



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

MEI TSANG

Celebrate Good Times, Come On!

I come from a big family in China, and on every special occasion, we would gather for a big feast. But there were always disagreements until we started making dumplings. Each person had a role—kneading, cutting, rolling, filling, cooking, or cleaning. By the time the dumplings were ready, tummies were filled and conflicts dissolved. Everyone leaves happy. Despite our differences, celebration has the power of bringing us together.

I love February as the celebrations keep on going. First, we kick off with Lunar New Year (January 29 through February 12), which is one of my favorite holidays. We have fireworks, food, gatherings, and red envelopes. It's a celebration rooted in the idea that villagers had to band together to chase away the bad and usher in a better future. To do that, you have to clean the house, pay your debts, forgive generously, make amends, and eliminate negativity. Around Orange County, this traditional Asian festival is now acknowledged all around us with decorations, festivals, and lion dances, bringing joy and unity to our community.

Then, we have Valentine's Day, or what I call a Big Ol' Love Fest. This day encourages us to express gratitude and appreciation for those who bring meaning and positivity to our lives. While often thought of as a romantic holiday, Valentine's Day extends beyond couples to celebrate the love within families, friendships, and communities. I love having "Galentines", seeing kids exchange tokens of friendship at school (I used to have my kids bring a Cup of Noodles and they were a hit!), or visiting seniors. It is a day that reminds us of the importance of connection, and how small acts of kindness and expressions of love can mean so much.

The love celebrated on Valentine's Day and the unity highlighted during Lunar New Year create the perfect foundation for honoring Black History Month in February: resilience, hope, and the strength found in community through celebration and positivity. Black History Month encapsulates the enduring power of community and love for justice that has fueled the achievements of Black individuals and communities throughout our history. More importantly, it is a moment to reflect on the extraordinary strength and unity of Black communities, which, despite centuries of oppression, have continuously risen to inspire progress and change. Black History Month is more than a celebration—it is a call to recognize the legacy of those who fought for justice and to carry their lessons forward into a more inclusive future.

In honor of this legacy, I reached out to a few of our esteemed leaders in the community to learn how they maintain positivity and resilience in their professional journeys.

The Honorable Judge Fred W. Slaughter (Central District Court Judge) who has been practicing for over twenty-five years has his signature saying: "Every moment is an opportunity for greatness. Positive energy, positive results."

The Honorable Michele Bell (Superior Court, Family Law Division) shares, "I lean on my friends and colleagues and obtaining their feedback. Having a diversity of perspective guides me to a meaningful resolution."


Rebekah Thomas (Current OCBA Board Member, and former Thurgood Marshall Bar President) says: "When life gets challenging and I face obstacles, I literally turn to my village, which includes my legal community, and ask for what I need (a hug, a talk, a sit-and-do-nothing moment), and I offer what I have to others. We need each other!"

Their insights underscore the transformative power of staying connected and being positive.

I also want to spotlight two significant events coming up this month. On February 18, 2025, the TMBA, with OCBA sponsorship, will host a program on *Race, Language and the Law (1 CLE Implicit Bias Hour)*. This event will examine the impact of linguistic bias in the legal system, such as the Trayvon Martin trial where a Black woman's credibility as a witness was undermined due to perceptions of her language. Dr. Sharese King, a renowned linguistics expert, will lead an interactive session about the implications of language bias, and will offer practical tools to address it.

On the same day, February 18, the Unity Bar of Orange County in connection with the Orange County Women Lawyers Association, with the OCBA's sponsorship, will host a lunch program Celebrating Seven Historic Female Firsts on California's Court of Appeal featuring (1) **The Honorable Annette Abbott Adams**, first California female justice; (2) **The Honorable Arleigh Woods**, first California African American female justice; (3) **The Honorable Sheila Prell Sonenshein**, first California Jewish American female justice and youngest intermediate appellate court justice; (4) **The Honorable Joyce Kennard**, first Asian American female justice, first California disabled female justice; (5) **The Honorable Ramona Godoy Perez**, first California Hispanic female justice; (6) **The Honorable Eileen Moore**, first and only California female military veteran justice; and (7) **The Honorable Therese Stewart**, first California openly lesbian justice.

Last, but not least, we also get to learn more about one of our beloved esteemed leaders, The Honorable Gail Andler (Ret.), who is our 2025 Franklin G. West award in this issue.

Whoa, looks like we have so much more to celebrate here! 

Mei Tsang wants to remind you to register for these events, and also if you see her around, she may just have a red envelope for you and will teach you to say Happy New Year in Chinese or make some dumplings. So come find her! Mei can be reached at mtsang@umbergzipser.com.