

Charles Houston Bar Association

Laying the Foundation for the Future



Features

Message From The President

**Featured Attorney:
Jahmal T. Davis**

**Are You
Communicating
Effectively?**

**Demetrius Shelton
For NBA President**

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Limits Exist Only in the Mind

CHBA has not had a Newsletter in over 3 years. One of my goals was to bring back this wonderful means of communication. The newsletter allows us to convey to our members and friends the many ideas and activities that are taking place within the legal community and by CHBA members.

This issue's theme is on success: focus and determination. How does one focus and execute? Given my installation and the many hats I wear, that has been my challenge: simplify, focus and execute. Although sleep is over-rated, time is not: I try to spend as much of it as possible with my child and my family. But in order to do that – I must simplify, focus and execute. So I thought I would get some words of wisdom on focus and determination and goal setting from Jahmal T. Davis – Hanson Bridgett's newest African American Partner. In his honest and sincere way, Jahmal explains how his life and his career have changed over the years; yet how focus and determination are the stepping stones to success.

Save the Date!

March 12, 2009	March 14, 2009	April 2-5 2009	April 1, 2009
CHBA Chevy's Fundraiser-Chevy's Emeryville-1890 Powell	Foreclosure Clinic-Oakland Public Library Elmhurst	California Association of Black Lawyers Conference-Pasadena, CA	CHBA MCLE-How to Become a Mediator 101-Golden Gate

www.charleshoustonbar.org

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Interview With Jahmal T. Davis

What has been your career path?

I graduated in 1997 and went straight to Alameda County Public Defender's Office. I was there from 1997 – 2001. At that point I left criminal defense altogether and I joined Lafayette & Kumagi. While there I learned the civil side. I was there for 3 years and my practice area was employment defense (mostly). In 2004 I came to Hanson Bridgett. At Hanson I started as a general, civil litigator and soon returned to a labor and employment defense practice.

What was it like - the transition from criminal to civil?

The transition was very tough. Although the skill set in each arena is essential to being an effective trial lawyer; they are different. In the Public Defender's Office you learn how to be court savvy. You learn about juries, trial advocacy, evidence and motion practice. You don't have to think through as many business issues. In the civil arena I had to brush up on legal research and strengthen my writing skills. I also had to learn about client development; client relationships. The client relationships are very different.

But when I bring it all together - I feel like I'm in a much better place; a much more complete legal advocate.

What's it like at Hanson?

Reason I came is reason I stay.

This is much different than where I worked previously. Gary (Lafayette & Kumagi) has a great practice. There are good lawyers there. It's more diverse than most firms.

When I was approached to come here I really was not looking for a job. I was approached and I asked: why would I do that? I never wanted to work at a "majority" firm because of mis-perceptions. So I was reluctant to interview, then a classmate asked me to check it out. I knew Hanson had more money to offer, but that was not going to be the determining factor. For me, it was really about happiness.

When I interviewed I was shocked! Although the firm, from its photo book, did not look diverse, the mindset was very diverse. So much so that I went home and told my wife "I like it."

I went on another round of interviews, took a risk and came over. Hanson continues to show that what I saw at the interview is who they are;

they put resources (including money) behind the things that are important to me. If I say I need to pay my CHBA dues or support CHBA, they do it. They encourage my participation in California Minority Counsel Program, the Minority Corporate Counsel Association and other organizations. And when I attend events for these and other organizations, Hanson makes sure that I am able to contribute monetarily. The firm mindset is to encourage me to participate in those associations that are important to me, and they put money behind it.

On the personal side – let me share a couple of experiences. My first year here, I was able to handle a pro bono case for a friend and get billable credit. Another example -- a pet project of mine is Legal Services for Children, Inc. Through LSC, I represent children in school expulsion proceedings. As a result of this work, I received LSC's 2008 Pro Bono Award. Andrew Giacomini (managing partner) goes with me to the dinner. While there he gets inspired. He decides to take a case. Then he sends an office wide email for other attorneys to take cases. Although not everyone will take cases, we do have increased participation with LSC.

It's those types of things that make Hanson special. Those are the reasons why I stay here.

You are partner now – and that's why I wanted to highlight you. How long did it take you to become a partner? What was the process? Would you do it all over again?

