



October 15, 2020
Report of the Projects Chair
Honorable Pennie K. McLaughlin

Summary of Activity:

The pandemic of 2020 has greatly affected District projects this year. Many Districts were creative in developing Zoom or similar meeting platforms to have some degree of continuity in programming. Examples of these programs included virtual receptions, film presentations, book clubs with local members and other events such as a virtual MentorJet program. In most areas, jail projects were shut down due to the difficulty of containing the spread of the virus in custodial settings. 2021 should bring a renewed energy to grow the existing programs and to expand projects into other areas, including the recently added “NAWJ Resource Fair” to our website.

Newer Projects to expand:

1. Reckoning with Racial Injustice in the Courts

The programming in this area has greatly expanded since the public’s recognition of the disparity of treatment faced by Black individuals by law enforcement, prosecutor’s offices and the courts themselves. NAWJ is working hard to develop programming in this area. At the same time, many of our past presidents and current members have appeared on panels to address these entrenched shortcomings. The ABA and many individual state courts (for example, Washington put on an excellent program recently) and legal associations, and other national judicial organizations have responded to the problem head-on with excellent programming attended and or executed by many of our members. There is no doubt that as the leading voice for women in the judiciary, the NAWJ is uniquely situated to continue programming in this area to reach a wider range of our judiciary throughout the country. To this end, not only is the NAWJ presenting excellent panels on bias and racism in our court system, we have sent out letters of inquiry to be invited to apply for large-scale grants in the range of \$150,000 to \$200,000 thanks to Laurie Denham’s grant writing contact. Should NAWJ be awarded such a grant, a team of experts in the field (including professors and leading members of our judiciary) would assist in a presentation aimed to directly raise awareness of the barriers that many people of color face day to day in their efforts to comply with court imposed conditions and disparity in sentencing across racial lines. The proposal includes the production of a dynamic film to set the stage about the extent of the problem, and then, more importantly, provide actual steps to eradicate the long existing

racism and disparity of treatment that has afflicted our justice system. The grant money would also provide needed funds to augment the NAWJ administration costs in carrying out the grant's objectives.

2. Mentor Jet and Informed Voter Project Program Combined

Last year, I reported that San Diego had launched a new program for the NAWJ that combined both our Mentor Jet and Informed Voter Projects. The college students that attended this program were grateful for the information regarding the independence of the judiciary and most reported that they had never thought about this while voting. Plus, during the actual mentoring sessions, further discussion took place on the IVP. Many of the students were determined to learn about the judicial candidates before voting in upcoming elections. It is recommended that all MentorJet programs with college and law school attendees add a 15-minute Informed Voter Project segment to each MentorJet-Color of Justice event.

3. NAWJ Projects Compilation for our Annual and Midyear Dinners:

At the midyear event in New Orleans, our NAWJ administration put together a short slideshow of photos from recent NAWJ events to play while our members were seated in the conference rooms. This year, with the pandemic, we did not gather new photos, as most events were postponed. It is important to highlight at each Mid-year and Annual Conference the many incredible activities that our Districts engage in throughout the country. The Projects Chair can coordinate with the District Directors to ensure that these photos are submitted timely after each event to recognize the individual members who are doing the work in their legal and public communities. Further, the photos can serve to inspire others to become more active. When members are more active, they attract new members, and can help sustain and grow the NAWJ membership roster.

4. NAWJ Logo products for our website and conferences:

Judge Pam Washington and I reviewed several product ideas to purchase for resale at our annual and midyear conferences. It has come to our attention that many of the items for sale at the conferences are popular, but pricey. Further, none of them contain the NAWJ logo. These products would be in addition to the vendors that come and pay a fee to sell their clothing, jewelry and other products. These logo products include a double-sided plastic cup with a straw for cold beverages and a hot drink steel cup. It is expected that members would purchase several of these items to share with colleagues who were unable to attend or who are not yet members. With each item adorned with the NAWJ logo, and available for under \$20 each, it is expected that the sales would be quite robust and could add \$1000 to \$3500 profit to our account with ease. We did discuss the logistical issue of shipping costs if the items were sold on our website, but with this cost added to the product, this would not present a difficult obstacle to making these products available for purchase.

5. Virtual Local Member Book Clubs and Happy Hour with a Purpose Events

Districts have become creative in offering member virtual bonding and educational events in their local member communities. For example, District 4 held a “Happy Hour with a Purpose” event and showed the final episode “The House We Live In,” which was part of the 3-part series Race- the Power of an Illusion. This idea could be replicated in many Districts for our members and potential new members, who would each pay a fee to participate. Los Angeles hosted a Zoom book club where the members discussed “The Women’s Hour,” about the 19th Amendment, and San Diego is hosting a member virtual book club discussing “Caste, The Origins of Our Discontent.” These events can be expanded throughout our Districts to keep our membership engaged and to grow the membership by hosting thought-provoking events on important current issues. As the pandemic lingers, we are adapting through this virtual platform.