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## ALL BY MYSELF: THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF SOLO PRACTICE

*by Michael D. White*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Erik B. Feingold

March 8 marked International Women's Day. This is a yearly event commemorating the movement for women's rights. It features global gatherings, conferences, awards, festivals and educational opportunities. Two days after International Women's Day, I had the honor of hearing **State Senator Hannah-Beth Jackson** speak at an event sponsored by the Women Lawyers of Ventura County. In addition to marking the occasion of International Women's Day, Ms. Jackson spoke about a very significant law she authored, which took effect Jan. 1 of last year, the "California Fair Pay Act," (SB 358). The Act amended Labor Code section 1197.5, the California statute prohibiting wage discrimination. Although that law has been on the books since 1949, it has rarely been used because its language made it difficult to establish a successful claim in light of the existing burdens of proof and limitations on discovery. The legislative history behind SB 358 reveals several shameful statistics about wage discrimination in California:

- As recently as 2014, the gender wage gap in California stood at sixteen cents on the dollar, meaning that a woman working full time year-round earned an average of 84 cents to every dollar a man earned;
- The gender wage gap is far worse for women of color. Latina women in California make only 44 cents for every dollar a white male makes, rendering California the home of the biggest gap for Latina women *in the nation*;
- Collectively, women working full time in California lose approximately \$33,650,294,544 each year due to the gender wage gap; and
- The wage gap contributes to a higher statewide poverty rate among women, most significantly affecting women of color and single women living with children.

(2015 Cal. Leg. Serv. Ch. 546 (Analysis of S.B. 358, Oct. 6, 2015).)

SB 358 cured problematic language in the statute, enhanced wage discrimination claimants' discovery rights, and effectively made such claims "summary judgment proof."

The significant changes to Labor Code section 1197.5 are:

- Elimination of the requirement that the jobs that are compared must be located at the same establishment;
- Replacement of a comparison of "equal" work with a comparison of "substantially similar" work;
- Increased difficulty for employers to justify unequal pay between men and women;
- Added express anti-retaliation protections for workers who assist employees with bringing claims under the Act; and
- Assurance that an employer cannot prohibit workers from disclosing their wages, discussing the wages of others, or inquiring about others' wages, enabling

employees to coordinate with each other for the purpose of determining a factual basis for an equal pay claim.

Since passage of the Act, several lawsuits have been filed litigating the new law, including many with claims under the Private Attorneys General Act using the Act as the predicate Labor Code violation. Because the law is so new, there have been no published decisions to date, but there will be in short order. The Act is a valuable weapon in an employment litigator's arsenal to right what has been a systemic wrong causing too much harm for far too long in California.

*Erik B. Feingold is a litigator with Myers, Widders, Gibson, Jones & Feingold in Ventura.*

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# ALL BY MYSELF: THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF SOLO PRACTICE

by Michael D. White

Such legal luminaries as John Adams, John Marshall, William Brennan and Hugo Black did it at various times during their legal careers. So did Abraham Lincoln, who once advised a young attorney to “Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other one thing.”

The “it” is serving as a solo practitioner, the career path for, according to the American Bar Association, some 49 percent of American lawyers. Solo practice can provide immense satisfaction, but also drain the resolution to succeed that set them off on their solo quest for professional satisfaction.

## Why Go Solo?

A common path for solos is to work for a large firm and then gradually move to a small or medium-sized firm before going it alone for a variety of reasons, from downsizing to the shock of unfulfilled expectations.

“When I passed the bar, I was excited to be hired at the insurance defense firm that I clerked at while awaiting bar results,” recalls Westlake Village family law attorney Kathy G. Neumann, who’s been in solo practice for nearly thirteen years. “Three weeks after I was hired, the partnership imploded, so I, along with other more experienced attorneys, was on my own.”

A few months later, Neumann was hired at another insurance defense firm, but within one-and-a-half years, the staff was eliminated, one by one. “I worked at another firm for five-and-a-half years as of counsel, but it too suffered growing pains, and eventually unraveled.”

Bankruptcy attorney Steven R. Fox’s path was blazed by the experience of seeing his expectations of legal professionalism sorely bruised. “When I started practicing, jobs were plentiful for young lawyers,” he says. “I had a clerkship with a federal bankruptcy judge and I obtained a job at a small downtown bankruptcy firm. I figured I would work for firms in downtown L.A. all my life. I even thought about being a partner in the firm I was at, but I watched the firm and how it worked.”

