

Judge Jason M. Lobo
Hartford Judicial District - Law Day Program
May 3, 2013

Good morning. I would like to welcome you to this celebration of Law Day 2013. In 1958, President Dwight D. Eisenhower established Law Day, and Congress designated May 1 as the official date for celebrating Law Day in 1961. This year's theme, which is the core of our judicial system and our government as a whole, is *Realizing the Dream: Equality for All*.

When thinking about what equality for all means for us here today, I am reminded of two very important historical events. This year marks the 150th anniversary of President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation where he called upon our government and its peoples to action.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." It has been 50 years since the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. uttered his "I Have a Dream" speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial, again calling upon this nation's government and its people to hold itself accountable to the inalienable rights of all its citizenry. The messages from these aforementioned leaders have no less resonance today in our current judicial system than when they were proclaimed those many years ago.

Working in various capacities within our legal system over the past 22 years, I have been impressed by the many attorneys, courthouse staff, and members of the bench who have worked tirelessly to ensure that all who walk through our courthouse doors have access to our judicial system, are treated fairly, and have a voice that will be heard. Our court system continues to make strides in working against discrimination based on race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, disability, economic means and sexual orientation. The recent appointments to our Connecticut Supreme and Superior Courts are further examples of this effort.

The upholding of these rights may seem difficult and run counter to public opinion at times, as some may feel regarding the legal representation and protections afforded the defendant connected to the bombings in Boston. However, it is because of these very protections, which are available to all individuals appearing before our courts, as well as the protective rights for the victims who are also impacted by these cases, which provide the foundation of our legal processes and the rule of law.

Although we have the best legal system in the world, we cannot stop striving to ensure that everyone's voice within our legal system is heard. These lessons cannot solely be taught from the mouths of presidents, civic leaders, attorneys, victims' advocates and the judiciary, but must begin within our homes and societies as a whole. Some messages are delivered from podiums in front of thousands. Others are more quietly shared, and some would argue as equally effective, in more intimate settings.

The earlier in one's life lessons of equality are taught, the earlier those lessons will come to fruition in those with whom we come in contact. Theodor Seuss Geisel understood this basic

truth when authoring “The Sneetches” in 1961. In this parable for children, and a favorite bedtime story of my three boys, Sneetches with stars on their bellies discriminate against those without. A Sylvester McMonkey McBean arrives with both a “star on” and “star off” machine as each group of Sneetches pays money in an attempt to gain or maintain their preferred status over the other group. As they run from one machine to the next, it is only when the Sneetches lose track of which group they are from, and what status is actually preferred, that they lose their discriminations based on physical appearances, what they “have” versus what they “don’t,” and learn to accept and celebrate their differences.

Although life is not always a children’s story without troubles and worry-free endings, the realistic ideals of equal treatment and access for the people our legal process serves is a constant goal upon which we cannot lose sight. And, with unwavering diligence, we may also achieve the goal attained at the end of Dr. Seuss’ tale when he writes:

. I’m quite happy to say
That the Sneetches got really quite smart on that day.
The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches.
And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.
That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars and whether
They had one, or not, upon thars.

Thank you.