

NCWBA “Rocks” at the Summit

By: *Karen M. Goodman (Past WLS President, NCWBA Board member 2009-2013)*

Women lawyers from across the United States and Canada were inspired by extraordinary speakers focusing on the Summit’s theme “Gender Equity—Moving the Bar Forward.” After the newly installed board, including former WLS President Pat Sturdevant, was sworn in by Judge Angela Bradstreet (Past CWL President), Hastings Professor Joan Williams addressed the audience on her extensive studies in gender bias. She emphasized that male lawyers are typically evaluated based on their potential while women lawyers are evaluated based on their achievement. In spite of the discouraging reports of ongoing bias, she encouraged bar leaders to conduct trainings for women lawyers to focus on (1) self-promotion; (2) working as a group (which she described as “power to the posse”) and (3) praising the team. I can’t wait to read her book, “*What Works for Women at Work*,” (available January 2014) on how to implement structural changes to combat gender bias.

Boston lawyer Nancy Cremins presented the audience with a “crash course” on social media, focusing on the benefits of tweeting and blogging to promote practices as well as women bar organizations. She impressed the audience with how her active use of social media has increased her profile in the Boston business community which has resulted in more clients.

As is the tradition of the Summit, bar leaders told the audience about their organization’s great programs addressing gender equity. One of the most valuable features of the Summit is how it actively promotes networking amongst bar leaders. By the end of the day, each lawyer has at least 50 new friends and confidants.

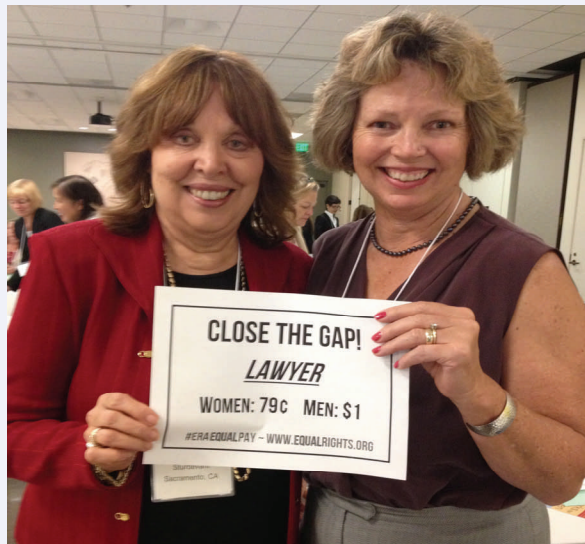
We walked over to the elegant City Club for lunch and NCWBA’s annual awards program. Honored this year were El Paso Women’s Bar Association for its “Project Future” (focusing on foster youths), Women’s Bar Association of Massachusetts for its “Know Your Rights” program and Washington Women Lawyers for its “Legacy Project” program (where they have memorialized the oral histories through film of the Founding Mothers of its bar association). Then, the packed room was enchanted, cajoled and inspired by everyone’s “shero” Pat Schroeder, retired congresswoman from Colorado. She recounted her stories when she first arrived in Washington in 1973, with two young children and faced with people (including women) telling her that she couldn’t do it. She expressed concern as to how little progress we had made in women becoming

political leaders. In spite of United States’ desire to be #1 in everything, we actually rank #90 for women in national leadership positions. She expressed hope that women will work together to fight the ongoing sexism in the media and encouraged organized boycotts of companies that promoted sexism. She advocated for renewal of efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment, for women lawyers to run for political office and to actually set aside August 26th (the day women obtained the right to vote) as a national holiday.

The group returned to the Bar Association of San Francisco’s conference room for an afternoon full of inspiration. Noreen Farrell, Executive Director for the Equal Rights Advocates, told the audience about the importance of closing the gender wage gap. According to her studies women lawyers make 79 cents for every dollar a male lawyer makes. She encouraged bar leaders to work closely with ERA to advocate for equal pay.

Women Lawyers of Sacramento were well represented at the National Conference Women’s Bar Association Annual Summit held on August 9, 2013 in San Francisco

Marsha Greenberger of the National Women’s Law Center told the audience about the work her organization has been doing to secure more women’s appointments to the federal judiciary. NCWBA (through immediate Past President Pam Berman’s inspirational leadership) has taken a highly visible position in promoting more women lawyers to apply for the federal bench. Ms. Greenberger applauded President Obama’s efforts to nominate women for the federal bench (41% of the total nominees), but has been discouraged by the Senators in not reporting nominees to the White House as well as requiring 60 votes for approval. The District of Columbia is a particular problem since certain Senators (because of politics) have decided that it doesn’t need any more judges even though there are three openings. She encouraged bar leaders to identify good candidates and encourage them to apply.



Patricia Sturdevant and Karen Goodman

The audience then divided into 6 smaller groups to focus on equity in the judiciary, equity in society and equity in law practice. Pat Sturdevant headed up one of these break-out sessions. Each group reported back its proposed program. Pat’s group proposed putting together a “Negotiating Tool Kit” to assist women workers in obtaining the compensation they deserve. NCWBA will have written outlines

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of each of the proposed programs for all of its member organizations.

Finally, the group gathered for a wonderful reception at the Hanson Bridgett firm on Market Street. I said good bye to friends, new and old, and wished the 2013-2014 NCWBA Board, led by Past CWL President Andrea Carlise, the best for the new year. My 4 years on the NCWBA Board have been inspiring and illuminating. In many ways, WLS has been a trailblazer (particularly on our great success in getting qualified women appointed to our state trial courts) and NCWBA has provided a sisterhood across the country of women bar leaders committed to improving the condition for women in law and society.



Karen Goodman, Pat Schroeder, and Mary Cain-Simon