



CITY BAR REPORT

News from the Bar Association of Baltimore City

Ethics Hotline Volunteer

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The President's Message

Access to Justice and Civility



Jim Motsay

As I begin my time as your President, I look back at what this organization has done for the members of the bar, the courts and our community. I want to thank Judge Middleton for everything she did this past year. It was another good year. I also want to recognize all of our Past Presidents and what they accomplished in lifting this organization up and moving it forward.

Before I begin with how I see my Bar year, I want to discuss how I see our Bar. Recently, the Maryland State Bar Association chose to amend their By-Laws to limit our input as the largest local Bar Association. This was done over strenuous objection and sound rational opposition by our representatives of the MSBA Board of Governors (BOG) and our membership. The BABC is now capped at five representatives on the BOG.

I am not spending time in this article or in this coming year to rehash the events leading up to the amendments and the events of the day the vote was taken. Suffice it to say, that not only are we limited in our voice at the State Bar, but they have created a special class of representatives on the Board of Governors that they will select themselves. They are classifying these new BOG positions as diversity selections. However, as stated by the President of the State Bar at the Legal

Summit early last month, they are not seeking input from the specialty bars. These are the bars that represent more diverse members. The State Bar has not defined what they mean by diversity – is it by sex, nationality, race, type of law one practices? If you are also a member of a specialty bar, you need to know that your voice is muted on the selection of these representatives.

The Bar Association of Baltimore City is a very diverse Bar in and of itself. So, I want this Bar, our Bar, to concentrate on continuing our growth and support of our members, the Courts, and our community. We are the oldest bar association in the State of Maryland, and the 5th oldest bar association in the United States of America. Our bar has been at the forefront of the law and in support of its members. We will continue this path. We will continue to work with other bar associations. However, with the latest actions of the State Bar, we will not be part of, or under an umbrella, that the State Bar is trying to create.

Every President is asked if they will have a theme for their year in office. This year, my theme will be two-pronged. I want to continue the successful work the Past Presidents have achieved on Access to Justice, and I want to include civility.

For Access for Justice, I am looking for us to reduce the number of cases that are available to help people in need of legal services. If you have ever handled cases from our Senior Legal Services, through our Lawyer Referral Program,

or even through other programs statewide, such as Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service, you understand the people that need this assistance. There are currently opportunities to help in this area. With over 2000 members, we should be able to decrease the number of people needing legal services in our community. So, what I'm asking all of you to do during this year is to take one case through Senior Legal Services or the Maryland Volunteer Lawyers program. Consider signing up for our Lawyer Referral Program. This is an opportunity to build your business as this is not a free service.

On the issue of civility, which I do not see as a major problem but see it as an area we can always improve. I believe that we can do better as professionals and champions of what is right by reminding ourselves to be more civil in and out of the court system. I know Covid has played a very interesting part in our interaction with our colleagues; but certainly, we can adapt to those changes to make civility an important part of the treatment of other counsel, judges, and litigants. I think back to the days when we would attend depositions. Even if there were difficult questions asked during the deposition, when we finished and were packing up, we would stand around and chat with each other. Now, with many if not most of our matters being done remotely, that opportunity has been lost. Take a couple of extra minutes before you sign off to chat with

opposing counsel. I look at some of the acerbic letters that are written and how attorneys complain about that type of interaction. It doesn't make you a better lawyer, and it doesn't make your position any more powerful. When you are faced with a difficult decision, take a breath, step back and come back to it. Respond in an appropriate, but civil manner. It's one thing to make your point, it's another thing to drive a stake. Let us not only speak when we are at a bar function or another type of event. Let us all work harder and monitor how we respond to each other, to the court, and to litigants.

The best way to get to know other attorneys is by joining a committee of our Bar Association. So, if you're not a member, join, select a committee, and participate. You can serve on more than one committee. Committees provide our members with valuable information and opportunities. Part of the value in being a member of the Bar Association of Baltimore City is that your CLEs are free. You do not have to pay for them as you do with other bar associations.

This year you have a strong slate of officers representing you. If you have an idea, a suggestion, or even a concern, please contact me. We are always looking to be better, and we can only be better with your help.

I thank all of you for your continued support in the programs and activities of YOUR Bar Association.

Young Lawyers' Division Update

Dear Summer, we are going to miss you but it's time for us to grow.



Sara El-Sara

First, thank you to James Robinson, the entire YLD Council, and everyone who has contributed and continues to support this wonderful organization. James provided exceptional and outstanding leadership which allowed the YLD to host events and programs as we continued to navigate the constant transitions from full on pandemic mode to re-opening. I am forever grateful to James for his mentorship these past few months and will certainly take him up on his offer for advice moving forward.

