



Our Shrinking World

It has been a strange week, surreal in many respects.

First, the stock market shot up and down like Disney's Space Mountain; financial institutions ran to cliff's edge like lemmings; the bailout bill failed and then passed; and then, time went backward as OJ was convicted on the anniversary of his acquittal. Friday, October 4, was also the day we were visited by a delegation of Chinese lawyers.

There were six men and one woman in the group from China. Teresa Schmid, the outgoing Executive Director of the Bar, welcomed them. I gave them an overview of the organization of the Bar and our relationship to the state Supreme Court. Patience Huntwork, staff attorney at the Supreme Court, gave them a summary of the duties and responsibilities of the Court.

And Godwin Otu, the Bar's diversity director, spoke about diversity and inclusion in the profession.

Their questions were interesting: Was I a volunteer or did I get paid for being the president? Were the staff members paid or volunteers? (They must have heard about our cost-cutting plan.) Were our courts like the ones on *Boston Legal*? Did the ABA have control over us? (I told them that we let the ABA think that on occasion.) Could we discipline public lawyers, including prosecutors?

In all, we spent two hours with the delegation. One or two could speak a little English, but they relied on their translators. This made it difficult to make a connection. I struggled with that, wondering if we could have done or said more to assist them or better inform them.

The delegation left the building as I was leaving. As they climbed into a van, several members pointed to my Toyota Highlander, and one said, "Japanese auto." Yes, I said, but

next time I will buy Chinese. They seemed to understand, laughed and gave me the thumbs up. Connection made.


As you read this column, the dues statements for 2009 will soon be in your hands. Each year you are asked to make a contribution of \$50 or more to the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education—the "Foundation," as many of us know it better.

The importance of helping to make legal services available to those less fortunate cannot be understated. And the need for your contribution could not be more pressing. Charitable contributions generally are down because of the economy. The nation lost 169,000 additional jobs in September. October and November are likely to have been as bad.

We are not immune to the ravages of the economy, but by and large we lawyers are far better off than most other workers in this country. If by some bad fortune you are among the underemployed or the unemployed, then you may be entitled to skip the contribution this year. However, most of us are fully capable of giving \$50, and much more.

Lawyers have been leaders in this country since colonial days. That leadership is demonstrated in many ways: holding political office; drafting laws; interpreting laws; representing the privileged and the underprivileged; prosecuting criminals; and defending those charged with crimes.

I am asking you to be a leader in the effort to make justice more accessible to the poor. Make a generous contribution to the Foundation. Encourage others in your office to contribute.

For 75 years the organized Bar has found ways to contribute to the community. I have confidence that you will start the next 75 years by increasing that contribution. 

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