

ISSUE 1 | MAY 2023

# Because we MUST

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And the future of

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LAWYERS

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FOUNDATION

@CALawyersFoundation



MAY 2023

# Because we MUST.



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California Lawyers Foundation has found our sweet spot of impact. Access to Justice, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and Civic Engagement and Outreach.

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John Maxwell said "Dreams don't work unless you do," and in all honesty, he's right. We leave it to you to answer if you are willing to do what it takes to make a difference tomorrow?

## 12 Do something

There's always a way to help, always a way to serve. Get involved in a movement that is changing the way we as attorneys represent and serve ALL communities.

### ON THE COVER

The faces of our future. Our *why* behind what we do. The next generation of changemakers who will carry the law forward in ways previously unimagined.

### Get in Touch!

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We believe in a profession that mirrors our population, in access to justice for all and in a society that understands the equalizing role of the rule of law and judicial branch.





# WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR INITIAL SUPPORTERS: THE FOUNDING 50

**RMM**  
REMY | MOOSE | MANLEY  
LLP

**Klinedinst.**  
ATTORNEYS

ENVIRONMENTAL  
LAW  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

 **Procopio**

 **HansonBridgett**

TAXATION  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

**HEATHER  
ROSLING**

BUSINESS  
LAW  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

INTELLECTUAL  
PROPERTY  
LAW  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

LABOR AND  
EMPLOYMENT  
LAW  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

SOLO AND  
SMALL FIRM  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

**STEPHEN  
FERRUOLO**

TRUSTS AND  
ESTATES  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

  
LEGACY FOUNDATION

WORKERS'  
COMPENSATION  
CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS  
ASSOCIATION

## Join the Founding 50 today!





FEATURED STORY

# MY FAVORITE 'F' WORD

Oyango A. Snell, Esq.

Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director  
California Lawyers Association & California Lawyers Foundation

CALIFORNIA  
LAWYERS

FOUNDATION

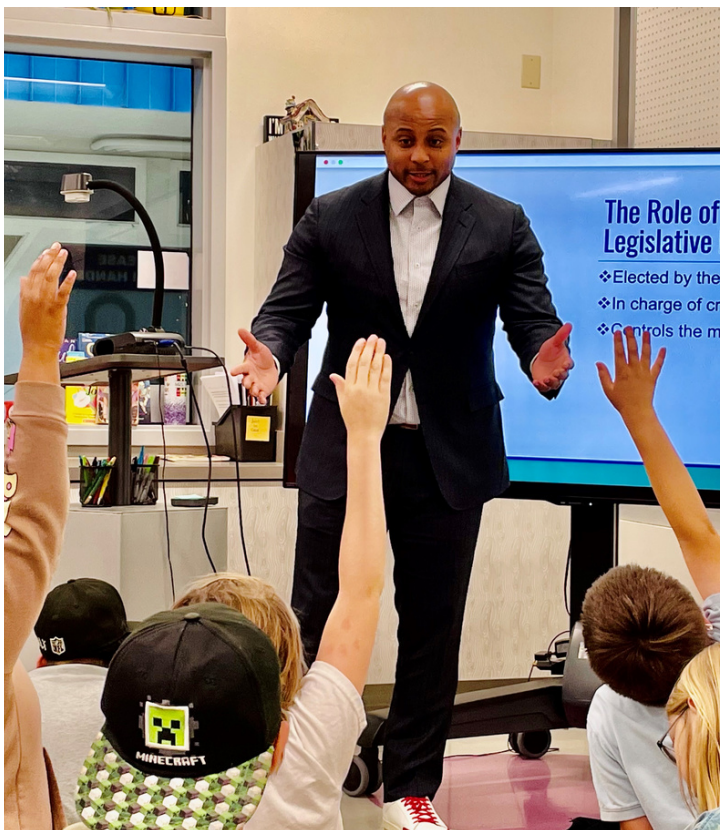




## SOME WORDS GET A BAD RAP...

if you know what I mean. But I am here to tell you about one of the best F-words that I know. It's foundation, as in the California Lawyers Foundation (CLF). But how did I become a lawyer in the first place?

