



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

CHRISTINA M. ZABAT-FRAN

A Force For Good

"To see and to be seen; that is the truest nature of love."

~ Brené Brown

I've found there are some truly unforgettable moments that—in an instant—make you feel seen. One in particular stands out to me.

There I was, nervous as a wreck, finishing my remarks at this end-of-year lawyer gathering of sorts, moving as gracefully as I could to not show it, and more importantly, to get off stage. The lights shone so brightly in my eyes that I couldn't see a thing so I kept smiling. I was a young lawyer, just four years in practice, and I was unabashedly sharing my thoughts about the need for our profession to evolve. Heart pounding! Throat thickening! At a holiday party, no less! What did I know?

As I walked off, she walked up. I was intimidated to say the least. It was Trudy Levindofske, CEO/Executive Director of the Orange County Bar Association, a legend to aspiring bar leaders like myself.

Trudy looked straight at me and said, "Christina, you are a force for good."

I didn't know what I was besides outside of my comfort zone, so that gave me pause. Who, me? How did she know?

Admittedly, words of affirmation are my love language, but this felt like more than mere encouragement. This was validation.

Through the years, I've met my fair share of challenges. I've swung for the fences and put myself out there, sometimes beyond reason, always looking to do things differently or be the first. I've found myself in doubt and fear at times, asking myself, "Who do you think you are?"

It's in those moments that I've recalled that moment. Thanks to Trudy, I remind myself that I am a force for good. Even more, I look for ways to let others know what I see in them, knowing how impactful that simple gesture has been for me.

I'm beyond lucky to have had the opportunity to work closely with Trudy over the years. We've bonded over our love for the OCBA, our dedication to our dogs, and our fandom of *The Bachelor*. I must tell you, if there was ever a leader for our bar who was "here for the right reasons," it would be Trudy.

In leading our organization and working with so many amazing attorneys, Trudy acts with tremendous compassion, care, and genuine concern for others. She is an extraordinary listener. She is the most trusted confidante. And not to be all about business, she also has the best humor and is downright fun company. She has been an unmatched partner as our profession changes and evolves. Personally, I don't know the OCBA without Trudy.

Well, in what may be the "most dramatic season finale ever" in OCBA history, Trudy is concluding her remarkable tenure and retiring after thirty-five years of service to our bar, with seventeen years as our CEO/Executive Director.

Please join me in applauding Trudy for an incredible run!

Dear Trudy: After our meet-cute so many years ago, I'm just so grateful not only to count you as a dear friend, but to serve as OCBA President with you at the helm. I draw great confidence leading board meetings with you right by my side. I am reassured in my vision knowing you are only a text or phone call away.

In the spirit of our shared love for classic reality show guilty pleasures, I will not be asking you to accept this rose. Instead, I will encourage you to collect your flowers as so many reach out to you with their own stories of how you made them "feel seen." I know I'm not the only one.

We will be celebrating you and your bar legacy from now through July when you retire, and we will feel the positive impact of your leadership for years to come. But for now: thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

Christina M. Zabat-Fran, the 2024 President of the OCBA, is also an avid, unapologetic reality show connoisseur and would love to learn if you are too. Her email is christina.zabat@lanvin-group.com.



OCBA President Christina Zabat-Fran with her date, OCBA CEO/Executive Director Trudy Levindofske, at the Anti-Defamation League Marcus M. Kaufman Jurisprudence Awards Dinner where Zabat-Fran was honored in 2022.