Process to become partner: I became a partner 4 years. It can happen. The identified track is 7 years; right out of law school or laterals. But there are some attorneys right out of law school that do it in 5 years. If you work hard and get some blessings -- things work out for you.

Looking back – yeah – it was worthwhile. It takes a lot of hard work and committed hours. Looking back now – I see the growth. I now see some of the other aspects of the practice that you can't see when you are doing it. When you first start you are trying to learn the law, trying to respond to all of the constructive critique, trying to impress. But now – I see the business of law – and it's fun. I'm not just being the lawyer – writing motions and arguing. Now you do more. You may be increasing presence in the community; developing new clients; dealing with counseling and business issues. I see myself more as a "counselor." It's more fulfilling when you get calls and people look to you for advice.

It may not be in your area of law, but people consider you their trusted advisor. So you work with them through the issues and problems. That's rewarding. That's the part you don't see at the front end. Although it's a lot of hard work - it is rewarding when you develop trusted relationships and you are able to help in not-so-traditional ways. All of this contributes to becoming a partner. It is rewarding and is rewarded.

What advice do you have for attorneys on goal setting/focus and determination?

You should always have goals set for yourself; things that you are striving for. Those things may change as your life changes, but always have a goal that is bigger than what you see. Stretch yourself – you will surprise yourself and end up in places you never thought you would be. Shoot for something farther than you think you can reach – and have a road map.

When I was a kid I had a poster on my wall. It was a poster of a hot air balloon. It stated: limits exist only in the mind. It helped define my goal setting – reach beyond what you can grasp. There really are no limits other than those that you are willing to accept. Becoming partner shouldn't be the end-goal and it should not be a bearer. It can happen. But if you are seeking to become partner – get a mentor.

Anything else you want readers to know about you?

Be a mentor. You can mentor in many ways. I mentor internally. I am on the recruiting committee. I also informally mentor people – I have folks hang out with me for a day. I started a mentor program through my church – in Vallejo. I have a passion of working with young people – the joy of when I'm not here working.

Although this interview was much longer, what was gleamed was there really are no limits other than those you are willing to accept. In order to be successful and juggle the many things that life throws at us, set goals, have a road map, have a mentor. But more importantly, let happiness guide your decisions.

I hope that you are able to take something from this interview and apply to your own situations: something that will help you focus and execute.

Until next time, Nedra A. Shawler

CHBA President

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Are You Communicating Effectively?

As an attorney you are in the business of communication. Your success in the practice of law is based on how well you communicate with your client, opposing counsel, the judge, witnesses, the jury, colleagues and support staff. Whether you are attempting to persuade, influence or convince someone or negotiate a deal, your ability to effectively communicate is vital to the success of that interaction. An indicator of how well you are communicating is whether the receiver of your message understood your message and responded in a way that produced the desired result. Often, the message we send as attorneys is misinterpreted and thus the receiver responds in a way that does not produce our desired results. Neither law school, nor our jobs teach us the necessary skills to effectively communicate. If our communication skills are not developed and sharpened, our growth in the practice of law is stunted. One approach leaders of organizations are taking to tackle the communication issue is through hiring coaches.

Harvard Business Review recently published an article regarding how leading companies are bringing coaches aboard to peak executive performance. Companies realize that employees are their greatest asset and thus they must invest in their employees. If employees are not performing at their optimal level, the company will suffer.

Law firms, as well as companies that have realized the effectiveness of coaching, are faced with challenges such as low morale, high absenteeism, decrease in worker performance, high turnover, and minority retention, to name a few. Poor communication is at the core of all these problems. Typically, when a breakdown in communication occurs that impacts decision-making abilities, creativity, and innovation. As a result, law firms, similar to other companies, spend too much time dealing with misunderstandings and conflict, thereby becoming inefficient and ineffective.

In an effort to address one's ability to effectively communicate, an international company by the name of Think, Feel, and Know, USA developed workshops and coaching modalities that specifically focus on the gaps in internal and external communications. We provide a simple, effective and non-judgmental approach (solution) for more effective communications. anyone you choose. Our methods begin with concept and strategy before moving into sustainable implementation.