Well, my path to the legal profession was not accidental, but the pathway was far from planned and intentional. When I think about why I became an attorney, I recognize that it was my determination to outsmart everyone that drove me. I was a kid who pushed the limits in school and often found myself in detention. A school librarian saw potential in me and made it possible for me to dream of being better and bigger than my socioeconomic status or demographic background to become a lawyer.





## MY FAVORITE 'F' WORD

**It is a long story filled with struggle and success, but I was determined to beat the odds. I became strategic about getting myself into a position to not only be heard, but to lead.**

The truth is that even in a diverse state like California, the legal profession and the judiciary have a long way to go before the demographics align with the general population of our state. I am an unapologetic champion for women and people of color in society and most certainly in the legal profession.

Perhaps that is why I am proud to serve CLF to deliver on its mission to drive the path forward for youth who have been challenged or burdened by systemic odds or disparate impacts because of their economic status, ethnic or racial background, ability, gender, or sexual orientation. Because we all know that when you believe in something and have the mindset of an attorney, anything is possible.







# THE STORY OF CLF BEGAN AT THE INCEPTION OF CLA

Established as the charitable arm and partner of CLA to promote diversity and inclusion and fair administration of justice, the Foundation focuses its work on three critical areas:

First, expanding Access to Justice for Californians, making the justice system more available to people in need throughout the state. Second, enhancing Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) in the legal profession by actively building educational pathways for diverse youth to consider a legal career helping to ensure that the legal profession is reflective of California's diverse population. Finally, increasing Civic Outreach and Engagement to educate Californians, especially our youth, about the judicial branch, the role of lawyers, and the rule of law.

In its first three years of operation, CLF has awarded more than \$450,000 to California organizations that are actively working to enhance diversity in the legal profession and achieve fairness in the administration of justice and the rule of law. Now in its fourth year, CLF will award an additional \$350,000 in grant funding to qualifying organizations to increase access to justice, enhance civics education for K-12 students, and eliminate financial and academic hurdles for students of color and students from low-income communities who want to pursue a career in law.

As a community of attorneys and attorney-influencers, we believe it is our social responsibility to contribute to a fair and just society where Californians thrive.

In a little more than three years, our staff and volunteers have actively developed and funded projects in alignment with these three areas of need in California. We have either built programs from scratch or partnered with other nonprofits to deliver on the long-held premise that lawyers help people when they need it most.

Our CLA members recognize the importance of bringing in new and more diverse members to the bar association and the legal industry. It is necessary as we grow, and we are willing and able to help facilitate pathways to diversifying the legal profession. In fact, we built an organization to make it possible! And that is the California Lawyers Foundation!

In the words of our CLF Board President, Jim Holmes, "We do great stuff, and our work ensures that diversifying the pathway to the legal profession is addressed at critical areas—in elementary school throughout the first years of an attorney." So, get involved! Visit our website to learn about volunteer opportunities.

Make a tax-deductible contribution to CLF and help us accelerate our work. Any amount is appreciated but let me suggest some more **F-words**; maybe a fifty, a franklin (\$100), five hundred, or five thousand dollars. We will take all the F's you are willing to give to help mitigate the burdens to access justice, increase diversity of the pathway to the legal profession, and enhance civics education and outreach.



# THE FUTURE WE DESIRE

**Not a challenge. But a fact. Years of strengthening our  
Foundation have led to endless opportunities.**

*By Olga Diaz  
Associate Executive Director of Diversity, Equity and  
Strategic Initiatives*

**John Maxwell said "Dreams don't work unless you do," and in all honesty, he's right. We leave it to you to answer if you are willing to do what it takes to make a difference tomorrow?**

I once ran for public office because it was the only path to correct an injustice in my community. Even though I had no idea how to start a campaign, fundraise or message voters, I was fueled to figure it out. In retrospect, it was one of the hardest and most selfless things I've ever done. But someone had to do it and at that moment it had to be me. I served for three consecutive terms.

