

Hopes for 2011 and Beyond

This being the start not only of a new year but of a new decade, please allow me to wax philosophical and list some of my fondest hopes for all:

Fairness and Justice

Most of us are aware that laws are greatly influenced by politics. That is, laws enacted by lawmakers (who also happen to be politicians) do not necessarily promote or lead to fairness and justice for all but often only for a favored few. The manner by which laws are sometimes executed by enforcement officers and interpreted by judges may also leave much to be desired. They are still human beings after all. As human beings, we all have vested interests, whether we would like to admit it or not. These interests inevitably creep into anything that we do, think or say, whether intentionally or not. However, as human beings, we are also gifted with the ability to discern and to make choices.

Therefore, whenever we are faced with a situation where we feel that the laws and their implementation or interpretation are not fair or are not in accordance with our views of what is just, we should not feel helpless and simply accept things as they are. Instead, we should always be reminded that achieving fairness and justice is not the sole domain of legislators and politicians, lawyers and judges, policemen and other enforcement officers.

I am not advocating anarchy or taking justice into our own hands. Far from it. A civilized society such as ours will still benefit from having systems in place to enact laws, enforce and interpret the same, which is what our legislative, executive and judicial branches of government are tasked to perform.

However, as responsible and concerned members of society, we are strongly encouraged to do our part in ensuring that our voices are heard every step of the way and that we support advocacies meant to stop the abuses and injustices perpetuated within a necessary but oftentimes misguided system.

Fairness and justice may seem frustratingly elusive at times but this should not prevent us from persistently working towards their realization, if not for ourselves, at least for future generations.

Good Health and Happiness

In this age when cancer of all kinds may seem like a growing pandemic and all sorts of mysterious diseases are becoming manifest, it is easy to become a bit paranoid and be anxious about our own and our loved ones' physical well being.

A cliché we have often heard from childhood is that, “Health is wealth”. Our wiser elders often remind us of the importance of keeping healthy by eating right, physical exercise, maintaining a positive attitude and living a full and balanced life. If we listen and follow these basic guidelines, then genuine happiness will hopefully be well within our reach. If despite our best efforts to achieve a healthy lifestyle, we still find ourselves stricken with a terminal illness, my hope is that we get the best medical attention possible and have the support of compassionate caregivers if needed until we breathe our very last.

Achieving a healthy mind and body is only one part of the happiness equation however. Achieving a healthy and peace-filled spirit is the other necessary part. Which leads me to my next fervent hope:

True and Lasting Peace

A wise person once said that peace is not merely the absence of war. Indeed, peace is actually better characterized by the presence of fairness and justice, of good health and happiness within a society. For individuals, we can also add the presence of a kind and generous spirit, free of anger, despair and all negative feelings towards ourselves and others.

Of course, these things are easier said (and written) than done. But they are not at all impossible. As earlier said, we as human beings have our limitations and weaknesses. However, it is always our choice to turn these limitations and weaknesses into strengths. Once we have learned to triumph over our human frailties, peace of mind, body and spirit will inevitably follow. If we can make every effort towards this goal, the dream of a true and lasting peace for the rest of the world will not anymore seem like an impossible dream.

Here’s hoping that you will be blessed with all these and more in this new decade.

The author is an immigration lawyer in Toronto and may be reached at deanna@santoslw.ca.