

Weak Economy a Challenge and Opportunity

IMAGINE FINDING yourself as president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation on Jan. 1. The market has plummeted and so has the Foundation's endowment. The economy is in shambles. Lawyers are losing jobs; many will make less in 2009 than in 2008; and law firms feel strapped.

By Amy Ginensky



is up, and the number of individuals and families seeking service by our grantee legal services organizations grows every single day.

That is the situation I realized I would find myself in on Jan. 1. I had the same sinking feeling you get sometimes when you are about to appear in court: the floor will

open, and you will fall through it. Or for those who are not litigators, but were pitchers in high school, the sense of dread you feel when you load the bases with no one out.

Short of breath, I thought back about other experiences that could be useful and an odd one came to mind. For those of you who are not Jewish, you still can get the gist. When your child is going to become a bar mitzvah, your synagogue gives you a date – often three years in advance. We got one for our son, put it on the

With all that, the worst is that the grantee organizations need the Foundation's financial support more than ever. The 33 legal services organizations who depend on the Bar Foundation's grants are suffering serious funding cuts; dramatically down are IOLTA funding, government grants and private contributions. And, what has increased, and dramatically so, is the size of the region's poorest community and the scope of their legal needs. From housing, to employment, to benefits, to health care, demand

We must remember those who need us, and be there for them, whatever it requires. And, by doing so, we will not merely enrich others, we will enrich ourselves. We have an opportunity to be more charitable, and more giving than we thought possible or have even been in the past, because it is needed that much more.

calendar, and a year before realized that the date was the morning of the day Passover began that year. Now you might say, so what? Well, when you have a large extended family whom you have looked forward to joining you on this special day, and 80 or so are out-of-towners, you have a problem. No one will come, because they need to be at a seder that night. They have their own lives and families. While

experiencing a sense of panic and disappointment, a colleague urged us to turn this challenge into an opportunity. And that is what happened. We held a seder and invited all to the table, along with their families. They all came. They came for us, they came for themselves. And it was a night to remember for each of us.

So, how does that relate to now? This *continued on page 16*

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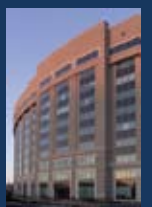
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There's More to Attorneys Than Meets the Eye

GETTING UP TO LEAVE AFTER HAVING LUNCH with two friends, one of them remarked with a laugh, "Sunah, you sure don't look like a lawyer." The other, a lawyer, agreed. Was it a compliment? A slight? Actually, it was just a commentary on my wardrobe. They were looking at my faux-fur-trimmed laced-up suede leather boots and my bulky three-quarter-sleeve granny cable-knit sweater. What can I say – baby, it's cold outside. But since I've heard this comment even when I wasn't dressed like Nanook of the North, I just smiled and said thank you.

I have heard from a lot of women lawyers, young and older, who have been told that they do not look like lawyers. The reasons vary – some don't wear the traditional suit; some look too young to be out of law school (much less be a lawyer); and some are just minority women. Of course, this all presupposes

that typical lawyers are older white males in suits – which many are. But obviously, our profession has become diverse enough that this should not continue to be the presumption of what a lawyer looks like.

Attorneys who don't all look alike benefit our profession immensely. I remember, as a first year at Temple Law, being impressed by an Hispanic attorney who came to speak on a panel. He was dressed casually and sat with his legs crossed at the ankles. He sat in stark contrast to the other attorneys who sat on the panel and spoke to the students about how they got to be successful. In fact, I don't remember who any of the other panelists were, but I still

By Sunah Park



remember him 14 years later because he was different. He was funny, intelligent, engaging, self-deprecating and honest. Just by being who he is, he made me believe that I could become a successful attorney being who I am. He is now a federal judge.

On the flip side, lawyers who look like us encourage us, too. I went to the Philadelphia Bar Association's Annual Meeting on a cold blustery day because Tsiwen Law received the Wachovia Fidelity Award, one of the highest honors bestowed by the Bar. Tsiwen's resume and bio make any accomplished attorney feel like a callow youth.

One of the founders of the Asian bar,

Tsiwen was a lifeline for me when I was president of the organization. There are numerous Asian American and non-Asian American attorneys who consider him the role model of a diligent and conscientious lawyer. In fact, I'd bet he'd make an excellent judge.

Speaking of which, I was on a plane on my way to a conference recently when the woman next to me asked if she could read my *Us Weekly* magazine. I said I would give her my magazine if she would let me read her *People*. She asked me if I was a lawyer. I was startled and asked her how she knew. She said she was a judge and that I sounded like a lawyer. Moral of the story: looks aren't everything.

Sunah Park, a partner at Thorp Reed & Armstrong, LLP, is editor-in-chief of the Philadelphia Bar Reporter.

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is a much more vexing situation. There is no comparison in the complexity and severity of the problem. But like the seder, it is a time when we must turn a challenge into an opportunity. We must remember those who need us, and be there for them, whatever it requires. And, by doing so, we will not merely enrich others, we will enrich ourselves. We have an opportunity to be more charitable, and more giving than we thought possible or have even been in the past, because it is needed that much more.

The Bar Foundation has begun setting the table. For the past two years, the Foundation was fortunate to be led by our immediate-past president, Elaine Rinaldi. Never was anyone as committed to getting as much money as possible into the hands of our grantees, consistent with the ability of the Foundation to remain viable. In the first year of her term, the Foundation gave a groundbreaking \$550,000 in grants. And in 2008, while the endowment suffered with the stock market and we faced substantial challenges raising funds, the Board of Trustees, voted on Dec. 10 to award \$558,000 in grants. The Board went deeper into its endowment than in years past, and individual trustees dug into their own pockets, (and in honor of our outgoing

president) to donate substantial additional funds. We did so because we needed to be there for our grantees.

During this next year, we will need all of you – law firms and individuals alike – to come to the table. While each of us no doubt feels pressure to put as much as possible under our own mattresses, we need to continue and increase our support of those in our community who every day are meeting the legal needs of the ever growing population of the poor and doing it with less and less. We need to be there. Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, composer and scholar of African-Amer-

ican oral history, said "Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're suppose to help you discover who you are." I am confident that we will discover that just as we don't fall through the floor when we go into court, but rather strongly advocate for our clients, and pitchers strike out the side even when the bases are loaded, the Bar Foundation will be able to succeed this year because

Philadelphia lawyers will be there making sure that we can in 2009 give even greater support to those who need it to make a real difference in the lives of those who have so much less than all of us.

Amy B. Ginensky, a partner at Pepper Hamilton LLP, is president of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation.

2008 Bar Foundation Grantees

American Civil Liberties Foundation of Pennsylvania
AIDS Law Project of PA
Court Appointed Special Advocates of Philadelphia
Community Legal Services
Consumer Bankruptcy Project
Custody & Support Assistance Clinic
Defenders Association of Philadelphia, Federal Division
Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania
Education Law Center
Equality Advocates- Pennsylvania
Friends of Farmworkers
HIAS and Council Migration Service of Philadelphia
Homeless Advocacy Project
Juvenile Law Center
Legal Clinic for the Disabled, Inc.
Nationalities Service Center

Pennsylvania Immigration Resource Center
Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts
Pennsylvania Health Law Project
Pa. Institutional Law Project
Philadelphia Legal Assistance
Philadelphia VIP
Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts
Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
Regional Housing Legal Services
Society Created to Reduce Urban Blight
Senior Law Center
Support Center for Child Advocates
Women Against Abuse, Inc.
Women Organized Against Rape
Women's Law Project



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