We all benefit from our modern functioning society – made possible by the sacrifice of people who have noticed a problem and taken action to fix it. Being part of a foundation is not a passive role, it means you accept the challenge of fixing a problem or gap. It takes competence, conscience, compassion and courage to accept the responsibility of leading change.

Martin Luther King Jr. tells us "It is always the right time to do the right thing" but the right time and right thing can be different for everyone.


Sometimes the right thing to do just jumps out at you. Other times, someone needs to ask you for your help.

Regardless, consider generosity as your standard. Give your time, your talent or your treasure because, well, it's always the right time...

No one makes it in this world alone. We may have family, friends, and mentors who support us but sometimes total strangers inspire us. I remember the kindness of woman who volunteered in my first-grade classroom weekly. She helped me learn to read because I was struggling to learn the English language. I think of her every time I read the word 'the' because she taught me how to say it when "sounding it out" didn't work. Such a simple word made me struggle but she took the time to explain how the letters formed the sound. This month, I will earn my doctorate, in part due to the ripple effect of her effort to help me when I was a child.

I spend most of my days figuring out complicated things. It's a privilege and a joy to make the improbable a reality. The future success of California Lawyers Foundation is my passion. My small part in cobbling together resources and volunteers to help increase access to justice, civic engagement and diversification of the legal profession is legacy work for the entire population of California. **This is your call to action – help me out.** It's the right thing to do and some kid, somewhere will know the kindness of a strangers help, and someday help another generation.





**WE MAKE A  
LIVING BY  
WHAT WE  
GET, BUT WE  
MAKE A LIFE  
BY WHAT WE  
GIVE.**

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL






# PROGRAMS IN FOCUS

ONE MISSION.  
THREE PROGRAMS.  
WHERE WE MAKE  
OUR MARK.

BY JIM HOLMES  
PRESIDENT, CLF FOUNDATION

Formed in 2019, the California Lawyers Foundation (CLF) is the charitable arm and partner of the California Lawyers Association, California's voluntary statewide bar association. While new to the scene, CLF is a statewide foundation actively developing and supporting projects that improve access to justice for people in need and make the legal system more fair and efficient for everyone; increase diversity in the profession and help educate Californians about the third branch, the role of lawyers and the rule of law.



A hand holding a magnifying glass over a dirt road in a field.

# We focus on what matters.

**Our work is intentional. Our work goes beyond the courthouse and directly to the communities we support.**

The California Lawyers Foundation (CLF) is at the center of noble work for thousands of California's legal professionals. As a community of lawyers, we embrace the responsibility of ensuring that all Californians have equal access to a functioning justice system, and we are eager to welcome the next generation of Californians into the legal profession. Rather than wait for change, we are actively making change happen.

The Foundation is the vehicle that allows us to raise and invest funds in support of our core focus areas – Access to Justice for our community, Diversification of the legal profession to mirror California's diverse population, and Civic Engagement to help educate young people across our state on civics and self-advocacy.

There are over 200,000 lawyers in California, but believe it or not, we need more. There is a justice gap for many Californians who cannot afford representation or those who don't know how to find the right kind of help. To expand access, our foundation has funded the development of a state-wide pro-bono portal, the creation of video guides for common challenges during covid-19, and in partnership with several organizations, a free legal answers web site to assist low-income Californians with guidance in the areas of housing, family, and employment. We live in a complicated society and as a community of attorneys we have the skill and the will to help close justice gaps in California.



