

## New Year, New Colleagues, New Commitment

February. We look forward to several "days" in February. Groundhog Day, Valentine's Day, Black History Month and Presidents' Day to name a few. This is not intended to be an inclusive list (just the ones I could remember).

Every year in February I remind my husband not to buy anything for Valentine's Day. We have too much stuff. However, we do celebrate by going out to dinner and I buy chocolate covered marshmallow hearts and those little conversation hearts. February is the month for romance, to show you care. I send chocolates to my mother and others in the family. So, whether you are part of a couple or not, remind someone you care about them.

February is also an important month for future members of our legal community. As law students get their final reviews in and prepare for the bar exam on February 25th and 26th, we should be reminded that the practice of law takes many forms. Not everyone goes into practice with a firm, large or small. Many opt for solo practice. Others go in-house or choose to work for agencies, government or non-profits. Many go to the prosecutors' offices or the public defender's office. Many strive for elected offices, judicial and partisan. All are worthy choices, and we should support our new lawyers as they go into the world.

The LBA recently launched its first New Lawyer Academy program. It is a six month program "designed to equip early-career attorneys with essential skills for success. This innovative program addresses key professional competencies, including communication, networking and resilience, to help attorneys bridge the gap between legal education and real-world practice." I had the pleasure and privilege of meeting some of the participants. They were engaging and I hope as excited as we were that they were involved.

Consider mentoring a law student through the Louis D. Brandeis School of Law, or a new lawyer in your firm or one that you meet at the LBA. Be there to answer questions or just be a sounding board. Invite them to join the LBA, its sections and committees, and other local groups that may coincide with their practice area.

Recently, an executive order was signed that targets diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in local and state bar associations. The LBA has a committee dedicated to DEI efforts and I hope we continue to strive, with or without committees or otherwise, to grow and diversify our profession. Clients relate to individuals who look and sound like them. My clients who speak Spanish are ecstatic when I respond in their language. I know that applies across the board for other languages and ethnicities. Our profession should reflect our community. Let us continue to work towards that.

Since 1976, February is also Black History Month, an annual celebration of African American achievement. This month, the LBA also celebrates its Trailblazer Award winner. The Justice William E. McNulty Jr. Trailblazer Award was developed by the LBA in 2003 to honor those who have had a significant impact in promoting racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession. We have honored our Trailblazers for more than two decades. If you know anyone worthy of this award, please visit the LBA website and nominate them.

Finally, I want to urge you, our members, to get involved with the LBA. Sadly, COVID-19 affected many things, including membership and participation in voluntary organizations across the board. Interested in teaching a Continuing Legal Education program? Call the LBA. Want to serve on a committee? Call the LBA. Want to play pickleball? Call the LBA. I distinctly remember a time when CLE programs were a forum not only to learn but to network and meet other members. We would attend a one-hour brown bag program, catch up with colleagues and maybe learn of a new case or get a referral. Time to get back to that.

Basically, I am saying come back to the LBA and reconnect. This year's 125th Anniversary Committee will be presenting programs about the history of the LBA and its mission. We also hope to have a family-friendly event during the year. Please make sure to read your eBriefs and *Bar Briefs* for these events.



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*Maria*  
 Maria A. Fernandez  
 LBA President