



From the President
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A season of giving and a gratitude practice

GIVING THANKS FOR WHAT WE HAVE AND WHAT WE DON'T HAVE IN OUR LIVES

If you ask any thirty-somethings, maintaining a gratitude practice is in vogue right now. And practicing gratitude is not a seasonal endeavor reserved only for the holidays, but rather, a year-round discipline. Whether it's a yoga session, meditation practice, sound bath or a spiritual retreat, finding a way to cultivate a grateful mind and heart can only serve to make us better people and professionals. To my knowledge, no one has ever regretted being grateful. Nor has anyone ever been accused of being too grateful.

The end-of-the-year holidays, specifically Thanksgiving, merely put gratitude on the calendar, guaranteeing that, at minimum, once a year we are reminded to take inventory of what we have, whether it has come to us by way of hard work, gift, inheritance, or luck. We perform the exercise of acknowledging and defining what it is that we're grateful for in our lives, whether with the obligatory Thanksgiving table ritual or through journaling or quiet reflection. Sometimes it's what we have that we are grateful for and other times it's what we've been fortunate enough *not* to have in our lives (e.g. disease, illness, tragedy, death, heartbreak) for which we give thanks.

PI practice is a daily reminder

When people ask me what it's like to be a personal-injury attorney, I often tell them that it's a daily reminder of what I have to be grateful for. My health, my senses, my limbs, my organs, my daily routine, my car, my ability to participate in my hobbies and recreational activities, and just *not* being in crisis. Every day I am helping someone through a traumatic experience. I'm evaluating, analyzing and placing a monetary value on what has been taken away from them, all in an effort to bring them a measure of justice, restoration and closure. Sometimes their

loss is temporary and other times it's permanent. I frequently find myself reflecting that the only reason my clients are my clients is because of misfortune, being in the wrong place at the wrong time through no fault of their own. And try as I might to separate myself from what my clients are going through, I cannot help but take on some of their pain. When their case is resolved, I too feel a sense of justice, restoration and closure. At the conclusion of every case, I count my lucky stars and forge forward to help the next person in need.

The health benefits of cultivating a grateful mind and heart are well-documented from a medical and scientific perspective. There are shelves of books, podcasts and Ted Talks on the benefits of practicing gratitude. Many religions include gratitude as a pillar of their faith and belief systems. Indeed, the psychology of gratitude has been exhaustively researched. Harvard Medical School published a recent article arguing that expressing gratitude makes people happier (<https://www.health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier>).

Personally, Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday of the year. Primarily because of the delicious food, but also because it allows me to take inventory of the year's "wins" and put everything into perspective. It affords me a reprieve and an opportunity to zoom out. In this fast-paced profession, it is easy to lose one's bearings in the turbulence of litigation. As I write this article and begin to reflect on the year, indeed, it has been a year of plenty for me, personally and professionally, and I have much to give thanks for.

A bountiful year for OCTLA

It has also been a bountiful year for OCTLA. Not only has crisis been averted, but the organization has flourished this

year. We didn't tread water, we propelled ourselves forward. The year started off with a memorable Installation of Officers and Judicial Awards Gala. Later in the year, the CAOC-CAOIE-OCTLA Palm Springs seminar returned to its "pre-Covid" form with robust attendance and renewed excitement for the convention. Our golf tournament followed shortly thereafter. Once again, it was a sold-out event this year, selling out nearly one month before the tournament. More recently, our Oktoberfest social mixer last month provided our members with a great way to celebrate the fall season atop the rooftop bar at The Fifth restaurant near Disneyland. Finally, our annual Top Gun Awards Gala & Fundraiser was held at the elegant Pendry Hotel in Newport Beach, where we honored outstanding achievement in the law and raised money for A Quarter Blue, our partner charity for the year. The generosity of our members never ceases to amaze me. This year was no different. And, of course, we welcomed a new executive director, Jennifer Lopez, to our organization. Since she started on July 1st, she has hit the ground running, infusing new ideas and energy into our organization. She will soar even higher in 2025.

As I prepare to pass the presidential reins to my good friend Aaron Hicks, I am excited to see the vision he sets for OCTLA 2025 and the new heights to which he will lead this organization. Thankfully, the cupboard will not be left bare. Indeed, rather quite the opposite. By nearly every metric, OCTLA is in a better position now than it was a year ago, a tribute to the dedication and commitment of our leadership and members.

As we enter the holiday season, I encourage all plaintiff attorneys to give thanks for all that they have enjoyed in their lives this year.