What Fox, who practices in Tarzana, saw was “a lot of warts, a lot of problems in

how the firm operated. There were many inefficiencies. The people there were not really motivated to work hard.”

But what pushed Fox over the edge to go solo was learning his firm had an attorney who had committed “serious errors of judgment and it was necessary for the good attorneys to leave the firm.”

Litigator Mark S. Shipow spent the first 28 years of his legal career in medium- and large-sized law firms before burnout led to his decision to go into solo practice. The “firm culture,” he says, “had changed in ways that I didn’t really like, and my kids were older and needed less financial support from me. I explored a few options, including consulting, becoming a judge, becoming a mediator.”

In the interim, Shipow loosened his relationship with the firm. He arranged to work on a contract basis and set up his own practice. That evolved to his becoming a solo practitioner “doing the same type of business litigation I had done my entire career.”

## Advantages

What’s the upside of going solo? “Being able to maintain a flexible schedule, not having to report to others, more relaxed atmosphere, better able to balance work and private life,” says Shipow, a check in the plus column seconded by tax attorney and certified public accountant Hratch J. Karakachian.

A solo practice, Karakachian says, offers “flexibility both in terms of the daily work schedule and running the operation. Such things as the decision to take on or not take on certain clients,” an issue that sometimes leads to conflict in a highly-structured firm environment.

“I am my own boss,” says Fox. “The office has the feel of a classic small law firm, something I like. Attorneys who meet me at my office like the feel and the vibe. The office is organized, efficient and quiet. You can think. I turn away most of the potential calls to my office as they do not fit the model of what I want in clients and/or in cases.”

“I work hard and reap the benefits,” says Neumann. “I can decide which clients I

wish to accept and can go the extra mile when needed, even if the client cannot pay for all of the fees. I can schedule my time off at my discretion.”

And, she adds, “job security...of sorts.”

## Downside

“Job security...of sorts”?

“As an employee, you’re paid a salary, so you have consistent income, whether the client has paid or not,” says Neumann. “As a solo, your receivables are inconsistent, so you must act as your own collection department.”

Freedom has both its benefits and its drawbacks, at least partially borne out by a 2015 analysis for *CNN* and *Business Insider* conducted by the University of Tennessee, which estimated that attorneys working in solo practice earn an average of slightly less than \$50,000 per year.

Throw into the mix “an unpredictable workload, a lack of interaction with others, a lack of being part of a team, and having to do everything from research, drafting, and administration yourself,” says Shipow, as well as “the need to be a self-starter and the fact that it’s too easy to get distracted.”

Also, adds Karakachian, “the collegiality is missing. You don’t have an equal to run things by and get insights and feedback.”

Flying solo also makes it “harder to have good backup,” says Fox. “You always have to worry about cases. The last time I went on vacation and did not worry about the clients and cases was probably in 1993 when I had no access to any phones for about five days. Another attorney covered for me.”

Another drawback is that many solo attorneys spend between 25 to 50 percent of their time on non-practice, routine business maintenance functions such as filing and basic drafting to exhibit preparation. Affording a full-time paralegal or assistant is beyond the means of many solos. So how does a solo practitioner meld the day-to-day obligations of running a business with practicing law?

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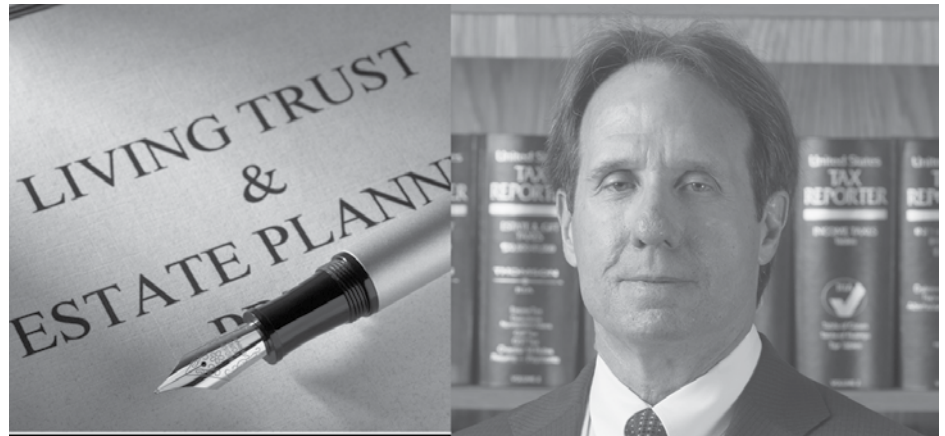
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## ALL BY MYSELF: THE AGONY AND ECSTASY OF SOLO PRACTICE

