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**Dignity in Law**  
by **Tod Aronovitz**

Eleanor Roosevelt, when asked about overcoming insurmountable obstacles in her life in the face of adversity, said,  
**“Sometimes you must do the thing you cannot do!”**

Do you want to make a difference? Do you *really* want to make a difference? I enlist your support. Most lawyers and judges are proud of our profession and are dismayed by unwarranted attacks. It's time to draw a line in the sand and to state that we comprise a unique profession and that we won't accept unjustified criticism any longer.

As I write this article, I envision you as a cross-section of our profession from the young lawyer to the most distinguished, seasoned trial judge. From the sole practitioner, the assistant public defender, the tenured law professor, the corporate practitioner, and the tax lawyer to the associate seeking partner status.

We have the talent and the ability to express our message that The Florida Bar seeks to return and heighten the dignity and the stature associated with being a respected counselor at law.

Immediately, the nay sayers and the downtrodden of our profession express their dismay, sigh, shrug their shoulders, and say that lawyers have been the scapegoats of society and refer us to the time of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and feudalism. Not true! The Code of the Babylonian King Hammurabi was thought to be the first and most important codification of law. The Code, established between 1792-1750 B.C., was respected and revered by the citizens of the Babylonian Empire, and all attorneys and prophets were admired for their enforcement of rules including: 1) if a man destroy the eye of another man, they shall destroy his eye; 2) if he breaks a man's bone, they shall break his bone; and 3) if a man hire an ox and cause its death through neglect or abuse, he shall restore ox for ox to the owner of the ox.

Thereafter, in the Byzantine State, all the civil magistrates were drawn from the profession of the law. The celebrated Institutes of Justinian devoted themselves to the study of Roman jurisprudence and were respected throughout the Roman Empire. Commencing in biblical times through the rise and fall of the Greek and Roman societies, the most respected, the most honored, and those held in the highest esteem were the intelligent, fair-minded rulemakers, whether they be judges, lawyers, or articulate lawyer members of the Senate.

Most practitioners of more than 25 years have seen an erosion of respect for our profession that coincides with its commercialization, promotion by advertisement, emphasis on profit and financial gain, as well as fast-paced competition with clients' demands and the pursuit of legal excellence. Our membership as elected legislative

representatives has dwindled, and the criticism of our brothers and sisters in the law has increased dramatically. Our Bar polls consistently reveal that most Florida lawyers view journalistic attacks as unfair and cry out to our Bar leadership to take a stand to tell our story.

Those who know me realize that I am truly proud to be called your president. Your Board of Governors voted unanimously to commence a historic and first of its kind public awareness program called "Dignity in Law" to convey our message that thousands of lawyers across our state work hard day in and day out to help people, to protect our clients' rights, and to advocate on behalf of those in need.

Dignity in Law is a public awareness campaign designed to promote dignity in the profession as well as emphasizing the need for a fair and impartial judiciary by applying an intensive, consistent communications effort that is focused. The plan is designed to complement existing public relations efforts of the Bar and set priorities by audience, market, and objective.

Your Florida Bar will promote aggressive media relations efforts directed at all Florida journalists; create and maintain an interactive pressroom designed to provide journalists, attorneys, and Florida citizens with facts and current information on the real life activities of the judges and lawyers of our state; and build community alliances with prominent Florida corporations to promote the hard work of our judges and lawyers.

Our education and awareness initiative will employ unique new communications techniques to inform the public about our successes through the eyes of those we help. We will bring to life the story about a senior citizen whose home was saved through the help of her lawyer, the community that fought for precious open space with an environmental attorney's assistance, or a needy family who found justice from a judge who serves the people. Instead of opening the morning paper and reading about a single, controversial case, Floridians will read about the thousands of lawyers and judges who patiently and quietly work to make a difference in the lives of their clients and for the benefit of our society.

During my 28 years as a trial lawyer, I have observed legal professionals, some of whom are the most interesting, talented, assertive, and knowledgeable people who are lawyers and judges. I encourage you to: 1) take pride in our profession; 2) don't be bashful about telling your clients and your dear ones of your pride in your profession and your accomplishments on behalf of your clients; 3) discuss the subject with your colleagues and examine the uniqueness of our noble profession. Make a personal commitment to tell our story to the public. Be proud to be called a "lawyer."

I have tremendous confidence in the power and ability of the 70,000 lawyers in Florida. As your Bar president, I will spread this message throughout the state, encourage our consultants to emphasize the good works of our diligent judges and lawyers to the press on a daily basis and once again demonstrate that The Florida Bar is the leading bar association of our land, willing to take on the most critical issues to protect our courts and benefit society.

Eleanor Roosevelt was long admired for her quiet strength and determination. In recognizing that "sometimes you must do the thing you cannot do," she underscored her determination to complete a difficult task. Your Board of Governors, representing all Florida lawyers and judges, unanimously voted to support the Dignity in Law public awareness program because our profession has a wonderful story to tell. I am driven by the words of Eleanor Roosevelt to spread the message and to accomplish this goal on your behalf.

**Tod Aronovitz**