

President's Column

Working for Equal Justice for All

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Greetings my most esteemed colleagues and *Court Review* readers. The American Judges Association calendar has been extremely busy since my investiture in October, and I could not be more thrilled to be representing such an outstanding group of judges. If you haven't had a chance to do so already, please take a look at our website (www.amjudges.org). Each month we are highlighting our members. If you would like to nominate someone, or nominate yourself, for the "Members Spotlight" please do so by sending their biography to aja@ncsc.org. Our members are doing awesome things and we want to share their awesomeness!

On March 7, 2022, I traveled to Selma, Alabama for the reenactment of the march on bloody Sunday. As I tried to wrap my mind around my experience in Selma on the 57th anniversary of bloody Sunday—I could only imagine what those "foot soldiers" had gone through when they were met on the top of the Edmond Pettus bridge with drawn guns, whips, water hoses, and anything else the police could use to try and stop them from crossing that bridge. Through much adversity these men and women plowed and marched on to Montgomery. I merely traced their steps and I was exhausted. As I listened to speech after speech, including one from the Vice President of the United States of America Kamala Harris, about this infamous bridge crossing, I couldn't help but wonder how they survived. I walked across that bridge, then sat in an SUV and was driven to Montgomery. They marched to the top of the bridge and were met with all kinds of brutality, yet they still marched on to Montgomery. It took us forty-five minutes to drive to Montgomery and they marched there after being beaten. What tenacity, what strength, what courage they all possessed. The march across that bridge was a life-changing event for me. If they could go on after all they endured surely we can do our part to make this world a better place. It definitely is not when you are born or when you die that makes the difference but instead, it is that dash in the middle that counts. It is what you do as you journey through this road called life that matters.

Although our fight for justice and equality is not yet complete, we must continue to strive for a more perfect union; to make the promise of justice a reality. We all owe those courageous men and women our deepest gratitude for the ultimate sacrifices they made to lay the groundwork for freedom and equality for all, especially at a time where the United States was marred with fatal and rampant racism that breathed so deeply within everyday society. Our robust diversity and continued progress toward inclusivity is the very thing that makes the United States of America thrive. It serves as a reminder that we as judges must continue to lead the way and do our part to hear courteously; answer wisely; consider soberly; and decide impartially. For after all, the judiciary is the heartbeat of the perception of justice and our job is to enhance justice not to diminish it. As one of the world's richest countries, there are still families who go to bed at night hungry, there are still families who have no place to call home, and there are still families who are judged by the color of their skin and not the content of their char-

acter. We have come a long way, but we also know that we have a long way to go. As former President Barack Obama once said, "This union my never be perfect, but generation after generation has shown that it can always be perfected."

As I am writing this message, the historic confirmation of Justice Katanji Brown Jackson has happened. My emotions are raging. I am excited. I am very proud. I am elated. Finally, after 233 years and 115 appointed justices, only five of whom are women and just three are people of color, we will have someone who looks like me as a member of the highest court in the land. The first African American woman has been confirmed to become a United States of America Supreme Court Justice. As we dispense justice daily, we call upon our life's experiences to guide us. Diversity is a key component to the administration of justice; therefore all courts should be diverse. We are not all the same and we do not all judge the same. Nevertheless, justice should be the ultimate goal we all strive to achieve. Justice Katanji Brown Jackson is the first but she definitely will not be the last. Our country will be the benefactor of lasting decisions from a justice who is highly competent, possesses diplomatic poise, and has persevered. The American Judges Association is proud to join in a collaboration with four other national judges' organizations to spear head a brunch in her honor.



More great news, I am "honey-moon happy" to report that AJA's first in-person conference was a huge success. The hotel was sold out and registration was at an all-time high. We were all overjoyed just to see one another again. Congratulations to our 2021 Awardees who were finally able to receive their awards in person at our midyear conference luncheon in Napa, California on April 27, 2022. Kudos to Justice Robert Torres and the entire education committee for putting together an excellent education program. A huge thank you to Past President Elliot Zide for spearheading a magnificent fundraiser for the American Judges Foundation. We all left Napa revived, reinvigorated and ready to move our courts forward. When we all work together we can accomplish greatness.

As we look ahead, we look forward to our Annual Educational Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from August 27th through August 31, 2022. Our theme is "Judicial Independence." The education program promises to be exemplary. One of my favorites is the United States Supreme Court update by Dean Erwin Chemerinsky. It never fails to be interesting, informative, and estimable. The conference seminars will explore the threats to judicial independence, judicial ethics, red flag laws, and of course judicial wellness. The host committee has planned many outstanding activities to highlight their stellar city. You should surely plan to attend.

Thank you for the confidence you have bestowed upon me to lead this association! Continue to strive to do your best—all for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I am humbled to have the opportunity and the responsibility to be a part of this enduring and indelible legacy.