

Disability in the Legal Professions

Introductory Speech

Daniel Holt

Good evening everyone. Welcome to the Disability in the Legal Professions event organised by the Young Lawyer's Committee.

I must thank 39 Essex Chambers, Tom Tabori and Beth Williams for helping us to put this event together by providing this fantastic meeting space. We do appreciate it. I would also like to show appreciation to the Young Lawyers Committee and Executive Committee members who have supported me in bringing this together,

There are some housekeeping matters to bring to your attention. We do have to vacate by 8:30 but please do come for drinks at The Knights Templar. [Insert Here]

Tonight's discussion is a significant one. It will highlight diversity issues that are often forgotten in the discourse. The purpose of this event is to raise awareness of the steps needed to ensure that disabled people can access the legal professions; to make sure disabled people are no longer discouraged from practicing. I hope these speeches will set the foundations for greater diversity within the legal professions.

Our distinguished panel contains:

John Horan who will be Chairing tonight's panel. He is a prominent discrimination barrister at Cloisters. He was the first barrister to receive guidance from the EAT about disabled people's rights before any court or tribunal. In 2016 John was listed by Power 100 as one of Britain's most influential people with a disability. In 2015 John hosted the European Commission's Monitoring Conference in Brussels on the Rights of People with Disabilities and the Courts. He has recently been involved in the trailblazing cases of Galo and Rackham, which he will no doubt discuss.

Jocelyn Cockburn is a partner at Hodge, Jones & Allen. She is joint Head of the Civil Liberties Team and also a member of the Military Claims Team. Jocelyn is regarded as a leader and an expert in the fields of Civil Liberties and Actions Against the Police with a wealth of experience representing bereaved families at Inquests and civil claims arising out of deaths in custody. She was Highly Commended at the Law Society Excellence Awards 2013. She won The Lawyer's "Partner of the Year Award" in 2012 and had been presented with the Personal Injury Case of the Year in 2010.

Diego Soto-Miranda is a barrister from 1 Essex Court. He has a wide-ranging practice in international and domestic commercial law, as well as other areas of civil practice, including defamation, professional negligence, human rights law and chancery, litigating in both domestic courts and tribunals. His litigation experience extends beyond domestic cases and he is accustomed to working with foreign lawyers, particularly Latin American attorneys and legal attachés of the Latin American Embassies in London.

Joanna Owen is a Senior Lawyer at the Equality and Human Rights Commission and legal lead on the Commission's work on health care matters. Her EHRC legal work has focussed on large scale inquiries covering topics as diverse as the protection of human rights of older people receiving home care and the gender pay gap in the finance sector. She also on the EHRC's formal investigation into unlawful discrimination of employees by the Metropolitan Police Service.

Josh Hepple is a writer, disability activist and trainer. Josh has been an Equality Trainer at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe for many years. He has written in the Guardian and elsewhere about his experiences as a gay disabled man. He undertook intensive research on the necessities of oral advocacy as part of his LLM qualification.

I will now leave you in John's capable hands. I do hope you enjoy the event.