

Choosing Our Destiny

It's hard for me to believe this is my last column as the 2015 CASD president. But since it is, I'm going out with some solidly ostentatious late 19th/early 20th century quotes from the great populist hero and occasional lawyer, William Jennings Bryan. Bryan spent his career as politician checking the influence of the rich and powerful, especially large corporations, and fighting to give power to ordinary people.

Bryan championed the cause of providing regular people with access to the civil courts. Civil law was about "restraining the arm outstretched for another's hurt or with punishing the actor after the injury is done."¹

He was also a fan of the legal profession, which he viewed as among the most honorable:

Next to the ministry I know of no more noble profession than the law. The object aimed at is justice, equal and exact, and if it does not reach that end at once it is because the stream is diverted by selfishness or checked by ignorance. Its principles ennoble and its practice elevates.²

Sure, he argued for creationism in the Scopes Monkey Trial, but hey, who hasn't taken the oddball case? And he did win.

But the real Bryan quote that is most fitting for this column is from a speech he delivered in 1899 as the leader of the Democratic party: "Destiny is no matter of chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved." The quote is appropriate because today our profession faces many hurdles, and it is up to us to choose how to face this future and direct it so we can continue to help our clients in ways better than ever.

Our task as plaintiff's lawyers is as challenging as it has ever been, and more challenging than during most periods. We face an ever-changing political environment where the very goal of the patrons of too many Democratic politicians is to wipe away the rights of those we represent. Meanwhile, the practice has been changing and will change even more in the near future. Take, for example, self-guided cars, which will result in our roadways becoming vastly safer, a loss of cases we all will gladly celebrate. But we also know this technology will be over-hyped and far from perfect. We will have to find new ways to hold accountable car companies that cut corners and use the tort system to incentivize manufacturers to improve the technology.

For CASD, providing top-notch education, increasing political awareness and participation and continuing to build a strong community of lawyers dedicated to helping each other protect the civil justice system for the regular person will remain our top goals. Over the past few years, CASD has quietly strengthened itself to be able to deliver on these goals more effectively than ever. These efforts will allow CASD to continue the vitally important work of our members. We've shored up the organization so we can take control of and achieve our destiny to meet these challenges and to take advantage of the many opportunities our futures hold.

So thanks to all of the hard working CASD board members and staff who have made CASD even better. And a special thanks to Bonnie Benitez, who understands the need to grasp and direct our destiny better than anyone. You'd make Mr. Bryan proud! **TBN**

by: Timothy Blood, CASD President



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¹ Bryan, William Jennings, "The Law and the Gospel," 1896, speech delivered at a banquet held by the St. Paul Methodist Church of Lincoln,

² The Law and the Gospel