

# Endurance of the Legal Profession During a Crisis

By KYLE LABUFF



I WAS WATCHING THE KEN BURNS DOCUMENTARY of the Roosevelts a few weeks ago. When the documentary would shift the focus to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, I was reminded of the level of challenging times that we as a nation have endured. Thinking of my grandparents, who were part of the Greatest Generation, it certainly puts a lot in perspective. My Italian grandmother would tell me stories of what it was like growing up during the Great Depression. They would have to put cardboard in parts of the soles of their shoes when they were worn, as they could not afford new shoes. An orange would be the only item in their stocking for Christmas. The level of uncertainty and fear weighed heavily on every family, but they pushed through the uphill battle. This was a result of tightening the belt, working together, trying new paths, and rolling up the sleeves.

There is a point made cited on various websites noting if someone was born in 1900, their first 50 years were a story of endurance unlike most generations moving forward. Starting with World War I, the Spanish Flu, The Great Depression, World War II, the Cold War, and the loss of multiple presidents. (Emerginggrowth.com) The times are tough now, but I have no doubt we-citizens and lawyers can push through this as we have done in the past.

It has been such an inspiration to see how the Connecticut Bar Association has reacted to the pandemic. A COVID-19 Pandemic Task Force, spearheaded under Ndidi Moses's presidency and continued under Amy Lin Meyerson's presidency, has provided relief to attorneys throughout Connecticut. This has been in the form of helping with the PPP loans, understanding how the profession will adapt to the technological needs, and even an opportunity to report hate crimes. There were eight subcommittees, including: Liaison to the Executive and Legislative Branch, Judicial and Federal Branch Liaison, Legal Aid, Public at Large, Legal Profession, Financial Impact on the Legal Profession, Technology, and Law Students and Law Schools. We know that there continues to be a tremendous demand for legal aid with each month that passes. Evictions, wills, and bankruptcies will flood the state and it should be our obligation to answer the call. If you have any spare time, please donate your efforts to help those in need. I my-

self have gone through challenging economic times in adulthood and I still make volunteering an obligation. There is always someone in a worse position.

Immediate Past President Ndidi N. Moses organized the State of the Legal Profession Task Force during her presidency. This task force consists of five subcommittees: Leveraging Technology to Advance the Legal Profession, Advancing the Legal Industry through Alternative Business Models, Law Schools and Future Lawyers, Modernizing Lawyer Referral and Law Firm Models, and Revising Ethics Rules. Although this task force was established before the pandemic, this has developed into a stress test of our profession. This past September, the task force hosted a virtual seminar to discuss the "Advances in Technology, Artificial Intelligence and Alternative Fee Arrangements." The task force's findings provided an accurate need and direction of our field.

FDR was once quoted as saying, "If something doesn't work, admit it frankly and try something else. But above all, try something!" The CBA is doing more than trying "something!" The one-two punch of these task forces brought information and hopefully more peace of mind and opportunity to the legal field. I am thankful for the leadership of Attorneys Amy Lin Meyerson and Ndidi Moses. Many others participated in these Task Forces and I thank them, too. I particularly want to thank my fellow Millennials who embraced the challenge and helped out by taking on those pro bono cases. I used to worry how we were an untested generation. Between the Great Recession and the COVID-19 pandemic, I no longer believe that. We have most certainly been tested.

Our profession was unquestionably around in 1900 and we endured. Now is no different. Through great leadership, working together, and a little bit of sacrifice, we will get through this era of uncertainty and worry—and we will be stronger for it! ■

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*Kyle LaBuff currently works for the Division of Criminal Justice as a deputy assistant state's attorney. He has published multiple articles in the CT Lawyer and is vice-chair of the State of the Legal Profession Task Force.*