



From the President
Martin I. Aarons
 AARONS WARD



“Here we go yo”

“HERE WE GO YO, HERE WE GO YO, SO WHAT, SO WHAT, SO WHAT’S THE SCENARIO?”

As I sat down to write my first column for Advocate, these Tribe Called Quest lyrics kept popping in my head. Because, (sing it with me) here we go yo, here we go yo, its time for my year as CAALA President. Yes, I am super excited to be your 2025 CAALA President!

And yet, I kept thinking, why this song? Well, I realized it is emblematic of CAALA. Individual performances amplified through unity and collaboration. Lyrical skills and playfulness. It is full of energy and spirited exchanges among the artists. I mean, “Bo know this, and Bo knows that, but Bo don’t know jack, cause Bo can’t rap”...and it got me thinking back to my growth through CAALA. How CAALA is made up of all these amazing and different individuals, with different lyrical/trial skills. How we are a spirited bunch, full of energy and enthusiasm. How when we come together as “CAALA” all our different backgrounds get amplified through our unity and togetherness. CAALA helps all of us grow and together we all make CAALA a truly amazing place.

So, I went back digging in my library...I started my practice from my kitchen table in 2009. I would take Ari, who was three years old at the time, to pre-school and then come home to work at that kitchen table until 3 pm. I would leave at 3 pm because my wife Azy would come home from work as a teacher with our little one in tow. (Thank you Azy and Ari for being there to support and love me every day on this journey. You two are the best!).

I would leave home and go down the street to work for a few more hours at the local Starbucks. All my suits and clothes smelled like coffee. I was grinding (pun intended). I knew I wanted to be a trial lawyer. I knew it would require me to put in work. I wanted to help people. But also, I needed help to achieve these goals.

I found it in CAALA.

Getting started

Like so many of you, when I first walked into the annual CAALA Las Vegas convention I did not know a single person in the room. CAALA greeted me with open arms. As Busta advised: I observed the vibe and checked out the scenario. I realized CAALA had everything.

From radio, to the video, CAALA had everything. CAALA gave to me willingly and with great enthusiasm. I poured through the list serve looking for answers to my questions. I attended every educational seminar trying to find a new nugget of information I could use in my practice and to network. I would go to every member mixer, New Lawyer Committee meeting, and Education Committee and Board meeting, looking to find my people. My people are CAALA. And without Team CAALA, I would not be the lawyer I am today.

As I was learning and drinking up all that CAALA had to offer I knew that I wanted to help in any way possible. I wanted to give back. I volunteered to be on committees, showed up, and did the work. I helped gather documents and sorted and redacted them for the document bank. Represented CAALA at law school functions, moderated, wrote for Advocate, was vice chair of new lawyers, and eventually spoke at an education seminar. I gave back, kept giving, and haven’t stopped.

Finding my law partner through CAALA

Just like Tribe could not do it on their own, I realized I needed a teammate. So, in January 2016 I hired a young lawyer named Shannon (who I found through a CAALA list serve post). Little did I realize that I’d hired the best and brightest lawyer in California, who would in three years’ time become my law partner. Just like Scenario, it works and is amazing because of the team. The best results happen in teams and partnerships. Shannon Ward, none of this is possible without you and your brilliance. Thank you. I appreciate you.

And then, in Fall 2019, I ran for the Executive Committee. Five years on the Executive Committee goes by fast. CAALA is still the CAALA that I grew up with and taught me to be the lawyer I am today. And yet, CAALA is so much more now that it was back then.

As one example, this year’s CAALA GALA will be the first in its 76-year history that we honor an outstanding jurist, trial lawyer extraordinaire, rising star, and an amazing Ted Horn award recipient for Leadership and Service, who all happen to

be women. Each of whom worked tirelessly and with dedication to earn these awards. Congratulations to Judge Ruth Kwan, Natalie Weatherford, Teresa Johnson, and Maryann Gallagher.

CAALA has the vibe and keeps growing and getting better and it’s not going to stop. As of December 2024, we had more than 4,000 members. There were 88 total committee meetings and events – 19 virtual events, 18 live events, and 51 committee meetings. There were more than 320 speakers and 9,230 attendees at these events. All of this and more is coordinated by our amazing CAALA staff: Kwedi, Bill, Fatima, Lydia, Araceli, Margie, and Martha. You are all fabulous. They’ve been known to do the impossible like Broadway Joe... Thank you!

Even more resources

So, here we go yo, here we go yo, we are going to do it all and more in 25’ yo. First, the CAALA Document bank is a treasure trove of a resource. It is time to give it a refresh. Back in 2014 Jeff Rudman and his team did an amazing job of gathering documents and organizing them onto our website. That was 10 years ago, and a lot has changed since then. We are going to work hard this year to update and upgrade our document bank. If you are interested in working on this committee, please send me an email.

Next, we are going to establish the CAALA Leadership Academy. A multipart course that will take place over the course of this year. We are going to create, develop, and nurture future leaders for CAALA and the local bar at large. It’ll be an amazing program that will set the standard for Leadership Academies, just as CAALA sets the standard in everything we do.

Watch as CAALA combines all the juice from the mind, heel up, wheel up, bring it back, come rewind, Powerful impact, boom from the Cannon... CAALA is going to continue in 2025 providing the best-in-class education, networking, collaboration, and advocacy. Empowering Attorneys Advocating for People.

The scenario is CAALA is going to have a great 2025!