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“That’s a really tough part of the law [practice] and, frankly, a lot, or perhaps most, lawyers are not good at running a business,” says Fox. “They are good at being lawyers. These are two really different skills. I have represented lawyers and law firms in bankruptcy cases and these cases are revealing because I see really good lawyers who often are really bad businesspeople.”

Shipow maintains a delicate balance, handling the inevitable business-side issues “as they come up by meshing them with other daily activities. I try not to let things like billing, record-keeping and filing back up. With a flexible schedule, I can run the business in off hours, or practice law off hours, as the need and schedule dictate.”

**Marketing the Solo Practice**

Without the support staff and logistical wherewithal available to larger firms, marketing a solo practice can be a challenge. Shipow’s comparatively flexible schedule allows some time to be creative in how he markets his practice.

He relies on “word of mouth through colleagues and clients from my 35 years

of practice and through a couple of networking groups,” he says. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter, Shipow feels, “can be distracting,” with precious time spent having to filter content.

On the other hand, Neumann relies on a combination of “networking, a website, and good relationships with friends, family and former clients” to market her practice.

Fox’s marketing strategy is based on lesson learned from his physician father “that where you treat people with integrity, respect and courtesy, and you help them, people will develop confidence in you and send you potential work. His medical practice was built 100 percent on handling cases for other doctors who did not want the difficult medical problems. He returned each patient when the patient was well again.”

“The business model,” Fox says, “requires integrity and respect in order to succeed. My primary source of business is other attorneys who believe I will do good work for their clients and only recommend a bankruptcy filing if that is the best solution.”

**Preparing for Disaster**

The enjoyment of total control of one’s own solo operation is tempered for the need to prepare for disasters – professional, personal or natural. One online authority recommends that solos “should keep clear records about the mundane,” everything from passwords and contact information to the “critical,” such as case status, court dates and billing data.

Preparation for some runs from, in Neumann’s case, the simple and existential — “a business line of credit, and fingers crossed” — to the moderately sophisticated and refined.

Disaster prep, says Shipow, “is probably my weakest link. I have malpractice insurance, computer backup, and my personal life is in pretty good order.”

“Thorough caseload management and focus on the essentials,” Shipow says, is also key. “I try to stay as organized as possible, so things don’t fall through the cracks. I keep a list of cases and what needs to be done on a weekly basis. I only take cases that are

*Continued on page 8*

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*Continued from page 7*

within my areas of expertise. Occasionally I get outside help for specific projects.”

On the business side, Fox maintains his electronic data and information on multiple offsite backups and sits on a cash reserve with a commitment to not run up debt. “On the personal side, I have one son left at home and he is close to going to college,” he says. “My wife is very understanding of solo practice and its demands. I think the preparation on the personal side is that my family is supportive and understanding.”

### **The Future of the Solo Practice**

Faced with the proliferation of do-it-yourself legal websites, the transformation in how the law is practiced, and the increasingly complicated challenges facing any small business owner, solo practitioners are compelled to become creative in crafting the tools needed to deliver value to clients in the future.

“I expect that being a solo practitioner will always continue to be an option,” says Neumann. “Because overhead costs are lower for a solo than for a firm, quality legal work can save a client a substantial amount on fees. Many clients don’t care about having a firm because their relationship is with their attorney. And now a website is often the face of the firm, rather than having the name of a law firm on a building.”

Solo practice isn’t going away, “nor should it,” says Shipow. “Sole practitioners provide a valuable service for clients that can’t afford a large firm, or don’t want to be lost in the shuffle of large firm clients.” In addition, “in this era of more legal specialization, good sole practitioners who focus on a particular area can provide good service to clients.”

“Sole practitioners who handle everything are more problematic, and I think it will be increasingly difficult for them to survive,” says Shipow, voicing an opinion shared by Karakachian, who observes that, “a solo practice will be viable with a lawyer who has a highly specialized practice.”

