



CAALA President

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SECK LAW

“What do you want to be?”

SEEING A WOMAN WHO LOOKED LIKE ME, FROM MY COMMUNITY AND WHO WAS A LAWYER, MADE MY DREAM SEEM POSSIBLE. IF I COULD SEE IT, I COULD BE IT

A couple of years ago, when my daughter was three years old, a parent at her daycare asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. My daughter confidently replied, “a doctor.” The parent, intrigued, asked, “what kind of doctor?” With a quizzical look, my daughter tilted her head slightly and responded, “a real one.” She then walked away.

As the president of the Consumer Attorneys Association of Los Angeles, a trial lawyers association, it’s sometimes surreal to believe that I am indeed a trial lawyer – a real one. Like my daughter, I, too, had known since an early age what I wanted to be when I grew up. I’m not sure where I got the idea to be a lawyer, but I suspect it was my mother who planted that seed (or some might say, a dream). Throughout my childhood, whenever asked about my aspirations, I confidently stated that I wanted to be a lawyer. Fortunately, no one ever inquired about the type of lawyer I wanted to become. If they had, I doubt I would have answered as confidently as my daughter. I didn’t know any lawyers, and truthfully, I did not fully comprehend what lawyers did beyond studying the law. The only ones I saw were on television, and none of them looked like me.

However, by the time I entered high school, everything changed. For the first time, I witnessed a trial lawyer in action – Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. The trial of the century. I was captivated. Johnnie was eloquent, intelligent, dynamic,

quick-witted, poetic, poised, and charismatic. I watched as much of the trial as I could after school, and I knew then that I wanted to do what Johnnie Cochran did. I wanted to be a trial lawyer.

Around the same time, I had the opportunity to meet a real lawyer in the flesh – Judith Hightower. She was a Seattle Municipal Court Judge, only the second Black woman ever elected to the bench at that time. Seeing a woman who looked like me, from my community, on the bench made my dream seem possible. If I could see it, I could be it.

While in high school, I began to carefully plan how I would become an attorney. Which colleges do lawyers attend? What subjects do lawyers major in in college? What makes a successful lawyer? Who do I want to represent? These were the type of questions I asked myself at the start of my journey. The answers guided me to Boston for college (a mecca for higher education), informed my decision to major in philosophy and journalism (lawyers must be thinkers and writers), led me to Loyola Law School (Johnnie Cochran’s alma mater) and ushered me into CAALA (a haven for trial lawyers).

My desire, drive, determination, and discipline carried me to and through law but it is in part due to my exposure to Johnnie and Judith, that I am here.

This is my first message as the President of CAALA, and it seems fitting that the first issue would focus on Trial Skills. Like many of you,

I turn to the Advocate in search of knowledge. For years, I had the honor to author many articles and the pleasure to edit several issues. I still have many of those early issues tucked away. With that said, this issue, these articles, and this first presidential column would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our long-standing editor, Jeff Ehrlich, and our publisher, Richard Neubauer of Neubauer & Associates.

Advocate is one of CAALA’s great benefits offered to its members and the community at large. The authors are some of the most accomplished of our time. Their articles are meant to teach, challenge, and inspire. I am truly thankful for the time, thoughtfulness, and effort each of them has put into their articles. Most of all, I appreciate their willingness to unselfishly impart their wisdom.

Through this monthly column, I hope to share with you our association’s goals, achievements, and challenges, and maybe even more about myself. In our interactions in the real world, at conventions, mixers, and events, I hope you will share something about yourself and how best you think CAALA can serve you.

I am proud to begin my service as president of CAALA, the largest local trial lawyers association in the country. I am proud to say I’m a trial lawyer. My daughter would say, a real one.

