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## THE PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



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The greeting “Happy New Year” took on a more profound meaning this year. Everyone was eager to move on from the unique challenges that faced us in our careers and in our personal lives. One of those challenges was the merger of our careers into our personal lives, as most of the legal community went to work daily in their home offices. MDLA members were leaders in the legal community accommodating and working around the challenges faced by attorneys, judges, and their clients demonstrating the highest level of civility and patience.

Our organization did an exemplary job of retooling and offering our services to members as they worked in the new Zoom economy. Our MDLA committees were active and working with new ideas and innovation.

For example, MDLA’s Diversity Committee started its Lunch and Learn series for both members and non-members. The Lunch and Learn series is designed to share and discuss the history and different perspectives of all Minnesotans. It consists of 1-hour CLEs held over Zoom.

Jessica Ryan was the inaugural speaker for the Lunch and Learn Series. Ms. Ryan is currently in private practice representing Tribal Governments and American Indian families. She has extensive litigation experience, serving as a prosecutor in several tribal courts and defense counsel in state courts. Previously, Ms. Ryan was a Chief Judge and Court of Appeals Judge for two tribal courts. She played a key role in renegotiating the Tribal/State Agreement between Minnesota’s Tribal Nations and the Department of Human Services related to child welfare, and she has sought to improve its application through rule, statutory, and Bench Book revisions. As Ms. Ryan stated, one of the purposes of the Lunch and Learn Series is to listen and allow ourselves to marinate in a different perspective.

The MDLA’s second Lunch and Learn was February 18, 2021. Dr. Bill Green, JD, led an in-depth discussion about Nellie Francis, a Black St. Paul women leader of the Women’s Suffrage campaign of 1919. Francis was a civil rights leader who successfully lobbied to have the antilynching bill enacted in 1921. Dr. Green published a biography on Nellie Francis and her influence on Black Female Suffrage in January.

Bill Green received his B.A. in History from Gustavus Adolphus College, and his M.A., Ph.D. and J.D. from the University of Minnesota. He has spoken widely at such places as the Ramsey County Bar Association, Bethel Lutheran Church, the Friends of the Ramsey County Library, Unity Unitarian Universalist Church in St. Paul, and Mitchell Hamline Law School. He has also lectured at Peabody College-Vanderbilt University, St. John’s University, and Lincoln College-Oxford University. While serving as Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools, he studied school reform at Harvard University. He currently serves as vice president of the Minnesota Historical Society.

2021 will continue to present challenges to all of us. We will continue to innovate and learn about our own history and perspective. The MDLA and its members will continue to innovate and lead as we solve those challenges together.