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Bar Bulletin: Star-studded lineup for Justice Raymond J. Ehrlich Trial Advocacy Seminar

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Monday, January 26, 11:11 AM EST

By Charles B. Jimerson, Litigation Section Chair for The Jacksonville Bar Association

As a business litigator, I've learned the most important thing to remember when you're trying to persuade a jury or a bench-trial judge is that you must make them see that you really believe in your client's case. That justice is on your client's side, whether your client is a person or an entity.

Everything else is commentary.

With that as background, I'd like to persuade you that if you ever plan on stepping foot in a courtroom again in any capacity, you should sign up for our 2015 Justice Raymond J. Ehrlich Trial Advocacy Seminar.

This seminar will provide you with moments of insight from experienced lawyers and judges that are worth a lifetime of experience. This seminar is your chance to do something today that your future self will thank you for.

This year's impressive list of speakers will undoubtedly challenge you to think for yourself and find your own trial voice.

I believe in this group because I think they are great leaders who will inspire greatness in others.

Our speakers not only plan on telling you what to do to be successful, they'll actually show you how it is done. Not convinced yet? Let me tell you a little bit about our lineup.

Our 2015 legal Bodhi Day will begin with Bob Spohrer telling us about who Justice Ehrlich was and what he meant to our legal community.

As a practicing attorney for more than 40 years and having worked with Justice Ehrlich, Bob will remark on the legacy of Justice Ehrlich and what we all should know about this great man.

Our curriculum begins in earnest with a four-person presentation from Melissa Nelson, Rick Block, Chris Hazelip and Rut Liles speaking to us about "The Top 10 Mistakes Lawyers Make at Trial."

If you practice long enough and try enough cases as these litigators have, you'll see mistakes made and likely make your own mistakes. Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes, and these fine trial lawyers have volunteered their time to share their experiences.

In depositions, as in fishing, nothing is more ungainly than a fisherman being pulled into the water by his catch. Joe Camerlengo and Alan Wachs will teach you how to take and defend depositions, as well as how to use those depositions at trial.

Thereafter, David Wells, Tim Volpe and John DeVault will sit in on a "Bet the Company Litigation" panel. I'm not sure if



Charles Jimerson



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these men are gamblers, but I'd have no problem tempting corporate fortune with them as my Dutch uncle.

At lunch, I'll present the Justice Ehrlich Trial Advocacy Award to the winner who best exemplifies steadfast obedience to ethics, professionalism, preparation, respect to all participants in the legal process, aggressive advocacy, mentorship, scholarship and a driving force to do what is right.

After lunch we'll have a panel of eight — that's right eight — judges serving under a creative new format geared toward adding some flavor into the stale judicial panel format we've experienced.

It is our hope that we can prompt Judges Wallace, Cole, Aho, Carithers and Norton to ask Judges Makar, Clark and Van Nortwick questions that trial lawyers and judges across the land have always wanted to ask appellate judges.

This interactive panel will remind you that you can't judge one's choices without understanding their reasons.

If nothing else, this panel will offer you the opportunity to engage on an informal basis with our local trial and appellate bench. Remember, good lawyers know the law. Great lawyers know the judge.

Subsequently, Catfish Abbott will tell us the who, what, when, where, how and why of jury focus groups. If you can't trust a guy named "Catfish" to teach you how to put your faith in 12 people who weren't smart enough to get out of jury duty, then I don't know who you can trust.

Lastly, we've got a panel to speak about "Media Relations in Courtroom Proceedings" and how for every action there is an equal and opposite action, plus a media overreaction.

This will not be a panel to miss as Judge Debra Nelson and Public Information Officer Michelle Kennedy of State v. George Zimmerman fame will speak about their experience in a trial of national exposure.

Of-quoted media rights advocate George Gabel will speak from an angle of preserving the press' ability to report on the legal process and Florida Bar Counsel Carlos Leon will speak on the ethical requirements and implications of media interactions in litigated matters.

Consider this my gentle nudge to encourage you to take charge of your own professional development in 2015. We've given you brains to pick, ears to bend and a push in the right direction.

If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for your career shortcomings, I bet you wouldn't sit for a month. Own up to it and come get better Feb. 11.

Charles B. Jimerson is an A-V Rated business litigator and board certified construction lawyer who serves as the managing partner at Jimerson & Cobb, P.A.

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