“Big firms,” says Fox, “can do great work, some very sophisticated work, that few solo practitioners can do. At the same time, though, they are very expensive. Over the years, I have banded with other solo practitioners to essentially replace the need for a large firm because each of us has the

skills the client needs and our charges will be a third to a half the charges the big firms charge.”

Fox says solos “will offer the middle class and the small businesses legal work which they cannot afford to purchase from the large firms and which these people know should not be purchased on the Internet.”

### **When All Is Said and Done**

So would it be wise to recommend that a newly-minted, bright-eyed law school grad hang out their own shingle? The answer by general acclamation: no...and a very qualified yes.

To Karakachian, the idea of embarking on a solo practice comes down to a simple and straightforward, “Only as an absolute last resort.”

“Not if it can be avoided,” says Shipow. “I believe firms provide invaluable training for new attorneys, in terms of how to practice law, working with and supervising others, marketing and the business of running a practice. I always recommend to new attorneys that they make every effort to get

into a firm environment for at least a few years.”

Fox would not recommend it because “having some time in another firm allows you to watch how it operates, its mistakes, its warts and its good things. You get to develop ideas about what you would want your firm to be, its feel and vibe, and the types of clients it represents.”

“Part of the problem,” says Neumann, is that law students “learn to think like lawyers in law school, but we don’t learn to practice law there. I think it’s valuable to have an experienced attorney teach you procedures and answer questions.”

The practice of law, she says, “has a very steep and time-intensive learning curve, so it’s very time consuming to learn how to practice law. Also, it’s challenging to be a solo and the sole source of income for a family, especially at first.”

*Michael White is a member of the San Fernando Valley Bar Association. Reprinted with the permission of the SFVBA and Liz Post, Executive Director.*

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## 44TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT WOMAN OF THE YEAR

by *Rabiah Rahman*



On March 6, Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin honored Judge **Michele Castillo** as the 2017 California State Assembly Woman of the Year for the 44th District. The award was established in 1987 to commemorate Women’s History Month. Held annually, the Women of the Year ceremony celebrates California’s extraordinary women and is

a Capitol tradition to salute community service. Assemblymember Irwin presented Judge Castillo with the award at a formal ceremony on the floor of the California State Assembly and hosted a reception at her district office in Camarillo.

Governor Jerry Brown appointed Judge Castillo to the bench on June 28, 2016. Before being appointed, Judge Castillo served as a Ventura County Superior Court Commissioner and worked as a Deputy Public Defender in Ventura County since 2005 and Fresno County from 2003 - 2005.


“Judge Castillo has led an exceptional law career, dedicating herself to improving her community and demonstrating a commitment to public service, which makes her an outstanding representative for the 44th District for the 2017 Woman of the Year,” said Assemblymember Irwin. “I know that she will continue to be a role model for others and continue to play a vital role in our community.”

Assemblymember Irwin acknowledged the need for young people to see themselves reflected in leadership positions and the judiciary. Her appointment reflects that, even at a young age, achieving one’s professional goals is possible. Judge Castillo’s passion for leadership and the fair administration of justice is displayed through her dedication to the legal profession, civility in the courtroom, and mentorship of young and aspiring attorneys. Judge Castillo continues to make Ventura County proud.

To learn more about the accomplishments of Judge Castillo, you can find a full profile on Her Honor in the Feb. 2015 issue of Citations.




*Rabiah Rahman* is an associate at Strauss & Strauss, APC and a member of the Citations Editorial Board.



