Change is coming

By Nina Marino

Twenty-eight years ago, I was not a white-collar criminal defense attorney. I was a new attorney practicing criminal defense law. I took court appointed cases. In the wake of the acquittal of four LAPD officers who beat up Rodney King, Los Angeles erupted in a firestorm of flame and smoke. I recall watching from my roof top in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned. But that was in West Hollywood as Pico and La Cienega burned.

The jury was out a couple of hours before they acquitted Moises of all charges. The judge was visibly unhappy with the verdict, apparently believing Moises Mota should have been found guilty for the looting and destruction of the city. And so, it did not end there. During the resulting civil lawsuit against the city for wrongful arrest, the city attorney requested a trial exhibit. The court clerk could not locate the exhibit, and the judge, in what I believe was retaliation against me for representing Moises, accused me of stealing it. The fear I felt of being wrongly accused, like my client, Moises, was terrifying. Would the false charge stick? Would I lose my law license after just a few years of practice? I had to hire a lawyer to represent me. Soon after I did that, the missing exhibit was found; apparently the clerk had misplaced it.

My experience of watching the riots of 1992, defending the wrongfully accused, and ultimately having to defend myself, has stayed with me throughout my career. Seeing the city ignite again for the very same reasons it ignited 28 years ago is profoundly gut wrenching. The gaping hole in which the pain of injustice resides in our city and in our country has never been healed. The hole continues to exist as an abyss of police brutality and excessive force fueled by racism, inequality, and fear rooted in 400 years of oppression. So profound is this hole, that even COVID-19 could not cover it up. As Kareem Abdul-Jabbar said recently in the LA Times, “the needle hardly budges.”

Yet, I see cause for hope. In 1992, we had what history has recorded as six days of “riots.” Today we have peaceful and organized protests made possible by level heads and social media connectivity. The protesters also look different today than they did in 1992. In 1992, the protesters were largely black people, today they are mostly young people of all races, including a lot of white people.

The looters of today, like the protesters, are also more organized due to social media. However today, because there are cameras everywhere, LAPD is not sweeping like they did in 1992 when more than 12,000 people were arrested over the six-day period. Today, on day six, 2,700 people have been arrested; I think we can expect more arrests will come later, but hopefully they will be supported by better evidence. Today, perhaps Moises Mota would not be arrested.

Education and the ongoing discussion of all that exists in the hole has been the bedrock of change. In 1992 the term “white privilege” was not commonly known. Today we understand what it means to be black and what it means to be white and how that shapes our experiences. We understand that being black is to exist with barriers and stigma, whereas being white is to exist with privilege. We also see clearly that the pain the black community feels is not a brief moment in time, but in fact a lifetime, and because of that