

On Being a Lighthouse

“Dear Lord Please Be Good to Me the Sea Is So Wide and My Boat Is So Small”

—Children’s Defense Fund

By Ndidi N. Moses

WE OFTEN THINK OF LIGHTHOUSES AS magnificent and commanding structures that provide beacons of light to help people navigate their vessels in challenging circumstances. Lighthouses, however, can also come in the form of organizations, programs, people, and experiences. Throughout my childhood, nonprofit and charitable organizations, with their high-quality programing and dedicated volunteers, served as my lighthouses, helping me maneuver through this vast sea of life, in my very small boat.

My parents immigrated to the United States when I was an infant. To make the trip to America, they had to sell almost all of their worldly possessions. When my family arrived on United States’ soil, they had one suitcase, a couple of dollars, and faith that their hard work would ensure their children lived better lives. My parents came to the United States for my mother to attend graduate school for pharmacy and public health. My father also continued his studies, completing his bachelors and juris doctorate degrees. With three small children, demanding graduate programs, and very little income, my parents went to school, worked, and tried to ensure their children were successful and not statistics.

While my family held these high hopes, our surrounding inner city environment had other plans. Crime was rampant, and we were on many occasions the victims of crime in our neighborhood, from muggings to burglaries. As young children, my siblings and I witnessed assaults, stabings, child abductions, and other violent

crimes. My large extended family ensured that we were, for the most part, protected from the dangerous environmental factors in our community that sought to hurt us. Our extended family also helped to ensure that we were able to rebuild after a tragedy. But, when the seas were too rough for our boats, we had to depend on lighthouses to find our way during difficult times.

I can’t recall the organizations or all of the social programs that assisted us as children. I can’t recall the exact subject matter of the enrichment programs we enrolled in, or what they specifically taught us. I can only remember, with extreme clarity, the faces of the people who volunteered in those programs. I remember their faces vividly—kind eyes, freckled noses, genuine smiles, and warm hugs. If I close my eyes, I can sometimes hear their voices, reassuring me, encouraging me, inspiring me, and letting me know anything was possible. I know from my mother that most of the volunteers were community members, college and graduate students, who dedicated their free time to work at summer camps, afterschool programs, and community centers to provide enrichment activities to inner city children.

While the enrichment programs kept my siblings and me off the streets and helped bridge educational gaps, it was those who volunteered for the programs who changed our lives. The volunteers who participated in the programs gave us faith that even though the sea was vast, there were lighthouses along the way that would help us find our way. The volun-



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teers taught me the importance of mentoring and giving back to my community. They taught me the value and importance of being a beacon of light for others.

Recognizing the importance of being a lighthouse, I have dedicated my career to public service and giving back to others. I have also made it a point to volunteer with organizations that share these same values. One organization that, for well over 140 years, has served as a lighthouse for the Connecticut legal community, is the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA). The CBA is dedicated to removing barriers of entry to the legal profession and creating pathways to justice and success. The CBA also helps those members of our community lost in the legal storms of life by working diligently to support and organize pro bono programs across the state and to develop enrichment programs for children and adults of all ages. I have volunteered to help in many of these programs over the course of my career, repaying a small por-

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Court Decisions (Continued from page 41)

cient to impose an obligation on the attorney to comply with the statute.

There is no procedure for the “termination” of a proceeding for reinstatement to the Connecticut bar, or for the return of the \$1,000 fee to apply for reinstatement. An applicant’s only recourse is to withdraw the application while forfeiting the fee. *Disciplinary Counsel v. Spadoni*, 67 CLR 543 (Sheridan, David M., J.).

Trade Regulation

A CUTPA claim may be based on a violation of Connecticut’s Corrupt Organizations and Racketeering Activity Act (CORA), even though CORA does not itself authorize a private cause of action. *Fleming v. Bemer*, 67 CLR 593 (Bellis, Barbara N., J.). This opinion holds that allegations that the defendant engaged in a conspiracy to sexually traffic vulnerable individuals, including the plaintiff, in violation of CORA, are sufficient to state a claim for damages in a civil action brought pursuant to CUTPA.

A prevailing mortgagee forced to prosecute a foreclosure counterclaim to a debtor’s preemptive CUTPA complaint is entitled under the mortgage’s fee-recovery clause to recover the fees incurred both to prosecute the foreclosure counterclaim and the CUTPA complaint. *Wahba v. JP Morgan Chase Bank, N.A.*, 67 CLR 462 (Povodator, Kenneth B., J.T.R.). The opinion reasons that the defense of the CUTPA claim was necessary in order to enforce the mortgage note, and the issues involved in defending the note were intertwined with those involved in prosecuting the foreclosure counterclaim.

Unemployment Compensation

Mendes v. Administrator, Unemployment Compensation Act, 67 CLR 574 (Blue, Jon C., J.T.R.), holds that an unemployment compensation appeals referee’s reliance on the mail box rule to establish a rebut-

table presumption that an applicant had received a hearing notice requires proof of the reliability of the agency’s normal procedures for preparing and delivering such notices to the US Postal Service.

Workers’ Compensation Law

Malone v. 390 Capitol Avenue, 67 CLR 461 (Moukawsher, Thomas G., J.), holds that the term “corporation” as used in the provision of the Workers’ Compensation Statute that extends to “construction design professionals” immunity from liability for construction site injuries, with “construction design professional” defined as licensed architects and engineers and “any corporation” licensed to provide such services, Conn. Gen. Stat. § 31-293(c), does not include *limited liability companies*. Rather, the statutory immunity extends only to traditional corporations. This opinion holds that while a design professional who is a member of an LLC is exempt under the statute from common-law liability for injuries to insured construction site workers, the LLC itself is not. ■

Young Lawyers (Continued from page 43)

it is of increasing importance that we participate in bar association activities where we can get to know our colleagues, as familiarity encourages collegiality. Skip the online CLE and drive to the seminar. Join a section and come out to a meeting. Attend the YLS Charity Karaoke next year so that you may deafen your colleagues and teach them to appreciate professionally recorded music. I do not think it some great coincidence that bar associations across the nation have had diminishing ranks at the same time as professionalism is bemoaned as being lost. If young lawyers today wish to build a positive professional community for the future, I urge them to get involved with the CBA Young Lawyers Section, whether by simply showing up for a social event or joining the executive committee and developing the future of the bar. ■

Notes

1. https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2019/02/27/accused-witness-tampering-matt-gaetz-apologizes-deletes-tweet-insists-he-wasnt-threatening-cohen/?utm_term=.2b022def32ab
2. <https://hbr.org/2017/04/a-new-more-rigorous-study-confirms-the-more-you-use-facebook-the-worse-you-feel>; <https://www.newyorker.com/tech/annals-of-technology/how-facebook-makes-us-unhappy>

Pro Bono (Continued from page 37)

tion of my debt to society by serving as a beacon of light to people in need.

If you want to change the trajectory of a person’s life forever, if you want to become a beacon of light to guide people out of the legal storms they are facing, you can volunteer to become a lighthouse by joining the CBA’s Pro Bono Committee. Just contact the CBA at (860)469-2221 or visit ctbar.org/sectionsandcommittees to find out more information. ■

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