

Kimberly A. Knox's Remarks for Law Day, May 1, 2013, at The Supreme Court Courtroom in Hartford

Good morning, I am Kimberly A. Knox, president-elect for the Connecticut Bar Association, and I am honored to be here to speak about this year's Law Day theme, "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All."

As current American Bar Association President Laurel G. Bellows notes, "Law Day is a day to reflect on and rededicate ourselves to the rule of law and the principles of liberty, justice, and equality." Since 1958, the President of the United States has annually recognized Law Day; and in 1961, Congress passed a joint resolution designating today — May 1 — as the official day to celebrate Law Day each year.

The promise of equality under the law is what has made the United States a beacon to other nations. It is a pledge clearly set forth in the Declaration of Independence and in the opening words of the Preamble of the Constitution, "We the People." 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. One hundred and fifty years ago, President Abraham Lincoln sat in what is now called "Lincoln's Cottage" to write the Emancipation Proclamation, which marked the beginning of the end of slavery in this country.

In the mind of the Great Liberator, freedom and equality were intertwined. Let us recall Lincoln's words in the Gettysburg Address, when he issued a plea for "a new birth of freedom" in a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

In 1963, during the Proclamation's centennial, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial and called upon our nation to live up to the great promise, enshrined in its founding documents, of equality for all. Five decades later, the inspirational words of 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. This year's Law Day theme, "Realizing the Dream: Equality for All," provides an opportunity to explore the movement for civil and human rights in our country and the impact that it has had in promoting the ideal of equality under the law. And it affords 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 other violations of our basic human rights.

As Dr. King pointed out in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Much progress has been made since Lincoln's promise and in the half century since Dr. King delivered his historic speech. Segregation and many other legally tolerated discriminatory practices — that were accepted in 1963 — would be unimaginable today.

However, despite all the gains achieved, much work still needs to be completed to realize the dream of equality in the United States. Women and minorities remain grossly underrepresented in positions of real power, influence, and leadership. Although women have made many strides in achieving equality, gender inequity continues to exist in our society.

In our legal profession, a significant disparity in pay between women lawyers and their male colleagues performing the same exact work still remains — even though women make up almost half of the U.S. workforce.

On average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor's 2010 statistics, female full-time workers made only 77 cents for every dollar earned by men — a gender wage gap of 23 percent. The Bureau also noted that 2.7 million women earned wages at or below the federal minimum wage in 2010, while only 1.6 million men did — a difference of 62 percent.

Earlier this year, the American Bar Association's Commission of Women Working in the Profession published a study "A Current Glance at Women in the Law 2013", indicating that women make up the following percentages in these specific employment sectors:

- Pharmacists (83.2 percent)
- Postsecondary teachers (77.3 percent)
- Lawyers (77.1 percent)
- Retail salespersons (64.7 percent)
- Personal financial advisors (58.4 percent)

And, as of January 1, 2013, there were 21 woman CEOs of *Fortune* 500 companies. That's a record, although men still run about 96 percent of *Fortune* 500 companies. In addition, the ABA study states,

- Approximately 20 percent of general counsels of a *Fortune* 500 company are women.
- Two more women were elected to seats in the U.S. Senate during the 2012 election, bringing the total number of women senators to 20 — also a record. However, despite these gains, 80 percent of senators are men.
- Women make up 24.1 percent of the federal judiciary, and 27 percent of all state court judges. The total representation of women in all judgeships state and federal is 27.1 percent.

To quote Associate Supreme Court Justice of the United States Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in *U.S. v. Virginia* (1996), “Neither federal nor state government acts compatibly with equal protection when a law or official policy denies to women, simply because they are women, full citizenship stature—equal opportunity to aspire, achieve, participate in and contribute to society based on their individual talents and capacities.”

On the topic of slavery, although slavery is thought to be a thing of the past, human trafficking and modern slavery still exists within the borders of our country. Men, women, and children are being forced into slavery in our land of the free.

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, is certainly a modern-day form of slavery. It is a crime under international, federal, and most states’ laws, with only three states — South Dakota, West Virginia, and Wyoming — not having in-state laws enforced.

Worldwide, estimates of human trafficking range from 20.9 to 27 million enslaved individuals. Of the 27 million enslaved, 42,291 were identified in 2011. In that year, alone, the number of victims identified globally increased from 33,113 to 42,291. Of note, the most ever identified enslaved in a given year was 49,105 in 2009.

The International Labour Organization indicates that 68 percent are held in forced labor exploitation, 22 percent in forced sexual exploitation, and 10 percent in state-imposed forced labor. And, in 2011, the number of criminal convictions of traffickers globally increased slightly from 3,619 to 3,969.

While more people are trafficked for labor than commercial sex, 3,691 of the 3,969 global criminal convictions of traffickers were sex traffickers and just 278 were labor traffickers.

The ILO estimates that women and girls comprise 55 percent of all those in forced labor and 98 percent of all those in sex trafficking, whereas men and boys comprise 45 percent of those in forced labor and 2 percent of those in sex trafficking. Also, the ILO states that, 74 percent of trafficked persons are adults and 26 percent are children, defined as under the age of 18.

Globally, 56 percent of trafficked persons are enslaved in a country other than their own; 29 percent are enslaved in the area where they normally reside; and 15 percent are enslaved elsewhere within their own country. In all, 128 countries criminalize all forms of human trafficking.

All these statistics pertaining to both the current equal rights of women and human trafficking are staggering, and they must change.

In closing — as we reflect on this year’s Law Day theme of “Realizing the Dream: Equality for All” — let us work together to achieve the aspirations so eloquently expressed by Abraham Lincoln and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We must do so by uniting and committing ourselves to assuring that all citizens of this great country have the opportunity to “realize the dream” of liberty and equality.