

Thank you. I am deeply honored to receive this Award. To be recognized by my peers for work on something as important as diversity, and to have a movie made about me, is very special. It is really humbling to receive the award in the presence tonight of so many leaders, really giants, of our profession. I would like to recognize one person in particular who has been an enduring inspiration to me in the fight for justice and equality, Chief Justice Margaret Marshall. Thank you for all you do, and have done, for all of us.

I would like to thank my wife of 33 years, Dr. Mary Lee, for her support and love. Mary has been a pioneer in the medical profession and higher education. I would also like to thank my dear friends at AALAM, who nominated me. Your support and friendship mean more to me than I can ever express in words.

Thanks also to the Beacon Award selection committee for departing from past practice to recognize me as an individual. Doing this is a stroke of genius! No, it's not a stroke of genius because you are recognizing me per se, but because you are re-affirming the importance of individual effort. While organizations have the power and resources to establish policies and influence behavior, it's the individuals who are the power behind the organizations. Organizations can only act through individuals. Individuals decide the policies, individuals innovate and experiment, individuals come up with new ideas, individuals connect with other

individuals. On many levels, diversity is about how people relate to each other, and individuals have to connect with other individuals to work together to drive organizational change.

So this award is not about me, but it's about each of you for all you are doing to increase diversity in your organizations. Thank you for all your efforts.

Now, let me give you some more background on my journey. I moved back to Boston to join Goodwin Procter as a 5<sup>th</sup> year associate in 1981. Within a short time after I got back to Boston, I knew or knew of all the attorneys of color at the major law firms, because it was such a small group.

At Goodwin Procter in 1981, there was one other lawyer of color out of 100 lawyers, a newly elected partner named Richard Soden. I think on some level Richard was so glad to see another lawyer of color that he adopted me. Richard mentored me and helped me become a partner, in fact I would not have made it to partnership without Richard's advice and counsel, and protection. I have asked him many times over the years, how can I repay you, and he has always said, no need to repay me, just pay it forward by helping someone else. So this is a classic example of one individual helping another individual so that he can in turn help others. We were really glad when our efforts together were soon joined by Marian Tse, and then Wayne Budd, forming a bond that extends to the present day stars at

our firm, Robbie Braceras, Damian Wilmot and our most recent addition, Abim Thomas.

Richard also introduced me to the MA Black Lawyers Association where I met extraordinary, and colorful, pioneers named Wayne, Flash, Harrison, Roscoe, Ruth Ellen, Harry, Charlie, to name a few. I saw the power of their friendships, their bonds to each other, and their commitment to work together to create more opportunities for lawyers of color. This inspired a small group of us to form the Asian American Lawyers Association of MA (AALAM) where our pioneers were people like Marian Tse, Diane Young Spitzer, Francis Chin, Debbie Kee, Nan Duffly, Vivian Hsu, and our present group of outstanding leaders, including Rebecca Lee, Geoff Why, Jeff Hsi, Sarah Kim, Peggy Ho, Emily Yu and other rising stars. We really glad that the affinity bars have continued to work together over the years, recently with valuable support from the BBA.

So, many of us worked together over the years to try to increase diversity in our profession, and we made progress. But I think we can all agree that the progress has been slow, and there is still a long way to go. If this was a ladder, I would say we are just on the first few steps of the ladder.

There is lots of good research on the keys to diversity in the workplace, and I want to touch briefly on four areas:

Leading from the top. It's not enough for an organization to just have diversity friendly policies, Leaders have to lead proactively on diversity. They have to talk about it within their organizations seriously and continuously, make it a core part of their leadership of the organization, and not just a box to be checked off for hiring purposes. Leaders have to demand more diversity throughout the organization and at outside vendors, and demand accountability. Each of us should ask ourselves whether the leader of our organization is doing enough, and we need to hold our leaders accountable and we need to work with our leaders.

Critical mass. When Justice Sandra Day O'Connor resigned from the Supreme Court, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg realized how lonely it was to be the only woman on the Court. At a recent meeting of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, of which I am a member, we talked about this in the context of women serving on corporate boards. Research shows that one woman board member is not enough, she will constantly carry the burden of representing the female point of view. Two is not enough. Only when there are at least three women on the board does gender even start to become less of an issue, and this is for boards of 12 members or so. So, how many law firms, corporate legal departments, government agencies have critical mass on diversity? In my opinion, we need to do better, especially in the senior and leadership positions. For

example, there are clearly not enough partners of color at law firms. One or two partners of color at a firm do not equal critical mass.

And related to this: Work environment. How do we ease the discomfort of lawyers of color in the workplace. There is a lot of research on the burdens of racial and ethnic stereotyping. One book I recommend is *Whistling Vivaldi* by Professor Claude Steele. Professor Steele cites the example of how a young African American male dealt with the negative stereotype he experienced just walking down the street: women clutching their purses more tightly, people crossing the street to avoid him. He started whistling melodies from Vivaldi and other classical composers. He found that this broke the negative stereotype and put him in the category of an educated black. Professor Steele's research also demonstrates the adverse effect on work performance caused by a person of color's mere consciousness of the stigma of racial stereotyping. I know many lawyers of color who believe they have to be twice as good to succeed. We need to better understand why the workplace environment is giving rise to this perception.

How to give feedback. Giving feedback is an uncomfortable conversation in the best of circumstances, even for two persons of the same culture. We all need to learn to give feedback in a way that empowers a lawyer of color to feel like he or she belongs. Only then can the feedback be received in a less-threatening way that

focuses on understanding the things he or she is doing well and areas in need of improvement. What we know is that in these interactions, ignoring race or ethnicity doesn't work. We are not a colorblind society as some people would like to believe, and saying, as many organizations do, that we are a meritocracy doesn't account for whose definition of merit we are using. Does the definition take into account multicultural perspectives? And when it comes to personal interactions, too often, the fear of being politically incorrect keeps us apart at a time when we need to engage and learn about each other, so that race is not the silent elephant in the room.

So the research shows that there are more things we can all be doing to increase diversity in our organizations. Whatever we have been doing is clearly not enough. We need to do more. So are you ready to do more? Are you ready to rededicate yourself to working even harder on this?

Let me close by challenging each of us to do at least three things better or differently, whether it is leading more proactively on diversity, taking the time to learn from people of other cultures, learning to give better feedback, or mentoring more lawyers of color. Although the diversity challenges are huge, we can drive change, as individuals working together. We have the power of leverage, the multiplier effect of all our individual actions.

As Margaret Mead said: “Never believe that a few caring people can’t change the world. All social change comes from the passion of individuals.”

This is our power as individuals! Let’s use it together!

So thank you once again to the BBA for using the 2013 Beacon Award to re-affirm the power of individuals to change our institutions. Thank you.