

# What a Year: Looking Back to Look Forward



By Alainna R. Mire

**F**or this message — my final one as Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) president — I want to take a look back before I look forward. When I served as LSBA secretary, I wrote the following message in October 2015. It is still relevant today.

*While at a festival with friends, we started to reminisce about our childhoods. This started while at a lounge that served s'mores. While two of us just thought it was neat, our other friend was in heaven. He explained there was a technique to roasting the perfect marshmallow and a certain way to "make" your s'more. Apparently, as a child, someone would make a wood fire in the backyard so they could roast marshmallows and wieners.*

*After a good dose of laughter, we decided we wanted to experience this now as adults. We are planning an evening that will include roasting marshmallows for s'mores, Frito pies and hot dogs. Because he is our friend, we want to recreate and experience something that was such a positive experience in his life.*

*The idea of experiencing things as others do or learning about them is what it means to learn about and embrace diversity. Each person has different life experiences that impact who he or she becomes as an adult. These life experiences shape one's core values and beliefs. I am very fortunate to have a diverse family that is open and tolerant towards others. Not everyone is as open-minded and accepting. Some younger adults may think we already live in a society that is accepting of diverse people and cultures, yet older adults may not see it the same way. My parents lived through the civil rights movement as did the parents of others my age. My childhood was more open because of the movement experienced*

*by my parents. My friends are family by choice so we embrace each other as I was taught to embrace people from different backgrounds and socioeconomic status.*

Now, as I near the end of my term as president, I began to think of that message due to the current state of the world today. Instead of embracing diversity in all respects, we appeared to have retreated into ourselves and blamed it on any number of factors, such as political party, gender, place of birth, ethnicity and even socioeconomic status.

But there is a positive. I had the opportunity to speak at the Investiture of Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer on Jan. 7, 2021, the day after what I believe was an attack on democracy and the three branches of government. The significance of Jan. 6, 2021, stood in stark contrast to the celebration I was attending in honor of Chief Justice Weimer. All three branches of Louisiana government were represented during the ceremony, something you often don't see.

So, where have we been this year? It is very much an understatement to simply say this past year was "challenging." It was definitely that, but there were some bright moments, too.

As mentioned above, we celebrated the outgoing and incoming leadership of our Louisiana Supreme Court, as well as installing our two newest Justices. (Read the profiles of Justice Jay B. McCallum and Justice Piper D. Griffin in this issue of the *Journal*.)

Also this past year, we were able to make progress with our grand themes of diversity and, particularly, access to justice. (In this issue of the *Journal*, read the article, co-authored by Judge Lisa M. Woodruff-White and me, on "Mapping the Future of Justice

for All: Using the Geographic Information Systems Visual Mapping Tool," a project coordinated through the Louisiana Access to Justice Commission.)

In our August/September 2020 issue of the *Journal*, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment and recognized the leadership achievements of several LSBA women members. I was fortunate to assist in two CLEs commemorating this amazing time in American history. In 2020-21, I was able to join Judy Perry Martinez (American Bar Association president, 2019-2020), Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice (Ret.) Bernette Joshua Johnson and Vice President Kamala Harris as a female leader during a time of uncertainty in all of our lives. I was honored to serve alongside such amazing women.

It may not have been the year any of us wanted, but the Bar leadership and Bar members rallied to the challenge and managed to keep the day-to-day business of the Bar going, even though it was sometimes by "virtual/Zoom" means.

Our Bar had to rethink, retool and reassess some of our programming. Technology came into its full potential this past year and was the way we bridged the gap between all members.

In closing, I want to congratulate all LSBA members who volunteered their time and talent this past year to accelerate our programs and projects. I want to wish the best of luck to our new LSBA leadership taking over in June, headed by our incoming President H. Minor Pipes III.

As I mentioned in an earlier message, I thought that the vision I had for 2020 wouldn't be manifested, but I was wrong. Sometimes the vision that we have is not big enough so the universe expands it. Take care!