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Hartford Judicial District – Law Day Program
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On behalf of the Mayor and the City of Hartford, I would like to thank the Hartford County Bar Association for inviting me to speak at this year's Law Day ceremony. This is an honor for me. After spending so much time in this building in pre-trials, arbitrations, trial management conferences and trials, it is nice to be here in a non-adversarial setting for a change! By the way, I spent the beginning of my legal career as a legal research clerk about 15 years ago, and on a few days I clerked in this building. Are there any current or former legal research clerks here today? Please raise your hand.

As our theme for this year's Law Day is *Realizing the Dream: Equality for All*, I wanted to start with a quote from perhaps the most famous "Dreamer," the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. One of his more famous quotes is "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I am grateful to the lawyers and legislators that have made great strides in rectifying the injustices and inequalities in our history.

I was reminded of those strides regularly when I attended my law school, Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Some of the battles of the Civil War were fought in Lexington. In fact, even today, you can buy bullets used in the Civil War in a store in downtown Lexington. General Robert E. Lee is a prominent figure in the history of the school, as he was President of the school right after the Civil War. He and his horse are buried at Lee Chapel. I always wondered when I was in Lee Chapel if General Lee was rolling in his grave knowing I, an African-American from Connecticut, would be attending his school. Besides the wars fought on the battlefield, lawyers sought to end inequality in the courtroom and in the Legislature. I might not have attended a school like Washington & Lee without their efforts.

Now in fairness, my position as Senior Assistant Corporation Counsel does not allow me to initiate legal actions or to lobby the Legislature to address the inequalities that still remain. But all that means is I cannot join the fight from my desk at work. There are other things I can do to realize the dream.

First, I support the current efforts of lawyers and legislators to address inequality not only in Connecticut, but all over the United States. I am waiting for the United States Supreme Court to render its decision in the California marriage case, but that fight ended in our state and others due to the efforts of lawyers and legislators. The Supreme Court may also rule on affirmative action this year. Congress is attempting to pass a "Paycheck Fairness Act" to restrict employers from paying men more than women for the same jobs. In last year's election, several attacks on voting rights took place. And so on. It starts with staying informed.

Second, I can vote for legislators who are committed to equality for all. Third, I can contribute to organizations that are focused on equality. Lastly, I can speak out in a personal capacity, like I am doing today. What I take from this year's theme is I can do more to secure equality for all, even outside a courtroom.

I'd like to leave you with a quote from Justice Thurgood Marshall. He said, "A child born to a Black mother in a state like Mississippi ... has exactly the same rights as a white baby born to the wealthiest person in the United States. It's not true, but I challenge anyone to say it is not a goal worth working for."

Even today, it is still a goal worth working for. We must continue to follow Justice Marshall's charge and not just to eliminate the inequalities between different races, but also between different genders and different sexual orientation, for example. That is how we "Realize the Dream."

Thank you.