

Remarks by Judge Michael E. Riley

**Windham Judicial District Law Day Ceremony
May 3, 2013**

THE THEME FOR LAW DAY 2013 IS:

**“REALIZING THE DREAM”:
EQUALITY FOR ALL**

The promise of equality under the law is what has made America a beacon to other nations. It is a pledge clearly set forth in the Declaration of Independence, and the opening words of the Constitution: “We the People” what unites us as Americans is our allegiance to these ideas articulated more than two centuries ago that “all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” It is in the words of Abraham Lincoln, the proposition to which our nation is dedicated.

The year 2013 marks the 150th anniversary of the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Hopefully, you have seen the movie “Lincoln” which brings the creation of this document to life, even though it is mistaken as to Connecticut’s involvement in the passage of the Proclamation in Congress.

In 1963, during the centennial of the issuance of the Proclamation, Dr. Martin Luther King stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial and called upon our nation to live up to the great promise, enshrined in our founding documents of equality for all. Five decades later, the inspirational words of the Reverend Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech continue to resonate and challenge us to live up to our national ideal of equality under the law.

The legacy of the Civil Rights Movement can be seen in the strides that have been made against discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation.

We honor the courageous men and women who fought to bring those ageless ideals of freedom and fairness into the rule of law --- from the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act to Title IX (think UConn Women's Basketball) and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Even now that work is not yet finished, opportunity remains painfully unequal for too many among us; justice too often goes undone. Law Day is a chance to reaffirm the critical role that our courts have always played in addressing those wrongs and aligning our Nation with its founding principles.

Law Day 2013 will provide an opportunity to explore the movement for civil and human rights in America and the impact it has had in promoting the idea of equality under the law. It will provide a forum for reflecting on the work that remains to be done in rectifying injustice, eliminating all forms of discrimination, and putting an end to human

trafficking and all other violations of our basic human rights. As Dr. King pointed out in his letter from a Birmingham, Ala. jail, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Let us mark this occasion by celebrating this history, upholding the right to due process, realizing the dream and honoring all who have sustained our proud legal tradition of **Equality for All**.