

2019 Hawai'i Access to Justice Conference

“Expanding Access to Civil Justice”

Friday, June 7, 2019

Summary of the closing plenary<sup>1</sup>

**“Expanding Access to Civil Justice”**

Panel Presenters:

Professor **Calvin Pang**; **Daniel Greenberg**, Special Counsel for Pro Bono Initiatives at Schulte Roth & Zabel in New York City; Dean **Aviam Soifer**; **Robert J. LeClair**, Executive Director, Hawaii Justice Foundation

At the end of the conference, the presenters wanted to end on a high note by focusing on how we could expand access to civil justice by reflecting on ourselves. Professor Calvin Pang began the closing plenary by introducing his boss, Dean Aviam Soifer. Dean Soifer then gave two short remarks about himself (in which he jokingly replied to Professor Pang that he does not like to be referred to as boss) before moving on to Daniel Greenberg.

Greenberg focused on an important trait that seems to be lacking in the world today: empathy. He told a story about budding doctors, who were smart but lacked empathy. The doctor made it his mission to teach them how to be more empathetic towards patients but realized he could not teach it directly. Instead, he decided to show them how to display empathy through curiosity and asking questions. He attempted this on the most difficult patient they had: an old lady. With every question the doctor asked, the patient would give a short reply. However, the doctor persisted on being curious and asking questions about her and was able to discover that she was a survivor of the Titanic. He ended his speech by pointing out that whatever we are doing, we are dealing with people's lives so be empathetic. Law is just a means. We should focus on the people.

Robert LeClair ended the plenary by emphasizing that increasing access to justice is critical both as an ideal and a reality. He suggested that when each of us look back at our legal careers, we will find that the most satisfying things we did involve our efforts to help other people. Every aspect of the access to justice effort is essential, whether the person involved is a senior partner in a major law firm or a front-line legal services attorney. It is critical that each of us respect all aspects of the provision of legal services. It is easy to get caught up in the feeling of competition with each other and with other legal services organizations, but what is necessary is that we remember the clients, not us, are the ones who matter. He also indicated that it is easy to get discouraged in the process of working to increase access to justice, since the number of people in

need keep expanding and there are additional demands on the legal system to solve family and social problems. He suggested that when he gets discouraged, he draws sustenance from the joy of working with others in the legal field who are committed to increasing fairness and justice in our society. He concluded his remarks by thanking all those who attended the conference and who care about justice.

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<sup>1</sup> A draft was prepared by Mary Pascual, summer law clerk, Access to Justice Tech Fellow, Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i, and edited by the presenters.