



A Call to Action

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is:
What are you doing for others?”

—The Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

As a general proposition, people fall into one of two categories: Those who work to make tomorrow exactly like today, and those who work to make tomorrow better than today. This column is dedicated to the latter group.

Lawyers have traditionally been well represented in civic affairs. Even though we, like everyone else, have families to raise and support, we also have a sense of how the larger society works. We are skilled in critical thinking, organizing facts and logical and legal principles into coherent plans of action. These skills and the licenses we hold give us power.

For those of you who want tomorrow to be better than today, now is the time for you to take your training and apply it to the very real problems that are facing our state and our nation. I have already written and spoken extensively on the need for us, as lawyers, to speak up to defend the judicial branch of our government against the relentless attacks of those who would seek to destroy our fair and impartial courts. We must also continue to do whatever we can to serve the needs of the poor and underserved among our increasingly diverse community and to use our power to uplift them. The Committees, Sections and Board of the State Bar help with these and many pressing issues of our times.

Nine years ago, upon completing my term as president of the Arizona Women Lawyers Association, I ran for the State Bar Board of Governors in the hope that I could make a positive contribution to the community and the profession by serving on the Board. The challenges of learning the many financial and organizational functions of the Bar and working to make them more responsive to the needs of the membership and the citizens of Arizona have been formidable.


Sometimes we have succeeded; often we have not. Whether the State Bar is better for my efforts, only time will tell. I can say that I am proud to have served.

Much remains to be done. I hope that someday the leadership and membership of the various committees of the State Bar will more closely reflect the racial, ethnic and gender profile of the community we serve. Most particularly, I hope that the Board of Governors, itself, will do the same. Today, of the 26 voting members of the Board of Governors,

only three are women. With the conclusion of my term as President in June, this number will slip to two unless District 6 (Maricopa County) elects a woman to replace me.

I have been warned that for me to point this out may provoke “backlash.” I hope not. But in any event, that’s a risk worth taking. I hope that the majority of the Bar will rise to the challenge of addressing issues of diversity in concrete ways. We’ve had a diversity policy in place for years, but at this point lip service is not enough.

I firmly believe that the relevance of the State Bar, and its credibility in the community at large, depends on our collective ability to develop, foster and promote diverse leadership to help us improve the profession for the benefit of the community. We should not ignore the fact that the community we serve will soon be 50 percent Hispanic, yet in 2005, Hispanics graduating from Arizona law schools comprised about 12 percent of their class. Women are represented more fairly in the State Bar’s membership, but not in its leadership.

Our society is entering a period of flux. Long-established expectations and assumptions are being challenged. The ancient Chinese curse “May you live in interesting times” is taking on a real poignancy. In these interesting times, members of our profession have a special contribution to make. We have taken an oath to uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States and the state of Arizona. More than most citizens, we have an awareness of the implications of that oath. We have a duty to speak up in a reasoned way to assure that the changes that are occurring give appropriate protections to the groups and individuals who lack political power. 



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Words Into Action

One way to act for positive change is to serve on a State Bar committee. For more information and an application, turn to page 62. The application, and more details about each committee, are available online: www.myazbar.org/SecComm/Committees/apptform.cfm