

a message from the president

The mission of The National Trial Lawyers is to provide networking opportunities, advocacy training and the highest quality educational programs for trial lawyers. The first annual Trial Lawyers Summit in South Beach in January was successful in accomplishing each aspect of our mission. In light of the excellent response of our members to the 2012 Trial Lawyers Summit, we have scheduled the second annual Trial Lawyers Summit in South Beach at the Loews Hotel on January 27–30, 2013. Save the date and begin next year by networking and sharing ideas and inspiration with America's premier trial lawyers.

At the Summit, the Trial Lawyers Round Table (the 100 most influential trial lawyers) and the Trial Lawyers Forum (the 25 most influential trial lawyer firms) held their organizational reception and luncheon at the former home of Gianni Versace. Tom Girardi was chosen as the Chair of the Trial Lawyers Round Table and the Trial Lawyers Forum and will work during this organizational period with the Executive Committee of Keith Givens, John Romano, Michael Burg, Mike Papantonio and Howard Nations. The immediate goal is to chart the course of the organizations as they undertake to combine resources, power and influence into formidable forces to preserve and protect individual rights, our profession and the judicial system from the scurrilous and unprincipled attacks that are steadily destroying those rights, and diminishing our profession and the judicial system.

The Round Table and Forum were launched at the Trial Lawyers Summit by *The Trial Lawyer* magazine and will move towards self governance, self selection and review of projects and goals during the next few months. If you have suggestions for projects that may be undertaken by these groups to help preserve individual rights or to shed the cleansing light of truth on the image of our profession or that of the judicial system, please contact Tom Girardi or any member of the Executive Committee with your ideas.

As an excellent exemplar of the type of project that the Forum and Round Table may undertake, Susan Saladoff, a member of the Trial Lawyers Round Table, addressed the groups about her award-winning documentary *Hot Coffee*. Susan discussed how we can assist her in gaining the widest possible distribution of her film, which exposes the campaign of lies about the infamous McDonald's coffee case and other factual distortions which are the bedrock of tort reform. If you wish to help in this cause, go to hotcoffeethemovie.com and learn how you can disseminate the truth about the anecdotal distortions that tort reformers have used successfully for decades to attack the civil justice system and our profession.

A highlight of the Trial Lawyers Summit was the Awards Luncheon at which The National Trial Lawyers Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Peter Neufeld and

Barry Scheck of the Innocence Project for their incredible work in exonerating and freeing, to date, 287 citizens who were wrongfully convicted of crimes and imprisoned, many on death row. This important work, which Peter and Barry perform pro bono, is a high profile reflection of the incalculable hours of pro bono work contributed by criminal defense lawyers in our organization to protect the rights of individuals and preserve and protect the rights and freedom of all of our citizens.

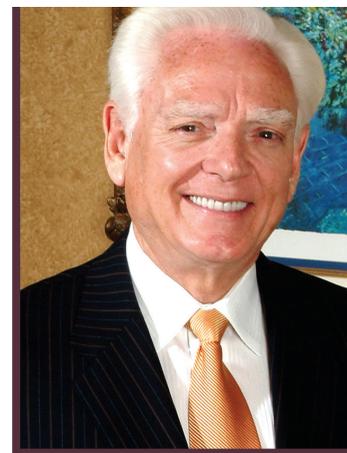
In the political cauldron that America has become in the past two decades, the disdain, disrespect and diminution of individual rights proceeds apace and the efforts of each of us to protect those rights must grow exponentially to meet the ever increasing challenges to the constitutional rights of citizens. If you wish to support Barry and Peter in their important pro bono efforts to free the innocent and protect the individual rights of each of us, contact them at innocenceproject.org.

Part of the mission of The National Trial Lawyers is to promote excellence through advocacy training. It is difficult for our current generation of young trial lawyers to believe that trial lawyers in my generation had twelve to fifteen cases set for trial every Monday morning in the 60s and 70s and that we trained for trials by going to trial. However, one of the by-products of lawyer advertising and tort reform is that, in many jurisdictions, the opportunities for young trial lawyers to hone their trial skills in the courtroom are greatly diminished.

In order to offer guidance and recognition to our young trial lawyers, we formed a new professional organization comprised of America's top young trial attorneys known as the Top 40 Under 40. Membership into The National Trial Lawyers: Top 40 Under 40 is by invitation only and is extended exclusively to those individuals who exemplify superior qualifications, trial results, and leadership as a young lawyer under the age of 40. Selection is based on a thorough multi-phase process which includes peer nominations combined with third-party research. The result is a credible, comprehensive and impressive list of young attorneys chosen to represent their state.

Through the help of our members and affiliate organizations, we will choose the top 40 trial lawyers under the age of 40 in each state and work with them to present Advocacy Skills training from America's premier trial lawyers. We began at the Summit with skill lectures from such outstanding lawyers as Peter Perlman, Tommy Malone and John Romano. The Top 40 Under 40 members will have considerable input into the type of advocacy training they wish to receive. In order to nominate attorneys for either National Trial Lawyers membership or Top 40 Under 40, visit our website at thenationaltriallawyers.org

The next big event is Mass Torts Made Perfect and Torts Made Perfect on April 18–20 at the Wynn Hotel in Las Vegas. In addition to the outstanding educational opportunities,



Howard Nations • President

networking is never better than during the high energy meetings and social events at Mass Torts. Additionally, as in each spring meeting, Thursday, April 19 will feature the inspirational 2012 Trial Lawyer Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony & Luncheon, with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. as the featured speaker.

As a service to our members, the Trial Lawyers Summit included a three hour ethics panel, which was recorded and will be placed on our website by the end of February. If you are in need of ethics CLE credits, this is an excellent source which is free to our members. We will refresh and add to this program periodically but it is our intention to always have ethics credits available on our website.

As always, we encourage your support of our affiliate organizations. And as the madness in Washington continues and the threats against the rights of our clients and our profession continue, we strongly urge our members to join AAJ's Leaders Forum at www.justice.org/AAJPAC.

It has never been more true, as stated by Mark Twain that "No man's life, liberty, or property are safe while the legislature is in session." While the Trial Lawyers Forum and the Trial Lawyers Round Table are joining in the fight to preserve our rights and our system, Linda Lipsen, Chief Executive Officer of the American Association For Justice remains the strongest voice in Washington to preserve and protect the rights of our clients in the legislative halls. She has the full support of the leadership of The National Trial Lawyers.

My year as president of this fine organization ends with this President's Message. It has been a distinct honor and privilege to serve with such an outstanding executive committee, membership and staff. I particularly want to thank past presidents Keith Givens, John Romano and Michael Burg — and our new president, Mike Papantonio — for their invaluable advice and guidance in our effort to build significantly on the firm foundation which they created. It is with a great degree of optimism about the future of this organization that I yield the presidency to Mike Papantonio with the assurance that the organization could not possibly be in better hands. I now gratefully assume the best position in any organization: Past President.