

Refining Mission & Values to Support the Vision

by Associate Justice Hernaldo J. Baltodano, Second District Court of Appeal, Div. 6

Earlier this year I was fortunate to hear remarks from Governor Gavin Newsom about the impact of the Unity Bar on judicial appointments. He said, "California is built on fundamental, I would argue, universal values of unity, and justice, and opportunity for all. These values have always been more than just words. They're a promise. And the Unity Bar, you take that promise and make it a reality." He delivered a call to action: "Now I'm asking for your ongoing support. *Your recommendations. We want to keep this process moving forward. Because together we can create a brighter and more inclusive future for all Californians.*"

With six appellate court and 102 superior court vacancies across California as of the date of this submission (September 24), Unity Bar chapters across our state are poised to

make a significant impact on judicial appointments during the remainder of the Governor's term. Judicial Appointments Secretary Luis Céspedes has encouraged those seeking appointment to the bench to submit their applications no later than August 2025.

To celebrate its one-year anniversary and respond to the Governor's call to action, the San Luis Obispo Unity Bar recently refined its Mission and Values to support its Vision: a highly qualified state judiciary that reflects the richness and diversity of California. "The San Luis Obispo Unity Bar is an alliance of law students, attorneys and judicial officers dedicated to promoting diversity in

the legal profession and in the judiciary through outreach, education, mentorship and the endorsement of highly qualified judicial candidates committed to access to justice."

This Mission is anchored by our Values:

1. We believe that a judiciary that reflects the richness, diversity and dynamic spirit of our communities strengthens our judicial institutions and improves access to justice.
2. We understand that diversity in the legal profession supports access to justice and is necessary for a diverse judiciary.
3. We support outreach, education, and mentorship at the K-12, college, law school and professional level to

the judicial appointment process.

We also encourage you to get involved in our outreach, education and mentorship efforts. Lending an ear to a struggling student, sharing lived experiences, talking to the community about the important work lawyers do, and speaking in support of judicial independence are all examples of the types of work you can help the San Luis Obispo Unity Bar accomplish.

Of course, this work takes time, courage and vulnerability. But as my friend, retired Judge LaDoris Cordell, said about courage: "We have been taught that heroes are those people who submit themselves to the most treacherous of situations, entirely

oblivious to fear. But, if one is oblivious to fear, then that person's actions are really of little moment. It is precisely in acknowledging fear, in facing danger with enor-

mous amounts of trepidation, in forging ahead even while quivering, that heroes are born. So, our stereotypical hero, by definition, cannot perform heroic acts. It is only ordinary people, like you and me, who have this heroic potential. Heroes do not need to shed blood. They do not need loud confrontations. Some of the most heroic acts are quiet demonstrations of what is right."

San Luis Obispo Unity Bar thanks attorney Charles Cummins from Loker Law and San Luis Obispo College of Law Campus Dean Erica Flores Baltodano for their tireless work in relaunching our website. ■

UNITY BAR



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY



encourage and elevate groups who have historically been excluded from the bar and bench and continue to face barriers to access.

4. We are aligned with the mission of Unity Bars across California and will strive to work collaboratively to accomplish our shared vision.

We have revamped our website (www.slounitybar.com) to reflect a busy year of outreach, education, mentorship, judicial endorsements and our commitment to these endeavors going forward. We invite you to visit the website and contact us if you have applied for appointment to the bench and seek our endorsement, or if you seek mentorship or simply want to learn about