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## Pride in the Profession

*"...the great strength of our profession lies in the integrity with which we act and the honor that we bring to our work."* *Atty.Griev.Comm. v. Coppola*, \_\_\_Md.\_\_\_, Misc. Doc.AG No. 5 (2011) at 40.

In April, I had the honor of attending the Law Day activities of the Bar Association of Montgomery County. Jack Quinn was installed as President and I found one of the most compelling themes of his speech to be his recognition of members of the Bench and Bar of Montgomery County whose lives inspired him and whose conduct brought luster to the reputation of the profession. Several weeks before, the Bar Association of Baltimore City celebrated the accomplishments of the "Living Legends of the Law," most of whom I've had the privilege of knowing for many years. We all know that bar associations and foundations regularly honor lawyers and judges for their contributions to the profession and to the common good. Those celebrations are not just the right thing to do; they are an indispensable part of our legal culture.

It is no secret that members of the public view our profession with cynicism; it is, after all, the basis for an overwhelming number of lawyer jokes. Most people, especially those who have little contact with the legal profession, do not understand the day to day work done by lawyers and the indispensable role they play in conflict resolution and the protection of our freedom and the rule of law. I fear that the public's often negative perception of the profession is, to some extent, fueled by cynicism and distrust within the profession. I often voice regret that such appears to be the case and, at one event, a lawyer said to me, in effect, "easy for you to say, there are lots of lawyers whose conduct makes us cynical."

Maybe that's true, but my experience is that most attorneys try to do the right thing, to represent their clients within ethical bounds, and to seek justice. Many, I hope, most, experienced attorneys try to inculcate novices with a culture of civility and with a love for the profession that celebrates its achievements and grieves when lawyers fall short. We are inspired by the lawyers whom we celebrate as contributors to the public good. We should be proud of lawyers who, like Iranian Shirin Ebadi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, risk their own freedom to represent the weak, the dispossessed, the oppressed. We should be proud of lawyers like the thousands in Pakistan who, in November 2009, were met with police violence, arrest and incarceration, when they demonstrated in the streets for a restoration of the rule of law in that country. And we should be proud of our brothers and sisters in this country who, every day, meet the burdens of the hopeless case, the hated cause and the "impossible" client.

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We fight cynicism by celebrating those whose works inspire us. We honor those who enhance the reputation of the profession, who affirm our own dedication to the law. But we should honor the profession and what it means to the society as a whole not only by celebrating the best of us, but by dedicating ourselves to bring integrity and honor to all the work we do.