



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Thanks for 2020 . . . Why Not?

November is the month of Thanksgiving. And although a global pandemic may prevent many of us from visiting far-away relatives to celebrate the occasion, there is no reason we cannot still embrace the spirit of the holiday.

2020 may not be a year that is fondly remembered by many. We started the year with the tragic death of local hero Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna, and seven other adults and children. This celebrity death was particularly sad to our community given Kobe's Orange County connections. So many of us had stories of encounters with Kobe or Gianna, or knew one or more of the others who perished on that fateful flight.

The year also started with news of a new virus spreading in China—much like SARS and MERS before it. And, as with SARS and MERS, we took notice, but not much else. Then, as we began looking forward to spring, everything changed. We quickly came to understand how much more dangerous this virus was than the ones that came before it, and the surreal suddenly became real. We were locked down in a way that previously would have been unimaginable. Schools closed. Our firms closed. Courts closed. Sports stopped. And time seemed to stand still.

It was in that stillness, in May, that George Floyd was killed. And although the tragic death of a black man at the hands of a police officer was not a new event, this one captured on video seemed different, and evoked a response we had not previously seen. People were outraged, and rightfully so.

In July, we lost congressman and voting rights icon John Lewis, with former presidents Clinton, Bush, and Obama all speaking at his funeral.

And, of course, we lost many other celebrities and athletes this year that were of less political import, but sad losses nonetheless—people like Tom Seaver, Lou Brock, Chadwick Boseman, Kenny Rogers, and Jerry Stiller.

And, as I sit down to write this in mid-September, Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg just passed away. Her passing, of course, would be sad in any circumstance, given the legacy she leaves, especially for women's rights, but the timing of her passing almost guarantees more divisiveness in our country.

So what, you may ask, do we have to be thankful for this year? How about this for starters: most of us still have our health. And while it is appropriate to acknowledge the 200,000 people who have died from COVID-19 in the United States, the 1 million people who have died from it worldwide, or the many others who may have lasting symptoms, we should never overlook our own health, and that of our loved ones.


We also should be thankful that, whatever the end point is for this blasted virus, we are eight months closer to that end point than

we were back in March. For me personally, I am especially thankful that my three kids are scheduled to return to class—actual, in-person class—this week. I am also thankful that I can walk into a Chipotle, order a burrito, and sit outside and enjoy it. I will not ever take Chipotle for granted again. This is a small thing, but in this moment, small pleasures are more important than ever.

We also can be grateful for the modern technology that has made our situation so much more bearable than it otherwise would have been. Imagine if this same virus had struck twenty-five years ago. We would not have been able to continue functioning in our roles as lawyers without the remote access we currently take for granted. Our courts would have been closed completely, instead of being open for virtual business as they are. The OCBA would have all but shut down, rather than continuing with regular virtual committee, section, and other meetings. And rather than attending online classes, our children would have effectively taken a sabbatical from school. Whatever many of us think of virtual school as compared to in-person school, I don't think any of us want to think of what life would be like if we didn't at least have that.

And let's not forget how much easier this has been made by companies like Uber Eats, DoorDash, and Shipt. Particularly for those of us who are more vulnerable or just more cautious, we can eat and survive without having to leave our homes. And, of course, there are Netflix, Disney Plus, and other entertainment sites that didn't exist twenty-five years ago. Would Blockbuster Video even have stayed open during a pandemic?

On the racial justice front, we also have a lot to be thankful for, notwithstanding the many problems that still exist. We as a nation will not be able to fix our problems until we acknowledge that there actually are problems. Since Memorial Day weekend, it seems that many of us—although, sadly, not everyone—have finally done that. And while I won't pretend we have done enough, or even nearly enough, the trend seems positive, and that is something. And we can be encouraged that a whole new generation of us see the importance of fighting for the rights of all of us.

The world and our nation are not perfect. Not even close. And 2020, by all reasonable measures, has been a lousy year. But amidst the bad, there has been good. We have our friends; we have our family; we have our community. And some of us have been lucky enough to add a new puppy to the mix. So I, for one, am thankful. 

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