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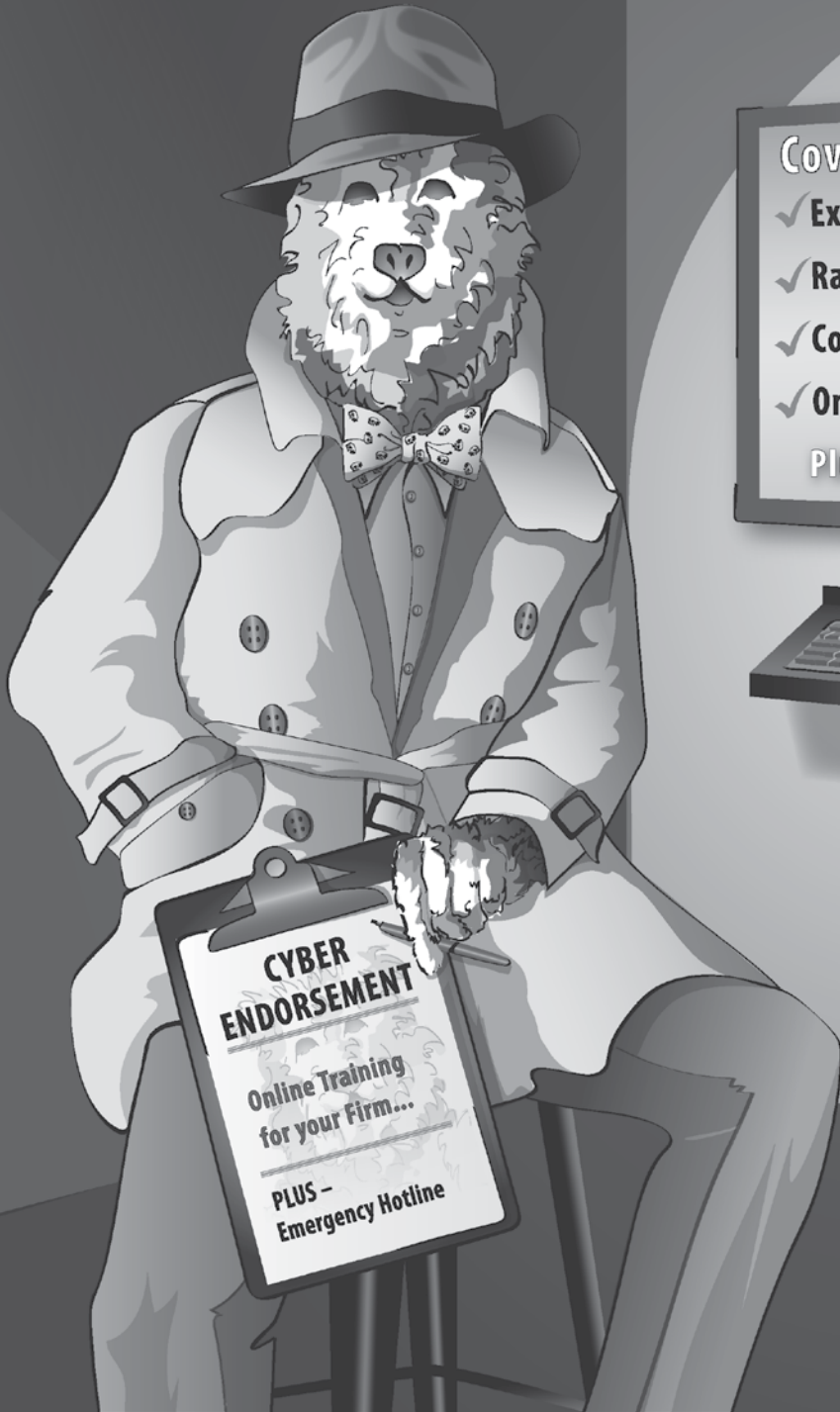


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## BARRISTERS CORNER

*by Katie Becker*

The Barristers are excited to bring another informative MCLE series to you this year, as part of our "Meet the Bench" series. This year's first presentation will be given by the Honorable **Kevin DeNoce**, April 20 at 12 pm, in courtroom 43 of the Ventura Courthouse. He will be discussing civil pre-trial and trial procedures. The event is open to all attorneys, judges and law students. \$25 for barristers, \$35 for other VCBA members, free for law students. Please join us!

We are also pleased and proud to announce a new chapter of collaboration with the Ventura County Trial Lawyers Association (VCTLA). VCTLA is an association of local trial attorneys who are committed to bettering the legal justice system, the lawyers who serve in it and the community it serves. VCTLA has graciously invited all qualified VCBA Barristers to attend a number of its events this year – FOR FREE! Please watch for VCTLA advertisements for such events. Barristers must still register for programs ([www.vctla.org](http://www.vctla.org)), but upon registering as a Barrister, they will be admitted free of charge.

The Barristers would like to urge our fellow lawyers, both new and seasoned, to please volunteer at Ventura County Legal Aid. Our organization is committed to having at least one board member at each clinic night, and we hope that you will all join us at some point. Volunteering at Legal Aid is a wonderful way to gain experience as a new lawyer. VCLA is also inviting law students to attend and volunteer. A law student will be paired with a lawyer, so that they can gain valuable experience while helping the public. Please see [www.vclegalaid.org](http://www.vclegalaid.org) for more information.

