

Let AAJ Inspire You to Fight for Justice

For as long as I can remember, I've always known that I would be a lawyer. I never had an alternate plan.

In 1982, I graduated from law school, passed the bar, and immediately started litigating personal injury cases for a small firm in Maryland. The work was exhilarating and meaningful. I quickly understood the difference I could make in someone's life.

In 1985, at age 26, with little money and few connections, I opened a law

firm. AAJ changed the arc of my career and my personal life. I left that convention inspired and energized. That year was just the first of many occasions when I saw AAJ leadership leap into action. Their efforts in the days following 9/11 assured that victims and their families would not be left behind while Congress considered immunity for the airlines. AAJ was instrumental in forming the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, and I learned that it was not just in the courtroom where we can

could not run a successful law firm and give our clients the care they deserve.

For the past five years, I've had the privilege of serving with dedicated, hardworking, and supportive AAJ officers and leaders. I also draw inspiration from the leaders who



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firm, announcing that I would handle only personal injury matters. I bought a used typewriter (yes . . . a typewriter) to start my practice. For six months, I answered the phones and licked the stamps.

Over the next 15 years, I built my practice and became heavily involved in my state trial lawyer association. In 2001, I met my wife, Tanique, and was about to become president of the Maryland Association for Justice. That was also the year I decided to attend my first AAJ convention.


It is not hyperbole to say that the first AAJ convention I attended was an eye-opener to all that the association offered. After that, my involvement with

make a difference: Our presence is necessary in the halls of Congress and state legislatures, as well. Trial Lawyers Care was created to provide free legal services to 9/11 victims and their families and would become the association's largest and most successful pro bono project. For a detailed history, visit www.justice.org/ways-to-give/volunteer/trial-lawyers-care/tlc-history.

I have rarely missed a convention since that first one almost 25 years ago. My involvement with AAJ has made me a better lawyer, helped me grow my firm, given me personal fulfillment, and introduced me to great friends and lawyers around the country. Most importantly, I became part of a community that shares my belief that civil justice is a crucial pillar of society.

I could not have dedicated time to AAJ over the past 25 years without Tanique's support and encouragement. Without my exceptional law partners, I

served before me. Their sage advice is invaluable. I look to the future with great optimism as I see strength and perseverance from our next generation of leaders. As I begin my term as AAJ's 80th president, I only hope I can give a young lawyer attending their first convention or a veteran stalwart a bit of encouragement, pride, courage, and fulfillment—just like I've received from AAJ over the years.

We face an existential crisis in the year ahead because we are under attack with an assault on the rule of law. And I expect those opposed to justice to concoct new weapons. But we will be prepared, and we will prevail. It is a privilege to serve all of you as we fight for justice. 

Bruce M. Plaxen

is a partner with Plaxen Adler Muncy in Columbia, Md., and can be reached at bruce.plaxen@justice.org.