

# 2015 Focal Points: Access to Justice, Pro Bono Services, and Renewed Commitment to Diversity

Timothy W. Moppin



*The following are excerpts from Timothy W. Moppin's remarks at his December 10, 2014, installation as the 2015 president of The Bar Association of San Francisco.*

I am humbled and truly honored to serve as the president of The Bar Association of San Francisco [BASF] for 2015. The history of BASF dates back to 1872, and there have been many great presidents before me. I will do my best to carry on the great tradition of helping to provide legal services to those who need them, but cannot afford them. But for the grace of my higher power, I could likely have been on the side of those in need.

I was born in Oakland after my parents and older siblings moved to California from Arkansas and settled in East Oakland. I am the seventh of eight children, and we did not live like *The Brady Bunch!* We had what we needed, and were content. We moved to Hayward, where I attended school, engaging in sports activities if there was time—football, baseball, and wrestling—and my local scout troop. My dream was to be a professional football player, but reality set in at about age fifteen. I then knew I had to go another route.

In my senior year of high school, I was involved in a program similar to BASF's School-To-College program. It was called College Bounders, and was run by one of my high school counselors, Dorothy Mullins. I was

invited to attend a college workshop at Berkeley High School, where my counselor introduced me to the recruiter from the University of Pennsylvania. I applied to Penn and was accepted. As part of the admissions process, I met a guy named Robert Schiff, who some of you may know. Bob is a Penn graduate and became a good friend and mentor. I will always be grateful that I met him.

When I was accepted to Boalt Hall—it will always be Boalt Hall to me—I let Bob know as he too had attended Boalt. In the summer before I started law school, Bob arranged for me to work as a case clerk in his firm, which was named Fisher & Hurst. That was the first time that I actually learned what a lawyer does.

After I graduated from Boalt and passed the bar exam, my legal career was launched. I have been fortunate enough to work for some very fine law firms and have worked with some great lawyers that have helped shape my career.

I was taught early on that it was important to be active in the local bar and was encouraged to do so. I was fortunate enough to be in firms that believed in giving support to the local bar, so it was easy for me to get involved. When I started practicing at Fitzgerald Abbott & Beardsley in Oakland, the then executive director of the Alameda County Bar Association, Hal Norton, asked me to revitalize their Barristers Club as the Barristers' president. Not knowing

any better, I agreed. I enlisted John Russo [City Manager, City of Alameda], Joan Haratani [Morgan, Lewis & Bockius], and Kevin Corbett [Corbett Law Office] to be my fellow officers, and thus began my career as a bar junkie.

As BASF president, my main concerns will be access to justice, giving back with pro bono service, and a renewed commitment to diversity in the legal profession. As a group, we will focus on the following initiatives:

## MEET THE JUDGES NIGHT

We will be working with Presiding Judge John Stewart and Judge Angela Bradstreet [both of the San Francisco Superior Court] to hold two public forums around the city where the members of the public will be allowed to present questions to a panel of judges from different divisions of the court, with BASF volunteers serving as proctors and moderators.

Often the public only interacts with judges when they are facing criminal charges or are under the stress of pro se litigation. The forums will allow the public more access to judges outside a courtroom setting. We are hoping to have one forum in April and another in October.



*The passing of the gavel—2014 BASF President Stephanie P. Skaff hands the reins to 2015 President Timothy W. Moppin.*

## PRO BONO CALL TO ACTION

We will be releasing a new call to action to encourage our members to give back with pro bono service. There are 4.3 million unrepresented litigants in California alone. Our goal is to encourage all members to participate in at least one pro bono opportunity in 2015. We would like to have our members work directly

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



*Timothy Moppin and 1977 President James Brosnahan at the December 10, 2014, annual luncheon.*

with the litigants to service their needs. That is the only way that we can improve access to justice for the millions of people who go to court without a lawyer because they cannot afford one.

## SERVICE DAYS

To help you actively participate, we plan to continue the service days that we started a couple of years ago. I will be reaching out to the past volunteers that we recognized today to ask them to take charge again this year, and hope that we are once again successful. We will have (1) Legal Advice and Referral Clinic; (2) Lawyers in Schools: Law Day 2015; (3) Log Cabin High School Garden Day; (4) School-To-College Workshop; and

(5) Service4Service Day in the Veterans Justice Court in San Francisco.

## GOALS AND TIME-TABLES STUDY

Since 1989, BASF has studied the progress of diversity in the legal profession. The hiring and retention of minority attorneys has been the topic of many discussions over the years. We have an active task force that has been conducting interviews and surveys to give us an update on the progress that has been made. I am not able to tell you the results, but can say that the report is due to be published in mid-2015 and there will be a major event surrounding the launch of the report. I look

forward to presiding over the event and to renewing our commitment to making more and better opportunities for diverse attorneys.

## INFORMAL HAPPY HOURS

The roots of BASF can be traced back to a local saloon called the Bank Exchange, which was located in the Montgomery and Washington Street area where the majority of the lawyers were located. It was a place where lawyers met at lunch and after court. I plan to restart the tradition by having informal happy hour gatherings where our members can come unwind with their fellow downtown lawyers. There will be no agenda. It will be simply to meet, network, and have fun.

Thank you and I look forward to working with you.

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