The Ventura County Barristers is a section of the Ventura County Bar Association. Membership is automatic and free if you are a VCBA member. If you are under 36 or have been practicing law for seven years or less, you are a Barrister! For more info on Barristers events, see our Facebook page, or email President, **Joshua Hopstone**, at [jhopstone@fcoplaw.com](mailto:jhopstone@fcoplaw.com).



*Katie Becker is a partner at Schuck, Becker & Dehesa, LLP, and a member of many boards. She is a trusts, probate and estate planning lawyer in Santa Paula.*



## GET OUT

by Bill Paterson

In "Get Out," writer/ director Jordan Peele has fashioned a film that owes equal inspiration to "Guess Who's Coming To Diner" and "The Shining." The result is a spectacularly inventive, edge-of-your-seat thriller.

Chris (Daniel Kaluuya) is an African-American photographer whose white girlfriend Rose (Allison Willows) has scheduled them for a visit to her parents' lakeside home. Chris asks the obvious question – "Do they know I'm black?" "No problem," says Rose, as her folks have no racial hang-ups. Chris has his doubts, but they pack the car and set off. But something happens on the way that sets the tone for both the film's racial tension and sense of vague foreboding.

True to Rose's assurances, her parents are the essence of warm hosts. Her dad (Bradley Whitford) greets Chris with a friendly hug and enthuses as to how he wished he could have voted for Obama a third time. He lays it on thick to the eye-rolling distress of his wife (Catherine Keener). As the family gathers around the dinner table that night, there is more easy jocularity, except for the edginess that Rose's obnoxious brother (Caleb Landry Jones) brings to the occasion. Chris acts the part of the good sport, but it is going to be a long weekend.

Then there is the family's black housekeeping staff. There is something going on with them, but Chris can't put his finger on it. The maid (Betty Gabriel) has the chilly and detached personality of a Stepford wife and the groundskeeper (Lakeith Jones) may sport a broad smile but his manner has an underlying sense of suppressed malice. Chris finds both them unnerving.

The weekend gets even longer when Rose's parents throw a garden party for a group of old friends. An elderly golfer tells Chris how much he admires Tiger Woods and it goes downhill from there, with a host of other paternalistic and not so paternalistic comments. Unthinkingly or intentionally, the crowd is not going to let Chris forget he is black.

The weekend is a claustrophobic drag, but Chris soldiers on. Then he makes an unsettling discovery, which convinces him that he and Rose need to leave. She is reluctant but they pack up and head down the stairs. It is at this point that "Get Out" goes into full thriller overdrive. I will say no more except to say that you are in for a wild ride.


"Get Out" is a poster child for what can be done with a limited budget and a killer script. Here are just a few of the creative touches that make this film such a great viewing experience:

- Creative set-ups whose significance only becomes apparent in retrospect. While I wish I could describe them in loving detail, it would be like giving away the ending of "The Sixth Sense."
- The artful way Peele has interwoven the perennial issue of race into a film genre where you would least expect it and without ever belaboring the fact.
- Walter (Marcus Henderson) as Chris's best friend. A TSA officer who envisions himself as the cutting edge of law enforcement, Walter is a loquacious soul with profane and colorful opinion on almost every aspect of life. One of the year's great comic performances.

There is more, much more, in store for you in one of the most entertaining films you will see this year. Just a gentle nudge – DO NOT MISS IT!


*Bill Paterson is a retired partner from Ferguson Case Orr Paterson.*

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## NEED SOMETHING TO READ?

by Wendy Lascher

When lawyers write fiction involving legal documents or proceedings, they walk a fine line between providing too much detail for lay readers, and annoying lawyers who read their books by being unrealistic about what really happens in the legal system. I can suspend disbelief to some extent, but I can't bring myself to enjoy books such as those written by John Grisham because they offer such a superficial, unrealistic view of the law.

Happily, there are alternatives. Santa Monica attorney Charles Rosenberg's *Write to Die* (Thomas & Mercer 2016) is one. A big firm partner handling a film studio's copyright litigation discovers the studio's general counsel dead at his desk. The partner comes close to firing a brash young associate who lies to him in the hope of figuring out where crucial evidence went. The murderer, of course, turns out to be someone you'd least expect. The story is gripping, yet Rosenberg skillfully weaves in the nuances of seeking an injunction and challenging expert testimony. The direct and cross-examination that Rosenberg incorporates helps tell the story at the same time it illustrates the way lawyers should, but rarely do, question witnesses. Like Rosenberg's previous mysteries, *Death on a High Floor* and *Long Knives*, *Write to Die* is well worth taking on a vacation weekend.

