

# The Power of One.

## M. Janet Palmer, 2005–2006 Conference of Local Bar Associations Chair



We are all familiar with the phrase “The power of one.” This cliché took on new significance for me as I reflected on the life of Rosa Parks. Mrs. Parks was one of the most influential persons in the twentieth century. With her passing, I am reminded of the power that one individual has to make a difference in the lives of others.

I had the honor of meeting and working with Mrs. Parks while completing an internship in the district office of U.S. Representative John Conyers of Michigan. It was one of the many jobs I took in law school to figure out what I wanted to do with my law degree. Mrs. Parks was an aide to Congressman Conyers at the time. From the first moment that I met her, I was struck by Mrs. Parks’s quiet and gentle demeanor. In fact, there was a small level of disbelief that this petite and unassuming woman ignited the most important movement for social change in our country since the abolition of slavery. But it did not take long for me to realize the Mrs. Parks’s strength was not in her size, but in her commitment to serving others. In one of the many tributes that have been printed in the past weeks, Mrs. Parks is quoted as saying, “I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people.”

Do these words sound familiar to you? I would guess that words similar to these found their way onto the law school application for the vast majority of us. Many of us chose this profession because we wanted to make a difference. Many of us are making a difference. This has become evident to me through my involvement with the Conference of Local Bar Associations. I have met countless number of lawyers who are committed to serving and educating the public. Needless to say, however, as sincere as our earlier intentions were, the practice of law leaves most of us with little time or energy to serve others in a voluntary capacity.

But you can do something. One of the easiest ways to serve is to become an active member in your local or specialty bar. As we

approach the beginning of a new year, I challenge every lawyer to commit to one public service project in 2006. Join a committee that mentors school-age children. Make a presentation to senior citizens advising them of their legal rights and responsibilities. Maybe your bar can address the needs of one of the many Gulf Coast families who have relocated to Virginia. While the news about the devastating effects of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is lessened, the need has not. Don’t limit participation in your programs to lawyers. Reach out to other professional and civic organizations. We need to let as many people as possible know about the good things lawyers do outside the practice of law.

The CLBA can help you. A CLBA representative is assigned to every local and specialty bar. Your bar can contact its representative to obtain information. The updated *So You’re 18* booklet is available for distribution. You can obtain copies from the bar. Then go to your local high school to explain what the law requires of our young people when they become adults. The CLBA is also supporting the Senior Lawyers Conference in its efforts to reach as many senior citizens as possible. The senior lawyers have compiled all the documents needed to conduct a Senior Citizens Law Day program. The CLBA encourages your bar to sponsor one.

If neither of these projects interests you, then get a copy of *Legally Informed*. This booklet, published by the CLBA, provides samples of projects and community services programs sponsored by local and specialty bars. There is no reason to reinvent the wheel, and remember: imitation is the greatest form of flattery.

Maybe our individual actions will not start a national movement. But you can make a difference in the life of a student, an underprivileged person or an aging citizen. After all, we’re not asking you to change the world, just a life. ♪