# If not now, when?

Our mission has always been to champion diversity, equity and inclusion in the Legal Community. The population of California is much more diverse than the population of lawyers. Inspiring and guiding diverse people to seek a career practicing law starts early. Creating greater diversity in the legal profession begins in kindergarten and continues through law school. We dedicate time and money to reaching students early and making sure they see a pathway to becoming attorneys and judges

Our programs are designed to inform Californian's about how complex systems work so that people are empowered to be their own best advocates. Civic engagement is a sign of a functioning society. When we visit a classroom to talk about how laws are made, we know that someday,

those students will be in positions to make the laws. Civic engagement also supports a civil society where it is possible for diverse populations to appreciate each other, co-exist and thrive.

Our formative years as a foundation were spent intentionally establishing a clear purpose, building our funding model and developing state-wide and regional partnerships to help us meet our three core goals. We started this foundation to do good and our passion is fueled by our purpose.

We chose our three focus areas - access to justice, diversification of the legal profession and civic engagement - because we have the expertise and passion to sustain this work. We do this because we can, but also because we must.

About Jim Holmes.

A founding member of Sullivan Hill, Jim Holmes practices primarily in the areas of bankruptcy, insolvency and commercial law.

Mr. Holmes served two terms as the inaugural Chair of the Board of Representatives of the California Lawyers Association (CLA) from its launch in January 2018 through October 2019, representing nearly 100,000 current California attorneys and other members of its various Sections.



# GIVING BACK. THE CLF WAY

In its first three years of operation, CLF has awarded more than \$450,000 to California organizations that are actively working to enhance diversity in the legal profession and achieve fairness in the administration of justice and the rule of law. Now in its fourth year, CLF will award an additional \$350,000 in grant funding to qualifying organizations to increase access to justice, enhance civics education for K-12 students, and eliminate financial and academic hurdles for students of color and students from low-income communities who want to pursue a career in law. Recipients of the 2023 Grant Award include:

## Access to Justice

- California Access to Justice Commission received \$50,000, a project to connect advisors with seniors and others who need to make legal arrangements for their health care decision making and end of life planning.
- Legal Access Alameda received \$50,000 to help fund Free Legal Answers California, an online legal advice platform benefitting low-income populations throughout California, founded in partnership with CLA.
- The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area received \$30,000 to work with low-income entrepreneurs of color to protect and build locally held wealth, thus staving off commercial evictions and loss of income for small business owners and their families.
- Legal Link received \$50,000 to provide timely, effective, community-based legal support for families experiencing poverty and housing insecurity in California.
- Veterans Legal Institute® (VLI) received \$7,500 to help eradicate barriers to employment, foster self-sufficiency, and free legal services support for indigent Veterans in Southern California.

## Civic Engagement

- California Judges Association's Judicial Fairness Coalition received \$40,000 to educate people on the importance of a fair and impartial judiciary and to combat attacks and unfair criticism on judges and the judicial branch.
- Legal Education Access Pipeline (LEAP) received \$50,000 to continue making law school and legal careers more accessible to underrepresented groups.
- San Joaquin County Bar Foundation received \$4,000 to restart the Foundation's First Impressions program, bringing civic education to fifth grade students in the San Joaquin County area.

## Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

- The Legal Aid Association of California (LAAC) received \$40,000 to support attorneys and legal aid staff from marginalized backgrounds with the end goal of increasing the critical issue of retention and representation of attorneys from these groups.
- UC College of the Law, San Francisco; Black Alumni Council received \$25,000 to fund an established scholarship fund benefiting students who have worked to better the experience of the UC College of the Law, San Francisco African-American community.

In addition to the annual awards to deserving organizations, CLF is always seeking support from law firms and corporate legal departments who believe in diversifying the legal profession, improving access to justice, and enhancing vital civics education. For more information on CLF, its grant funding process, and initiatives, visit [www.calawyersfoundation.org](http://www.calawyersfoundation.org).





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[CALAWYERSFOUNDATION.ORG/DONATE](https://calawyersfoundation.org/donate)

“I WONDERED WHY  
SOMEBODY DIDN’T  
DO SOMETHING.  
THEN I REALIZED, I  
AM SOMEBODY.”

— UNKNOWN