



## PRESIDENT'S PAGE

LARISA M. DINSMOOR

# Taking Pride in the Orange County Lavender Bar Association

June is “Pride Month.” A time to celebrate the vast strides that our LGBTQ+ colleagues, friends, and family have made. The month is designated to honor the 1969 Stonewall Uprising in Manhattan, which was a tipping point for the Gay Liberation Movement in the United States. Michael Olsen, Vice President of the Orange County Lavender Bar Association (OCLBA) explains “Pride month is important because LGBTQ+ people are diverse individuals and our diversity is often invisible by its very nature. Pride Month is a time for us to openly celebrate who we are, how far we have come as a community, and to look forward to all of the things we aim to accomplish as a community.”

OCLBA had its inaugural launch on June 16, 2010. The launch was a gala attended by 200 attorneys, philanthropists, business and community leaders, judges, professors, and students. The gala featured remarks by the attorneys who completed closing arguments in the landmark case *Perry v. Schwarzenegger*, which challenged Proposition 8 in federal court. Since then, the annual gala has provided an opportunity to celebrate advances in LGBT legal protections in California and across the nation, including the legalization of marriage equality. OCLBA President Casey Johnson notes, “While many LGBT lawyer organizations formed in years’ past, none have ever lasted more than a few years, so the fact that OCLBA is celebrating its 11th anniversary this year is a significant milestone for LGBT attorneys in Orange County.”

The OCLBA is not solely for those who identify as LGBTQ+. Adrienne Marshack (OCLBA Board Member) states, “It is (open) for everyone who knows that those in the LGBTQ+ community matter and who are committed to equality.” Michael Olsen (OCLBA Vice President) explains that membership is open to everyone, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity:

The support of our allies is deeply important because we cannot make progress without [it]. We are only as strong as our numbers. While our organization became incredibly popular as the fight for marriage equality heated up, there is still so much left to do. The rights of same-sex parents to adopt and foster children, and the rights, safety, and livelihoods of transgender people, are still actively under attack. Our battles were not won with the marriage cases, and we need our allies to stand with us as we look forward to a more equal and just society for all people regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

A 2019 study conducted by the National Institute of Health (NIH) revealed that the experiences of interpersonal discrimination were common for LGBTQ adults. Specifically, 57% of LGBTQ adults experienced slurs, 53% experienced microaggressions, 51% experi-

enced sexual harassment, 51% experience violence, and 34% experienced harassment regarding bathroom use.

OCLBA’s mission is “to strengthen professional and social ties among its members; discuss and take action on questions of law and justice that affect the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community; promote the values of inclusiveness and diversity in the Orange County legal community; build coalitions with other legal organizations to combat all forms of discrimination; and provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information of concern to members of the LGBT legal community.” The Executive Committee consists of Casey Johnson, (President), Michael Olsen (Vice President), Gary Polston (Treasurer), and Victoria Cho (Secretary). The OCLBA has a law school representative and operates with three committees: Anniversary Party Committee, Membership Committee, and Endorsements Committee. The latter conducts evaluations of applicants for judicial offices and non-partisan law-related boards or committees.

OCLBA is famous for its anniversary parties, which are usually held atop of the Sky Garden at 3161 Michelson building. Casey Johnson reveals “this year we’ll be celebrating in September—hopefully in person. As we did not have an event last year, we’ll be celebrating our tenth anniversary this year!” Everyone is welcome to attend.

To foster more connection, community, and unity, you can support the OCLBA and celebrate Pride Month in a number of ways:

- Become a member of the OCLBA. As Stephen Hicklin (Board Member) exclaims “The LBA does important work but it is a lot of fun, too!”
- Make a donation to the OCLBA Darmer Equality Scholarship or the Orange County Equality Coalition (OCEC). M. Katherine Baird Darmer was a Chapman law professor who tirelessly advocated against all forms of discrimination in Orange County. You can make a donation on OCLBA’s website. The OCEC engages with educational entities to ensure the fair, just, and equal treatment of LGBTQ+ students in Orange County. Information can be found at [www.ocequality.org](http://www.ocequality.org).
- Participate in OCLBA’s “Did You Know?” campaign, which will be rolled out on their website at [www.oclba.org](http://www.oclba.org) and emailed throughout the month of June.

As Gary Polston (Treasurer) explains, “Pride month is important because it lets us know we are not alone. We see that we are a community of diverse individuals who are stronger when united.”

*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](mailto:larisa@ocbar.org).*