

## **2016 Access to Justice Conference**

Friday, June 24, 2016

### **Panel: “Pursuit for Meaningful Justice for All”**

Presenters: Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman (ret.), Michelle Acosta, Victor Geminiani, Professor Calvin Pang, moderator

Professor Calvin Pang opened the panel discussion with the question: Between today and the conference next year, what are one or two ideas/projects/activities you believe we can advance or accomplish?

Victor Geminiani, Co-Executive Director of Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice, said that there should be systemic advocacy in class actions and with the state legislature. An example is de-monopolizing the legal profession. He explained that the Commission’s Task Force on Paralegals and Other Nonlawyers has taken up the issue. Hawaii Appleseed commissioned a survey that identified gaps in legal representation, which could be filled if paralegals were allowed, under the supervision of lawyers, to provide full representation.

Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman mentioned that another model could be independent practice, like the Washington “low bono” model, where lawyers charge less or use law schools to charge less in areas that people are underrepresented. There should be a focus on areas where people are not represented. He emphasized that there must be a central role by judges in fostering access to justice. He believes that lawyers did not become lawyers to get wealthy but became lawyers to do good deeds. He explained that the judiciary has to set the moral leadership, and the lawyers need to step up and lead the charge.

Michelle Acosta, Executive Director of Volunteer Legal Services of Hawaii, said that there is a need for more pro-bono volunteers. She said there are new tools like the pro-bono online tool that make volunteering easier. The challenge is informing people that the tools exist and getting them to use the new tools. Education and outreach are important and needed.

Some of the tools currently available are the online interactive court forms, which has been available through the state library system. An online video educational series is also available through [www.lawhelp.org/hi](http://www.lawhelp.org/hi).

There is a need for solid advocates in the Hawaii legislature related to issues of affordable housing, economic justice on rents, tax relief for the low-income Hawaii residents. Lawyers could advocate a right to counsel in limited areas and see what happens.

The foster care payment system and the treatment of kids in the mental health system are two areas where a systemic problem exists. Not all issues can be solved by a traditional class action. Lawyers can help to advocate for issues at the legislature.