



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

LARISA M. DINSMOOR

Connection, Community, and Unity

It has been an honor to serve as your OCBA President. This year continued to be challenging for many of us. Yet our fortitude, spirit, and dedication to the practice of law continues to make the OCBA the preeminent bar association in California. Here are a few ways in which we promoted connection, community, and unity in 2021.

Connection: "To Support the Lawyers Who Serve It"

To ensure sustainable connections, I formed a Membership Committee to promote, encourage, facilitate, increase, and retain OCBA members.

Committees and sections stayed connected via Zoom. The OCBA hosted over 370 virtual meetings, approximately nine per week. Over half of these meetings provided CLE credits. In recent months, some of us felt more comfortable meeting in person, so we went from Zoom to room. The OCBA pivoted to include hybrid options so members could elect how they wanted to participate based on their comfort level.

The COVID-19 Task Force continued to put on educational programs to help members adapt and thrive during the pandemic. Webinars addressed issues such as vaccines, returning to work, creative strategies to market your practice, and evolving and prospering during the pandemic.

The OCBA stayed connected with the California legislature during "Legislative Week." Each year, the OCBA President and a member from our Legislative Resolutions Committee meets with legislative representatives to discuss or promote resolutions that affect our community. This year, we met virtually with California Senators Tom Umberg and Dave Min.

This year, the Mentoring Committee matched 28 protégés with mentors. I eliminated the requirement that a protégé must have fewer than five years of legal experience to be matched with a mentor. Now, any lawyer who wants a mentor can have the opportunity to participate. Consequently, seven lawyers were able to enjoy the benefits of mentorship who previously were ineligible.

The Leadership Development Committee continues to identify, encourage, and connect with members who are interested in becoming future OCBA leaders. This year, the committee added a standing liaison from the Young Lawyers Division and various affiliate bars to increase leadership opportunities. As we return to more in-person events, members of the committee can connect future leaders with existing leaders, creating a leadership pipeline.

Community: "To Assist the Community Served By It"

The Community Outreach Committee went into hyperspace overdrive to meet the needs of the greater community. They provided dinners to over 100 people experiencing homelessness at the Friendship Shelter and donated nearly 2,000 lunches through various local non-profit organizations. Additionally, they helped our furry friends by raising funds for pet food and other care items at the OC Animal Care Center.

We continued to support Orange County law schools and future lawyers by participating in virtual and in-person swearing-in ceremonies. These new lawyers will need mentors so please volunteer to be a mentor with the Mentoring Committee.

The State Bar Task Force kept OCBA members apprised of ongoing and unprecedented changes in the California State Bar. These include, *inter alia*, allowing non-lawyer "para-professionals" to practice law in specified areas, to own up to 49% interest in law firms, and to hire disbarred or otherwise ineligible attorneys. The task force is currently drafting a response to the State Bar's request for public comment, outlining concerns about how these changes will affect those who need legal assistance. Please read this month's cover stories to learn more.

Unity: "To Enhance the System of Justice"

I endeavored to use my President's Page to promote unity by highlighting voices other than my own. To that end, I interviewed people from the Thurgood Marshall Bar Association, Women Lawyers Association, Jewish Bar Association, Hispanic Bar Association, and Lavender Bar Association. In addition, I honored our dearly departed Lei Lei Wang-Ekval, the first female Asian American OCBA President. I also interviewed judges who served our country to commemorate Veterans Day.

We continue to have a united Bench and Bar. Even though we began this year with the first ever virtual Judge's Night and installation, we maintained a sense of unity through "bar leaders" Zoom meetings. At these meetings, we heard from and had the opportunity to direct questions to: Orange County Superior Court Presiding Judge Erick Larsh, Assistant Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez, and Supervising Judge of the Civil Panel Layne Meltzer.

The Diversity & Inclusion Committee and Racial Justice Task Force both promoted unity with various allyship events. The OCBA co-sponsored events with affiliate and affinity bars, as well as the Orange County Association of Affinity Judicial Officers (OCAAJO). To learn more about how to be an ally in support of racial justice, visit OCBA's Racial Justice webpage at: <https://www.ocbar.org/racialjustice>.

In spite of the ongoing pandemic, our OCBA worked together to further its mission and grow as a community. I am grateful to the OCBA leaders and staff for providing ongoing, consistent, and high-level support with facilitating events, publishing this magazine, and in fulfilling our mission. Our community is incredibly lucky to have such imaginative and talented people behind the scenes. When I started this year, I drew inspiration from a quote about going a certain distance alone, but being able to go farther together. Joining forces with the committees, task forces, and leaders turned this inspiration into action. May we continue our connection, community, and unity into the new year and beyond!

Larisa M. Dinsmoor is 2021 OCBA President and an Orange County Public Defender. She would love to hear from you at larisa@ocbar.org.