I was surprised to learn that my Louisiana appellate lawyer friend Michael Rubin had written a mystery novel. *The Cottoncrest Curse* (Louisiana State University Press 2014) visits the bayou country of the post-Civil War south from the perspective of an itinerant Jewish peddler unfairly suspected of a ghastly crime. The book moves easily from present to past and back to the present as it exposes the effect of race discrimination on the family of a Civil War hero. A slapstick-like deputy sheriff provides comic relief to a frightening but inspiring story about saving the part of a legacy that really matters.

Laurence Leamer is a journalist, not a lawyer; and *The Price of Justice: A True Story of Greed and Corruption* (Henry Holt 2013) is not Leamer's most recent book, but it's well worth discovering. This is a true, and disheartening, story about how

West Virginia executive Don Blankenship destroyed the lives of West Virginians and manipulated the West Virginia Supreme Court in the name of the coal industry. The litigation reached the United States Supreme Court in *Caperton v. A.T. Massey Coal Co., Inc.* (2009) 556 U.S. 868, 173 L.Ed.2d 1208, 129 S.Ct. 2252, but Leamer focuses more on what happened before and after that decision, which was especially fascinating to me because I wrote an amicus brief in *Caperton*. I doubt that Leamer set out to teach trial lawyers how to shape a case, root out facts, prepare witnesses or deal with disappointment, but *The Price of Justice* offers some excellent lessons.



*Wendy Lascher is an appellate lawyer at Ferguson Case Orr Paterson, LLP. She is the editor of CITATIONS.*

## JUDGE CURTIS MEMORIAL

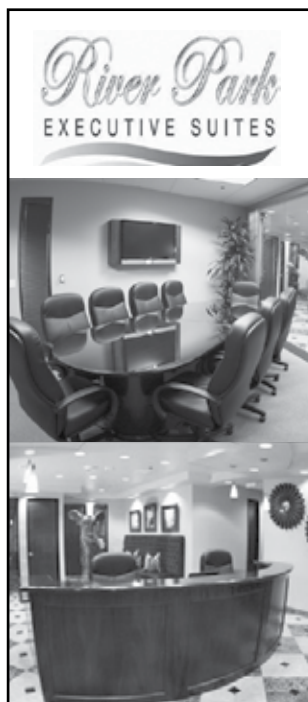
Several members of VCBA have asked CITATIONS to announce that a memorial service will be held Saturday, April 29, at 10:00 a.m. at the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara, 1535 Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara.

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## Governor Brown's Judicial Appointment Data from 2011-2016

by *Cassandra Wolf*

Per Senate Bills 56 and 182, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. released demographic data for judicial applicants and appointees in California. His appointments over the past five years have included a series of "firsts" in various courts, including Latina, Latino, African-American, Native American, South Asian American, and openly lesbian and gay judges and justices. Governor Brown appointed the first Hmong-American judge in the United States, the first American Muslim judge in California and **Ferdinand P. (Dino) Inumerable** became Ventura County's first Asian-American judge.

The names, categories and locations are available at <https://tinyurl.com/kkb6m5l>.

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## BOOK SALE

By *Dolly M. Knight*

The Ventura County Law Library invites you to a book sale, open house, and lecture event to raise funds for the Friends of the Ventura County Law Library, a 501(c)(3) organization.

Visit us Friday, May 5, from 2 to 4 pm for the book sale and open house, and stay with us from 4 to 5 pm for a class on The Basics of Judgment Enforcement taught by certified MCLE provider Gretchen Lichtenberger.

The class is free to attend and eligible for CLE credit. A certificate for CLE credit will cost \$25, with proceeds going directly to the Friends of the Ventura County Law Library.

The Law Library has received a significant number of donated treatises and practice guides. A complete list of books on offer is available at this link: [goo.gl/s1T8xy](http://goo.gl/s1T8xy).

We will not be able to reserve books ahead of time unless the buyer wishes to pay for them in advance.

