A CALL TO SERVE

The IIPSJ Intellectual Property Empowerment Summit

In 2010 the Institute of Intellectual Property and Social Justice (IIPSJ) will conduct its first National IP Empowerment Summit, at the Howard University School of Law. The IP Empowerment Summit will bring together a diverse group of IP professionals, including IP lawyers from private practice, in-house counsel, and educators, to collaborate with legislators and public interest and community activists to devise empowerment strategies for community development built around artistic works and technological innovation.

IIPSJ IP Empowerment Action Committees will be formed to create both discrete plans on particular topics, and to collectively construct a blueprint to help educate and empower socio-economically marginalized communities to protect and commercially exploit their own IP works for their own benefit. We expect these efforts to lead to the establishment of IP Empowerment Zones in strategic urban locations. The constituencies to be served include associations of artists; students in fine arts, engineering, and science degree programs; community development associations; and inventors. IIPSJ IP Summit attorneys will also work to empower attorneys serving these communities to develop the competencies and skills to carry out this work.

IP practitioners from a variety of law firms, in-house counsel departments, academic institutions, and public interest organizations have committed to participate in the IP Empowerment Summit, and plans are underway to link this program to similar initiatives around the nation.

The Need for IP-Focused Empowerment Strategies

In today’s information-based economy, economic power is often dependent upon intellectual property. Consequently, IP attorneys can and should take the lead in empowering minority and other marginalized communities to compete for and attain a stake in the 21st century economy. Stimulating an increase in ethnic diversity within the intellectual property bar is a major objective of the Summit, and also a key means through which to implement the IIPSJ empowerment strategies.
The IIPSJ IP Empowerment Summit Core Principles and Objectives

The core principles underlying IIPSJ’s community IP empowerment program are:
• IP Education and Rights Protection;
• Beneficial IP Exploitation and Entrepreneurial Development; and
• IP Political Activism and Legislative Lobbying.

The one-day IP Empowerment Summit will bring together patent, trademark and copyright attorneys, other IP professionals, and members of the public interest and community action sectors, to meet, discuss, learn, and network about how they can implement the underlying principles through:
• Promoting diversity in the field of IP practice;
• Empowering minority and marginalized communities through the vehicle of IP protection and exploitation; and
• Sharing best practices in an effort to further their professional careers and ascend to strategic positions through which to effectuate social change.

The IP Empowerment Summit Pilot Community Programs

The IP Empowerment Summit will function as a clearinghouse of valuable information concerning minority artists, inventors, entrepreneurs, and IP professionals. Information regarding market opportunities and business development trends will also be developed, including a national database of minority IP lawyers. Much of this information will be captured at the Summit and then disseminated through IIPSJ’s website (www.iipsj.org). Summit participants will be invited to join permanent IP Empowerment Action Committees to assess and use the data, and to deploy the IP empowerment agenda through various community programs, including:

The IIPSJ Minority Students in Science and Engineering Program
This program will engage law students, attorneys, and academicians in the development and presentation of “IP Road Show” programs designed to expose undergraduate minority science, engineering, and fine arts students to the fundamentals of IP law. The twin objectives of this program are to apprise students of the information needed to successfully exploit their creative works, as well as to expose them to the career option of pursuing careers in the field of IP law.

The IIPSJ Community IP Rights and Education Program
This program will educate high school and college students, as well as community creative artists and inventors, about the interconnected themes of intellectual property rights education and the importance of creator/inventor rights. Law students and practicing IP attorneys will undertake to familiarize members of the target communities with the benefits of IP protection, and to help them to more fully appreciate that they are both creative artists and inventors as well as IP end-users. Community artists and inventors will learn how weak creator/inventor rights
diminish their own prospects for IP-related economic empowerment. The program will include structured exploration of public domain material as a preferred source for user-generated content and private innovation, and examine how the use of such material presents fewer legal restrictions and concomitantly greater prospects for entrepreneurial success.

The IIPSJ Indigenous Talent Development Program
This program will bring together IP professionals and entrepreneurs to assist marginalized creative artists and inventors in the propitious exploitation of their creative output in the digital age. Sponsored community workshops and laboratories will provide development facilities, IP-related educational and vocational information, and opportunities for artistic license arrangements and technology transfer agreements.

The IIPSJ IP Empowerment and Political Activism Project
This multi-faceted project will seek to increase public awareness and understanding of IP, will engage in political activism through community building around IP issues, and will function as a legislative developments think-tank. The Empowerment and Political Activism Project will provide a vehicle through which IP professionals, educators, and public interest and community activists can collaborate on IP policy initiatives and lobbying efforts, and provide a platform through which they can advocate for IP legislation and government initiatives which will ensure the continued vitality of IP rights and a close fit between these rights and the socio-economic empowerment of minorities and other marginalized groups.

The IIPSJ IP Empowerment Summit Corporate Sponsorship Program
Opportunities are available for corporate sponsorship and participation in the IP Empowerment Summit, the community pilot programs, and IIPSJ’s permanent program. For details regarding corporate sponsorship, please contact Prof. Lateef Mtima at lmtima@iipsj.org or lmtimallmtima@aol.com.

For additional information about the IP Empowerment Summit please visit us at www.iipsj.org or contact Tashia Bunch at 617-956-5909 or at tbunch@fr.com.