



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

LARISA M. DINSMOOR

Connection, Community, and Unity

I am humbled and honored to serve as your OCBA President. The OCBA's Mission is to "To Enhance the System of Justice, To Support the Lawyers Who Serve It, and To Assist the Community Served by it." As such, we are bound together by a higher ethical code to serve our community and to help one another. As Aristotle stated, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." This year, as president, my goals are to help all of us to become more connected with each other, to be more active in helping our community, and to strive for unity.

Connection

We don't accomplish anything in the world alone and whatever happens is the result of the whole tapestry of one's life and all the weavings of individual threads from one to another that create something.
- Sandra Day O'Connor

COVID-19 has changed our lives. We can no longer be together in-person, shake hands, give a hug, or have face-to-face conversations. For me, being in the presence of another colleague or friend brings me energy and joy. For now, we are deprived of that. The terms "technical issues" and "Zoom fatigue" are prevalent. Consequently, we must continue to find ways to meaningfully connect with each other despite the challenges.

One of the best ways to stay connected is to sign up to be a protégé or mentor through the Mentoring Committee. Traditionally, the Mentoring Committee provided "Mentors" to "Protégés" who had fewer than five years of legal practice. Since our new reality presents challenges for all lawyers despite years of practice, the Mentoring Committee will no longer impose the five-year requirement to have a mentor. Any lawyer who would like a mentor is welcome to sign up. Having a mentor can help you transition from a big law firm to a solo practitioner, share tips and trades on how to litigate or practice remotely, reveal new resources, talk about balancing the stresses of a job and family life, or simply be someone to connect with during these trying times.

I'd encourage experienced attorneys in our community to become mentors. Having been a mentor myself, I found it to be a mutually beneficial experience. Make a connection that you never would have made *but for* a pandemic! Now that's turning a negative into a positive. Participating in this program can bring more joy and connection to your life. For more information, contact the Mentoring Committee at Mentoring@ocbar.org.

Community

Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much. - Helen Keller

We are lawyers and leaders. Our clients rely on us, and we can and should be able to rely on one another. The OCBA has six task forces, fifteen committees, twenty-six sections, and two divisions (the Young Lawyers and Masters Division). If you are not involved and want to be, please reach out to me at larisa@ocbar.org and I will connect you.

Affiliate and affinity bars are part of our community, too. In fact, 60% of affiliate members are OCBA members. I'd encourage more

collaboration with affiliate and affinity bars to enhance our community. As president, I will work with Dean Zipser and Nikki Miliband, Co-Chairs of the Leadership Development Committee, to identify and assist future leaders of the OCBA. This committee will liaise with the Young Lawyers Division, as well as affiliate and affinity bars to establish a leadership pipeline.

I will continue to ensure a strong Bench-Bar relationship. Congratulations to Presiding Judge Erick Larsh and Assistant Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez. I have known both for many years and know that the courts are in good hands.

Our community produces a wealth of resources for lawyers of all ages, practice areas, and time in practice. The OCBA has recorded seminars on topics that span the gambit: from general legal skills trainings to State Bar updates; from Ethics and Civility guidelines to lawyer well-being. I will strive to create a central place to access this valuable information in a one-stop shop on the OCBA website to make it easier to find what you need.

Unity

If you want to go quickly, go alone . . . if you want to go far, go together.
- African Proverb

Why go alone when we can go together and farther? Yet one cannot deny the divisiveness that has permeated our society nationally and locally. It's time to heal, move past differences, and focus on our commonalities. How do we achieve unity? I don't know the answer, but as a public defender I've discovered the power of empathy is a step in the right direction. Empathy means understanding and sharing someone else's feelings and experiences. Practicing empathy means getting curious and inquisitive of that which we haven't personally experienced or know. We ask questions and reserve judgement, and ultimately learn about each other. As lawyers we are used to learning via case law. Let's challenge ourselves to learn through human exchange and conversation.

2020 highlighted the prevalence of racial injustice in our country, and specifically, to African Americans. As lawyers, sworn to uphold the Constitution and laws, we must work to end injustice. Many of you have heard the term "allyship." An ally is a helper: a person who provides assistance and support in an ongoing effort or struggle. Part of going together means that if someone is falling behind, you help them. Going together means you go farther and everyone benefits. Let's challenge ourselves to learn more about racial injustice. To learn more about becoming an ally, contact the Racial Justice Task Force at RacialJusticeTaskForce@ocbar.org. Or, to get involved with our Diversity & Inclusion Committee, contact info@ocba.org.

Larisa M. Dinsmoor is 2021 OCBA President, an Orange County Public Defender, and a world traveler when there is no pandemic. She would love to hear from you at larisa@ocbar.org.