



CAALA President
Genie Harrison
 GENIE HARRISON LAW FIRM

Stuart Zanville to retire after 17 years

SEARCH COMMITTEE FORMED TO SEEK NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher, famously said, “The only thing that is constant in life is change.” Born in 535 B.C., Heraclitus inspired the writings of Plato and Aristotle. Despite being two-and-a-half millennia old, his brilliant observation about the consistency of change is as applicable now as ever.

Years ago, I told Stuart Zanville that I was leaving the law firm where I was then a partner to start my own firm. During the conversation, I was nervous and wondered out loud whether this change would affect CAALA’s desire to have me on the Board of Governors. In words I will never forget, Stuart responded, “It doesn’t matter what firm you’re at Genie. We want *you*.” With those two sentences Stuart Zanville affirmed my value as a leader in CAALA and, as a byproduct, helped buoy my confidence in starting my own law firm.

I am sure that in reading my story about Stuart’s vision for the organization and his private conversation with me, many of you see Stuart in your mind’s eye and may remember your own conversations with him in which he offered a patient ear and excellent counsel.

It is impossible to imagine CAALA without Stuart, or Stuart without CAALA. It is impossible to extricate his impact on us individually, the organization, and the legal community in Southern California. For seventeen years Stuart has excelled as CAALA’s Executive Director, offering the wisdom of a professional who has seen much and wants only the best for all of us and our clients. But as immutable as Stuart seems, as inextricably intertwined as he is in CAALA, Stuart has decided that the time has come for him to move into the next phase of his life. In bittersweet news, he has announced his retirement effective December 31, 2021.

While we cheer for Stuart and his family’s future together, we also face our own incalculable loss. But it is not yet time to fete or bemoan; Stuart has asked that those sentiments wait until December. Instead, it’s time to get to work on selecting new staff leadership for CAALA.

Guided by history and informed by the present, we have settled on a two-step process through which CAALA will select a new Executive Director. First, we will have a Search Committee chaired by 2018 Past President Mike Arias. The Search Committee is comprised of eight members – two each of Past Presidents, Executive Committee members, Board of Governors members, and non-Board members who are active in the organization. I want to

thank those who have agreed to do this incredibly important job for CAALA: Past Presidents Christine Spagnoli and Ricardo Echeverria; Executive Committee members Martin Aarons and Elizabeth Hernandez; Board of Governors members Alyssa Schabloski and Derek Tran; and CAALA members Lourdes DeArmas and Ese Omofoma. These Search Committee members are diverse in practice types and structures, experience, and protected classes, and will bring their impeccable individual integrity and work ethics to this process.

Led by Mike Arias and with appropriate professional assistance, the Search Committee will seek applications from qualified individuals, both external to the organization and internal. The Committee will narrow the most highly qualified candidates to no more than five and those candidates will then be interviewed by the entire Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will serve as the Selection Committee and will be the ultimate decision maker about whom to hire to lead CAALA in its next chapter.

Though we know that Stuart will focus his future on enjoying life with his family, we also know that he will always be there for us, whether we just need a willing ear or excellent advice. And don’t let Stuart know, but I’m asking that you please send your stories about Stuart to me at genie@genieharrisonlaw.com so we can send him off with a book of memories about how he has positively impacted so many of us.

Although we know that change is constant, we also know that we are not powerless. As Heraclitus counseled, “Character is destiny.” We have the capacity to shape our own future, individually, as an organization, and as a legal community. This year, in addition to diversity and inclusion, I have focused on two other key initiatives that will help us control our destiny – creating a virtual, volunteer- staffed, Mandatory Settlement Conference (“MSC”) program and fighting the State Bar’s effort to allow profit-driven corporations to take over the practice of law.

MSC Program

With July’s launch of Resolve Law LA, www.resolveawla.com, the Los Angeles legal community now has a volunteer attorney-staffed *virtual* MSC program. To date, 171 attorneys have signed up as Settlement Officers, of which 69 are Plaintiff Settlement Officers, 47 are Defendant Settlement Officers, and 55 can serve as either type. The Superior Court of Los Angeles County has ordered 36 cases from the PI Hub into the

Resolve Law LA virtual MSC program, with many more to come.

The Resolve Law LA system is user-friendly for Settlement Officers and for attorneys representing parties. We’ve received fantastic reviews like, “... the program was set up exceptionally well, the tech-instructions were great ...,” “... the parties had very favorable comments about ... the MSC process and our teamwork,” and “I think this program is going to be of tremendous benefit to the Court.” And the best news of all is that the program has already begun booking settlements.

We are fortunate indeed that in Los Angeles, CAALA has an outstanding working relationship with the defense bar and the Court. Due to those relationships, we created Resolve Law LA, which will ultimately benefit thousands. If you have ten years’ experience or more, I hope you register at www.resolveawla.com and schedule your availability to act as a Settlement Officer.

Fighting non-lawyers owning law firms

Lastly, I must again draw your attention to the State Bar’s efforts to open the practice of law to big accounting, venture capitalists, and big tech. The State Bar’s so-called “Closing the Justice Gap Working Group” and its subcommittees are meeting monthly to set the regulations that will allow the corporate take-over of the law business.

CAALA has a State Bar Committee that leads its resistance efforts, but we need all hands on deck, which again means you. If you are interested in serving on CAALA’s State Bar Committee and protecting the legal practice as a career, instead of allowing it to become a disaggregated app-based justice-minimizing widget business, please volunteer. Contact me at genie@genieharrisonlaw.com or Kwedi Moore, CAALA’s Staff Liaison, at kwedi@caala.org.

Heraclitus was correct – change is constant *and* we have the ability to write our own futures. CAALA respects and embodies both principles. We have harnessed technology to create a virtual MSC program to settle more cases and get others to trial faster. At the same time, CAALA has led the fight against big business’s effort to take over the practice of law. And though our beloved Stuart Zanville will retire at the end of this year, we will select outstanding new staff leadership for the organization – a leader whose wisdom and vision will help us write a future in which human beings continue to represent human beings in the fight for justice.