

Remarks of Nora J. Baladerian, Ph.D.

Press Conference on Filing of DOJ Complaints

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People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are just that. People. People with feelings, thoughts, preferences. People who deserve respect.

It has been said that how a country treats its most vulnerable citizens, demonstrates the character of the country. If the Los Angeles Superior Court were a country, it would get a failing grade.

The L.A. County Probate court routinely treats the individuals with disabilities who come before them as “less than.” Less than human, I’m sorry to say.

I’m also sorry to say, I have come very late into this game. For forty years, I have been advocating for the well-being and freedom from abuse of this population. It was only two years ago that I was enlightened. Once you are made aware of something, you cannot become unaware of it. It is like the blue ink in the water.

As Executive Director of the Disability and Abuse Project, I have worked alongside attorney Tom Coleman, who founded the Disability and Guardianship project as we responded to several calls for help...all of whose cases involved egregious actions by the probate court and its employees: judges, PVP attorneys, and training arm.

If I, as an involved and informed professional working in this field, could have been so ignorant for so long, while people with disabilities were experiencing court-induced abuse, how many others remained blissfully unaware? Many.

It is time now to right these wrongs.

However, while I had believed that once becoming aware of these egregious practices, change would happen, I now have learned that there is tremendous resistance! Why would the courts and its representatives reject the idea of assuring justice and law-abiding practices? Why indeed. I don’t know. I only know that they have.

We have made all who can make the needed changes aware of the not only the problem, but solutions. They have made specious arguments for continuing their practices: money, time, resources. No time for justice for YOU, is their message.

Today, we take the only step now available. By filing complaints to the US Department of Justice, a thorough investigation will be conducted.

Finally, we have hope that the injustices that have become pro-forma will be corrected...those made in the past, and practices will change so future victims of the court will no longer be victims but respected members of the community whose special needs are met as dictated by law.