Also available at the open house will be a tour of the Law Library's expanded Lexis Advance subscription, which includes special packages on immigration and bankruptcy, as well as information on the Law Library's other electronic resources.

Light refreshments will be served. Please contact Dolly Knight, the Law Library Director, with questions at [dollym@vencolawlib.org](mailto:dollym@vencolawlib.org) or 642-8982.

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# Exec's Dot...Dot...Dot...

by Steve Henderson, M.A., CAE



Welcome son number three! Attorneys **Jenna** and **Michael Strauss** are thrilled to announce the arrival on St. Patrick's Day of Samuel Anthony, weighing-in at seven pounds, six ounces and totaling 20.02 inches in length. I fully suspect grandpa **Tony Strauss** is very much pleased also ...



It's contagious out there – **Sasha Collins** of Staker Law gave birth to Nadia Lenae on Feb. 21, and the little tyke weighed seven pounds, six ounces...



Just in case you practice in Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara Presiding Judge **Patricia Kelly** announced in March the selection of **Von Deroian** as the newest Superior Court Commissioner. A 2006 graduate of the SB College of Law, she was plucked from the District Attorney's office...

During a technological refit of his courtroom a dozen or so years ago, U.S. District Judge Algenon Marbley was told there were a number of options available to judges to mask sidebar conversations with attorneys so jurors couldn't overhear. Judge Marbley chose the sounds of jazz trumpeter Miles Davis to float through the courtroom in the federal courthouse. Others on the sidebar playlist include guitarist Wes Montgomery,



singer and pianist Diana Krall and trumpeter Roy Hargrove... The California Legislative Women's Caucus once again sponsored the annual Woman of the Year celebration at the State Capitol, as part of Women's History Month. Assemblymember Jacqui Irwin (D-Thousand Oaks) recognized the Honorable **Michele Castillo** as the 2017 Woman of the Year for the 44th Assembly District...

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**Diana Lytel** for being honored by the nation's preeminent regional defense organization, the Association of Southern California Defense Counsel, with the President's Award. The ASCDC chose Diana for this award in recognition for her years of service and for all she has done as a board member of the organization...



Court of Appeal Justice **Marty Tangeman** is a seasoned cyclist and frequently hits the road on Saturday mornings with other jurists and attorneys. Here he is with Judge **Mark Borrell** and bar President **Erik Feingold**. Want to keep up with him? Lob him an email at [Martin.Tangeman@jud.ca.gov](mailto:Martin.Tangeman@jud.ca.gov)...

Need a clerk for the summer months? I have the resume of a 1L who'd like to be in the East County but recognizes beggars cannot be choosers. She has an undergrad degree from Northeastern in Criminology and has law office experience. [steve@vcba.org](mailto:steve@vcba.org)... Job opportunity –Beach Cowdrey Owen, LLP seeks an experienced litigation attorney with a focus on defending healthcare providers and human service providers. Applicants must have case-handling experience, including independently handling depositions, document-intensive discovery, dispositive motions and trial preparation. Email and writing sample to [wendy@beachcowdrey.com](mailto:wendy@beachcowdrey.com)...



Who's the Starting Official for the 34th Annual Law Day 5K? Race Director **Joe Strohm** scored Deputy District Attorney and Ventura Mayor **Erik Nasarenko**...

Interesting - The Assembly Committee on Judiciary, in a letter dated March 2 to Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, states that "Anxiety over the California bar exam discourages applicants from sitting in California for the exam." Because of that, in addition to a few other factors, "We respectfully request that the California Supreme Court rely on its inherent authority to regulate admission to the practice of law in the state and temporarily reduce the cut score for passing the California bar exam while research by the California State Bar and the Committee on Bar Examiners is pending..."

Some CLEs to consider this month: Women Lawyers on the 7th; Family Law on the 12th; Inn of Court on the 13th; Barristers on the 20th; Estate Planning and Probate on the 27th and CPA Law Society on the 28th...

*Steve Henderson has been the executive director and chief executive officer of the bar association and its affiliated organizations since November 1990. His perfect March Madness bracket scored him a million dollars a year for life from Warren Buffett. For alternative facts, Henderson may be reached at [steve@vcba.org](mailto:steve@vcba.org), FB, LinkedIn, Twitter at [stevehendo1](https://twitter.com/stevehendo1), Instagram at [steve\\_hendo](https://www.instagram.com/steve_hendo), or better yet, 650.7599.*



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