People tend to communicate in one preferential style over the others. By recognizing your own style and the style of others you can adapt your communication and connect more easily with

Using Think Feel Know, an individual or firm will be able to quickly identify the relationship blocks in their firm that keep them from having the greatest leverage and performing at their highest level. Think, Feel, Know, USA offers free "taster" sessions (90 minutes to 2 hours) to companies and firms so that one gets a basic understanding of how we work and how to work with all types of communication styles. If you are interested in scheduling a free "taster" session for your company, organization or firm, please contact us at the number provided below.

Tamara Wiggins Steele, Esq. is a certified coach and partner with Think Feel Know, USA, an international coaching organization. She is also founder of New Heights Company. She has practiced law for over (15) years and has coached for over (6) years. She can be reached at 1.800.361.9386 Ext. 89 or e-mail her @ tsteale@thinkfeelknow.com. Web address is www.thinkfeelknow.com.

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Every few days, new court decisions affecting California attorney conduct are filed. We summarize these cases on a *What's New* page at www.fishkinlaw.com

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CHBA MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Demetrius Shelton for President-Elect of the NBA-2009

Demetrius Shelton (of Oakland) is a candidate for President-elect of the National Bar Association at its Annual Meeting, August 1 through 8, 2009, Hilton San Diego Bayfront, San Diego California. The election will be held on Tuesday, August 4, 2009. At a minimum, everyone is encouraged to pay her/his NBA dues for 2009, register for the 2009 Annual Meeting in San Diego and vote for Demetrius on August 4th. You must be personally present to vote. For more information about the NBA and the convention, go to www.nationalbar.org.

On a related matter, a California Amtrak car with Demetrius' supporters aboard has been reserved for the San Joaquin route on Saturday, August 1, 2009. The train originates in Oakland, picks up passengers in Stockton (who will have taken an Amtrak bus from Sacramento) and proceeds to Bakersfield. Amtrak buses transport everyone from Bakersfield to Los Angeles. Bus passengers transfer to the Surfliner train to San Diego. This one-way train ride IS for those who: do not want to fly; do not want to drive; families (with children) on a Recession budget; singles and/or couples who want to relax and view the valley scenery; want to play bid whist; want to eat a lunch/brunch of honey-baked ham, fried chicken, potato salad, watermelon, soft drinks, potluck dessert and whatever else is provided; want to experience the camaraderie that can only come with the NBA convention experience. This one-way train ride is NOT for those who are: princes or princesses; kings or queens; whiners; "high maintenance." If you are interested in and/or want more information about the train ride, please contact Gordon Baranco at gbaranco@alameda.courts.ca.gov as soon as possible.

CHBA LAW CLINICS

The Charles Houston Bar Association & The Alameda County Bar Association/Volunteer Legal Service Corp Present:

FREE LEGAL CLINIC FORECLOSURE

Oakland Public Library
Elmhurst Branch

1427 88th Avenue Oakland, CA 94621

Saturday, March 14, 2009, 10:30-12:30

Volunteer attorneys will be on hand to answer your questions relating to foreclosure and loan modification legal issues

Space is limited so please come early to sign up.

FREE LEGAL CLINIC CONSUMER BANKRUPTCY LAW

Crescent Park Apartments
Family Resource Center

5000 Hartnett Avenue, Richmond, CA

Saturday, April 18, 2009, 10:30-12:30

Volunteer attorneys will be on hand to answer your questions relating to consumer bankruptcy legal issues.

Space is limited so please come early.

For further information or directions to the location, please contact Sharron Gelobter at (510) 288-8686.

CHBA MCLE

Charles Houston Bar Association Presents

"How to Become a Mediator 101"

This program will provide information on how to become a private mediator, a federal court mediator and a state court mediator and will provide a general overview of alternative dispute resolution.

The distinguished panel includes:

John Helie, Administrator of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program for Alameda County Superior Court.

Howard Herman, Esq., Director of the ADR Program for the Northern District of California.

Fred Butler, Esq., private mediator with ADR Services, Inc.

Yolanda Jackson, Esq., private mediator and Deputy Executive Director and Diversity Director for the Bar Association of San Francisco.

When: Wednesday, April 1, 2009

Where: Golden Gate University Law School Rm.3203

Time: 5:15 p.m. -6:15 p.m.

CHBA Volunteer Opportunity

Habitat for Humanity

CHBA will be volunteering with Habitat for Humanity on April 11 from 8:30 AM-4:30 PM at Whitney Young Circle in San Francisco: Intersection of Whitney Young Cir & Hudson Ave, San Francisco. Please contact Venus Johnson for more info. at venus.johnson@gmail.com.