Officially, this will be my last year as a young lawyer and while reflecting on what to say at the Annual Meeting and goals for the upcoming year, it struck me that I never expected to be here.

I didn't grow up in Maryland, no one in my family is a lawyer, and I didn't even think about becoming one until halfway through my undergraduate career. I'd hardly heard of Baltimore when I moved here and initially, I was not a

fan. Baltimore reminded me of a bigger, better located, and less southern version of my hometown, Richmond, Virginia. However, 14 years later, I think it's safe to say Charm City officially charmed me and the YLD has been an essential aspect of my life that has resulted in Baltimore becoming my home.

Trying to understand the geography, history, and culture of a new place has always been important to me as has service and giving back to the community. The YLD is instrumental to my feeling connected to Baltimore. We do so much as an organization with a modest budget from CLEs, to happy hour networking events, helping students compete in mock trials, the annual holiday party for children living in shelters – there is truly something in this organization for everyone.

That's not to say we don't have room for improvement and more work to do. During the pandemic, a phenomenal woman attorney, mentor, and trailblazer introduced me to the book, *Finding Justice: A History of Women Lawyers in Maryland since 1642*. The book contains a 96-page list of women who

were admitted to the Maryland Bar from 1902 to 2014. My mentor was admitted in 1978 and is on page 5. My name, Sara Mohamed Samy El-Shall, appears on page 90. It still gives me pause for thought to see my name in print in the publication and provides a glimpse of what it must have been like for our predecessors to fight for real change.

While it is important to continue our traditional staple events, I want to re-mix the "Best of YLD Hits" and I'm asking all of you to help us grow. We need more diversity in YLD leadership. In our continual pursuit to find justice, we must expand our outreach and impact. More involvement from public interest attorneys, law clerks, Legal Aid attorneys, assistant states attorneys, and assistant public defenders would add great value and perspective to the YLD. My personal goal is to meet someone new at every event or program we have this upcoming year and would be thrilled if each of you joined me in this challenge. Obviously, we are a group of volunteers and more than anything I want us to have fun this year and include as many people as possible.

Our go-to events are great, but let's also spice things up a bit. For example, the Life and the Law Committee could host a Bollywood-themed dance class, or the Public Service Committee could partner with organizations we haven't worked with in a while such as CASA Maryland or Tahirih Justice Center. We can be more effective in reaching out to law students, collaborating with their organizational events, and getting them involved earlier. If COVID taught us anything, it's that our time is valuable, and we cannot waste it.

I wish you all a remaining happy, healthy, and joyful summer. For those of you who didn't pick-up on my hopefully subtle Jay-Z nod in the title of this article, let's return from the summer with an "Empire State of Mind." Our city benches proclaim Baltimore is the greatest city in America and I truly believe that the YLD can contribute to that aspiration. There's nothing we can't do. Let's hear it for Baltimore and inspire our community and future leaders to feel brand new.

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OCTOBER 4

Crab Feast

OCTOBER 12

Cabaret & Cabernet

NOVEMBER 7

Supreme Court Admissions

NOVEMBER 18

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NOVEMBER 21

Past President's Luncheon

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The generous support of Sustaining Members of the Bar Association of Baltimore City greatly assists this bar association in fulfilling its mission and achieving further growth and success. The unwavering dedication of these members ensures the BABC will continue its long and distinguished tradition of service to our legal community and the public. If you are interested in becoming a Sustaining Member, please contact Karen Fast at kfast@baltimorebar.org.

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*Presents its
9th Annual Fundraiser & Volunteer Recognition Event*

Cabaret & Cabernet

Featuring Members & Friends of the Bar

Thursday, October 12

6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

*University of Maryland
Francis King Carey School of Law
Westminster Hall • 519 W. Fayette Street
Baltimore, MD 21201*

6:00-6:45 Registration & Cocktail Hour

6:45-7:00 Awards Presentation

7:00-8:00 Cabaret

To register, please visit: www.baltimorebar.org

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Tuesday, November 7

Cost Per Applicant: \$325
Court allows one guest per applicant. Registration fee for guests is \$100.
Optional Lunch: \$20 per person

Registration is Limited to 12 Applicants

Completed applications are due no later than Monday, August 7th. To obtain an application package, email us at info@baltimorebar.org

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You must have been admitted to the practice of law for three years prior to the date of application

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If you have questions or concerns, please call us at 410-539-5936.



The Bar Association of Baltimore City
invites you to our

ANNUAL CRAB FEAST



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BALTIMORE, MD 21224

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4
5:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M.

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