



A New Year vow renewal for 2024

Selfless service

BY SPENCER YOUNG

Every January people make a resolution to start a diet, exercise more, find work life balance, and other laudable self-improvement goals. This year, I am renewing an old vow for clients and the community I serve.

Sometimes I get too concerned with the business of law and less concerned with serving people. Sometimes I feel the dread of reviewing a huge document production instead of feeling how lucky I am to make a living learning and fighting for the benefit of other human beings. I often worry too much about my overhead instead of the pain in the community, country, and world I live in. Eighteen years of nearly non-stop litigation has taken a toll. I have gotten distracted with myself.

Today, I choose to renew my vow to serve my clients and think less about what I stand to win. Today I will meet this intentionally disorganized, duplicative, and unresponsive document production with gratitude. Today, I choose to reawaken the spirit of the warrior in me as illustrated to me by my teachers and mentors.

In 2004 I met a martial arts master in Berkeley, California. He taught me kung fu, wrestling, and how to wield weapons for self-defense. More importantly, he shared a warrior code from his teachers. The first guideline for any warrior, according to his/our tradition, is "selfless service."

A true warrior chooses to fight for others. Period. Full stop. This doesn't mean that they don't have any self-interest, or that they don't get paid to work. It means the primary motivation to fight is for someone else and/or the community. Warriorship is selfless service at its core. A mercenary fights for money. A warrior defends what is right. Which one are you?

Of course, the Rules of Professional Conduct require us to be zealous advocates and do what is in the client's best



interest. Critically, these rules do not speak about the *motivation* behind the work for the most part. So today, I renew my vow to be motivated by service to others.

Another martial art master taught me that most, if not all violent conflict, is about three things: 1) resources, 2) power, and/or 3) status. Think of the conflict in Gaza and Ukraine. Think of the infighting in our own congress and city halls these days. As a species, humans are obsessed with conflict-ridden motivations.

If we lawyers are motivated by these things, ultimately, we will experience inner and outer conflict more than the joy of service, doing what is "right," or even doing what really "turns us on." Teachers encourage me (and still remind me occasionally) to meet the day with respect for the truth: Power, status and resources are ultimately impermanent illusory goals.

Many lawyers I meet and read about are concerned with exactly those three things: 1) resources, e.g., money, cases, vacation homes, 2) power, e.g., community influence, ability to extract what they want, and 3) status, e.g., name recognition, Google reviews, verdict records. I have found myself distracted by these things too. So today, I renew my vow to return to why I started my law firm – to listen, learn, lead and win – for the benefit of others, not myself.

Multiple times a year I touch base with my old friend and one of the best life coaches available. He pulled me out of a more-than-mild depression during the Covid-Trump era a few years ago. He reminded me yesterday of his daily vow and intention when he wakes up every morning, "I choose to meet this day with love and gratitude in my heart." Today I renew my vow to do the same for the benefit of others, not myself.

Legal warriorship is serious business. Not because it is a business, but because the goal is to reduce the suffering of others. People are in pain. We can help some of them. We can probably help them more if we think less about ourselves and more about their needs instead of our own.

This new year I renew my vow to selflessly serve others to the best of my ability. Thank you to my teachers and mentors for reminding me of what's important and why I started this work. Yes, I will continue to make a living. Yes, I will continue to make informed business decisions. And, I will do it for the clients, the community, and the arc of justice, not for me, myself and I.

Spencer is the owner of Spencer Young Law, PC, a small firm focusing on employment and personal injury cases. He enjoys fighting for fun in the dojo and in court for clients. His love for consensual combat drives the meaning behind the firm's tagline, "Legal Warriorship" (www.spenceryounglaw.com). He likes to spend his time reading, cooking, hunting, fishing, and traveling when he's not buried in hilariously duplicative document productions or responding to unreasonable settlement offers. He lives in the East Bay with his wife, son, and golden doodle Jojo. 🐶



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