

Breaking Down Our Silos: Decalogue Co-Sponsors and Participates in Multi-Bar Event to Address Hate

by Mitchell B. Goldberg

On May 27, 2021, the Decalogue Society of Lawyers joined with twelve other bar associations to hold a forum to share and discuss ideas on how the Chicago and Illinois legal communities can move from working in our silos to take collective action to dismantle racism and hate. The other participating bar associations were the Arab American Bar Association of Chicago (AABAR), Asian American Bar Association (AABA), Black Women Lawyers Association (BWLA), Chicago Bar Association (CBA), Chinese American Bar Association (CABA), Cook County Bar Association (CCBA), Filipino American Lawyers Association of Chicago (FALA), Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois (HLAI), Illinois State Bar Association (ISBA), Japanese American Bar Association, Korean American Bar Association of Chicago (KABA), and Lesbian and Gay Bar Association of Chicago (LAGBAC).

The well-attended event, titled “Breaking Down Our Silos,” heard messages from Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Attorney General Kwame Raoul, as well as messages from a line-up of powerful speakers from the participating bar associations. These included Kristy Gonowon (AABA/FALA), Ann Chen (CABA), Judge Bill Haddad (ret.) (AABAR), Natasha Jenkins (CCBA), Griselda Vega Samuel (HLAI), Judge Joanne Rosado (PRBA), Avanti Bakane (SABA), Deidre Baumann (LAGBAC), Azar Alexander (LAGBAC), Sonni Choi Williams (AABA/KABA/ISBA), Sang Yup Lee (AABA), Jaz Park (AABA/KABA) and Jerrod Williams (CCBA). I also spoke at this event, representing Decalogue.

Most of the speakers have been directly involved in confronting hate and fighting racist attacks and discrimination directed against various communities in Illinois and beyond. Each speaker delivered extremely important and powerful remarks regarding examples of hate experienced by the respective communities and the importance of joining together to combat such hate.

Following these remarks, participants went into discussion groups to share stories, to foster ideas for bar association collaboration in dismantling racism and hate, and to brainstorm about efforts for interpersonal solidarity. These discussion groups were facilitated by members of the event’s volunteer organizers from the participating bar associations.

The event was initially conceived of by the AABA as part of Asian American Heritage Month and to address hate experienced by multiple communities in recent years and months. Decalogue was approached to participate, given its ongoing collaboration with other bar associations to address and combat hate and injustice directed against various communities.

The issues addressed were illuminating of the shared concerns facing our communities, and of the importance of offering our visible and vocal support of each other. It also reminded us all of our important roles as attorneys and volunteers to help address issues that impact access to justice in society. Truly, in these efforts, our bar associations are stronger together.

Mitchell Goldberg is a past president of the Decalogue Society of Lawyers.