

## **WORD MAGIC: HARSH REALITIES REGARDING THE MECHANISMS OF HUMAN LANGUAGE**

The modern American may laugh at the thought that "*once upon a time*" his ancestors may have believed that by the incantation of certain words they could make magical things happen – the witchcraft thing and all that.

Well the truth is that most people still believe in word magic and this is the very reason that so many modern enterprises are so successful to include those which rely on salesmanship, marketing, advertising, politicking, preaching, and the like. Using words, the sorcerers of commerce, banking, finance, government, religions, and the like conjure images of wondrous benefits and many people respond to those words as though the benefits are as certain to appear as have the words, themselves.

And nowhere is this ironic truth more in evidence than in the courtroom. The words and accompanying rituals of adjudicatory proceedings rely heavily on "forms and solemnities" of law to carry the tide of proceedings more rapidly to completion. The typical citizen finding himself in the courtroom has little or no inklings regarding the substance of law – that is verifiable meanings that may exist in the law and the issues of his case -- and so the courtroom players rely on the forms of law to carry the day for them most of the time. Similarly, whenever the individual "*pro se* litigant" comes to court expecting the words of his pleadings to be sufficient in themselves to get the justice he believes is due him, then he believes in word magic.

Whether he comes to court with the right words or only with words he mistakenly believed were the right words, he shows childish belief in word magic when he expects the words alone to carry his case. Only if he understands there is no magic in words themselves, but rather the magic is in words argued with knowledge and skill will he win his case or get his case dismissed, etc.

Regards,

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