



Executive Director
Stuart Zanville

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Connection

WHILE COVID-19 HAS CAUSED CAALA TO CHANGE, ONE THING WILL NOT CHANGE

"We are at this point truly with no guidance in history, law or precedent."

The Hon. Tani Cantil-Sakauye
Chief Justice, Supreme Court of California

The Chief Justice wrote those words on April 6 when she announced that the Judicial Council of California had issued eleven emergency rules related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here we are one month later, and the words aptly describe what every citizen of the world, every American, every trial lawyer and every CAALA member is feeling today. Personally, I've stopped trying to come up with words to describe what we are going through. My favorite so far, though, is "unimaginable." It still works for me.

In the future, "unimaginable" won't work since we will have experienced what had formerly been unthinkable. We'll need new words.

The last month has made me think of one word that has changed more dramatically than any other. That word is Connection. It may be too soon to come to conclusions, but I can't think of anything that has changed more than the way we connect. This is especially true of CAALA members. Connection is one of the cornerstones that CAALA provides its members, both as an association and as a community.

Just think of the ways you connected before the crisis took over your life. People in L.A. connected in person. You went to work in your car on freeways shared with hundreds of thousands of other Angelenos. You got to your office and met in person with co-workers countless times a day. You held meetings, sitting around a conference table and ate lunch across the table from a friend or co-worker. After work you joined friends at social gatherings. You went to bars and restaurants with dozens of others. You attended houses of worship sitting side by side with those of your faith. You attended concerts and plays and you

supported your favorite sports teams by attending games with thousands of similar-minded fans.

As a trial lawyer, your practice was defined by in-person connection. Depositions were conducted across the table from your adversary. Mediations were in small rooms with a neutral and the other party. You walked the halls of courthouses filled with hundreds, sometimes thousands of legal professionals and the people they represent. Once in the courtroom you were sitting at the same table with opposing counsel and you got as close to the jury as the judge would allow.

As a CAALA member, after your workday ended you attended in-person meetings in the CAALA office. You participated in Education and Membership seminars and roundtable programs. You attended social mixers with hundreds of your peers and never stopped talking to them until the event was over. You hugged or shook hands to begin every conversation and probably did the same when the conversation ended. Once a year you flew to Las Vegas for CAALA's annual convention, connecting face to face with thousands of your friends and fellow attorneys.

Without question, CAALA provided memorable in-person experiences to its members, setting high standards and earning accolades in the legal profession.

Unimaginably, all of this changed in the span of a few days in the wake of a crisis we did not create. In the new world, in-person connection was no longer possible. Now the connection was remote, online. Instead of face-to-face, we used facial recognition. Instead of talking to each other, we spoke to cell phones, tablets, desktops, laptops and smartwatches. Platforms let us see each other, but we were really talking to the camera on our device. Overnight, we

learned about new ways to communicate and connect.

CAALA immediately understood that in order to continue to provide the best services to our members, we needed to adapt, and adapt quickly.

A few days after our staff began working remotely, CAALA changed. We pivoted seamlessly from being the trial bar's leading provider of in-person events, programs and resources to be the leading *online* provider of those programs and services. We immediately increased the number of online programs we provided, presenting as many as two webinars a week. We helped our members connect with each other through our List Serves that provide an easy way to reach the CAALA community. We increased the number of online resources members could find on our website and reminded members that every article in Advocate magazine was available online.

Our meetings quickly went from in-person events to Zoom teleconferences and our seminars became webinars with on-demand access.

One thing that isn't changing is the content we provide to our members. We know that now, more than ever, CAALA members need us to provide timely, accurate, reliable information that's easy to access. We will continue to provide those resources.

We don't know how long this crisis will last. At some point there will be a vaccine and therapeutic drugs will be available to bring sick people back to health. When we are back to normal, much will be written and spoken about the changes that came from this unimaginable event. I can't think of anything that will change more than the way we connect.

CAALA will continue to support our members any way we can; that's what our vision statement says: *Empowering Plaintiff Attorneys to Achieve Justice.*

That will not change.