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CHBA PARTNERS

California Association of Black Lawyers Conference

The California Association of Black Lawyers Conference and National Bar Association Region IX Annual Meeting will be held April 2 - 5, 2009 in Pasadena, CA. The conference brochure is attached with the registration form, sponsorship opportunities and advertisement rates for the Judicial Luncheon and Installation Gala.

The early bird registration deadline is March 16, 2009 and hotel reservations at the Westin Pasadena must be made by March 14, 2009 for the guaranteed rate.

Camera ready advertisements must be in by March 13, 2009.

On-line registration at www.calblacklawyers.org will be available soon.

Please contact Nedra Jenkins at 323.286.2018 or Nej323@att.net for any further information or questions.

National Bar Association 84th Annual Convention & Exhibits

"Unleashing the Power of Our Legacy:
The Time is Now"

San Diego, California The Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel August 1--8, 2009 San Diego, California will be the host city for the National Bar Association's 84th Annual Convention. The convention will be hosted by the Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association. The convention will take place at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel.

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

Register now for the National Bar Association's 84th Annual Convention and Exhibits and save. The registration fee includes Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Seminars and course materials, the President's Reception, and the Annual Banquet. Register now. Please do not mail or fax the enclosed registration form after July 10, 2009.

HOTEL INFORMATION

The Hilton San Diego Bayfront Hotel, 1 Park Boulevard, San Diego, California, 92101. The National Bar Association Convention room rates are \$229.00 per night, single or double occupancy not including applicable state and city taxes, currently totaling 12.64%. To make reservations and take advantage of the Convention room rate call the Hilton at (619) 564-3333 or fax requests to (619) 564-3344. NBA special rates are good until July 2, 2009.

CHBA Thanks 2008 Gala Sponsors

On behalf of the 2008 President, Kimberlei Evans Dixon, and 2008 Gala Co-chairs, Nedra Shawler and Jennifer Madden, we would like to thank the sponsors of the 2008 Gala. Without your continued support we would not be able to provide the many philanthropic services that we provide our community, law students and attorneys. Again – thank you:

Hanson Bridgett, LLP

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CHBA Law Student Section

Bay Area Minority Law Student Scholarship Program

The Bar Association of San Francisco is pleased to announce that the application for our Bay Area Minority Law Student Scholarship Program is now available online at the following link:

<http://www.sfbar.org/diversity/scholarships.aspx>.

This program was established to help increase diversity in the legal profession in a concrete way, and alleviate at least one of the many barriers minority students may face when considering law school. In the past 10 years, we have awarded over 50 scholarships to deserving law students in the Bay Area. Awards are given based on financial need, commitment to and involvement in public service, barriers faced in life, and scholastics. Student recipients receive a \$10,000 scholarship towards their first year of law school. Thereafter, the scholarship may be renewed for an additional two years.

The deadline for completed applications is **May 15, 2009, by 4:00 p.m.** If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Daisy J. Hung, Esq. | Bar Association of San Francisco Diversity Pipeline Programs Manager
301 Battery Street | Third Floor | San Francisco, CA 94111, Direct: 415.782-9000 | Extension 8705 Main : 415.982-1600 | Fax: 415.477-2388 dhung@sfbar.org | www.sfbar.org

CHBA Membership

There's never been a more important time for you to join the Charles Houston Bar Association! The Charles Houston Bar Association, an affiliate of the National Bar Association represents the interests of African American lawyers, judges and law students throughout Northern California. Celebrating it's 54th year, CHBA is committed to working within the African American community to facilitate access to the justice system and to promote equal protection under the law. To become a members please visit <http://www.charleshoustonbar.org> or e-mail membership chair Andrew Houston at andrew@ahouston@gmail.com

CHBA 2009 Board

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Board members from Left to Right: Verleana Green, Melissa Brown, Kamili Dawson, Lenora Taylor, Kwixuan Maloof, Venus Johnson, Sharron Gelobter, Andrew Houston, Kimberlei Evans Dixon, Adante Pointer Above: Hon. Brenda Harbin Forte, Hon. Trina Thompson. Nedra Shawler (President).

www.charleshoustonbar.org