

CBA Hosts 7th Annual Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit

On October 19, more than 150 people attended the CBA's seventh annual Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit: The Collaborative Blueprint. The interactive and engaging virtual summit explored strategies for increasing retention in legal organizations and creating a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive legal community within Connecticut.

CBA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chair Ronald J. Houde, Jr. welcomed participants to the summit: "This year we are focusing on leadership retention and career development. The summit aims to encourage the development of formal and informal opportunities that are realistically achievable by diverse individuals," Houde stated. "Over the past five years, I've seen the true depth and passion in the work of the CBA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. I have also seen an increase in commitment among the various practice sections of the CBA."

Similar to years past, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chair, Hon. Cecil J. Thomas, presented the data from the Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity & Inclusion Pledge & Plan Signatories, which showed changes in the diversity of signatory organizations. The signatories represent varying legal sectors from solo and small firms to large firms, as well as public/non-profit legal professionals and corporate counsels. The Diversity & Inclusion Pledge & Plan reflects a reaffirmation of the legal profession's commitment to approaching diversity and inclusion strategically, collaboratively, and with accountability.

Featured Presenter Ritu Bhasin led the interactive workshop, "Inclusive Coaching Workshop: Coaching for Inclusion and Not Conformity." Attendees learned how, as leaders in the legal profession, to ensure that they are providing coaching, mentorship, sponsorship, and advocacy in an inclusive manner. Activities during the workshop focused on methodology for coaching across cultural differences and the skills necessary to empower and elevate team members without pushing conformity.



Ritu Bhasin

During the workshop, Bhasin shared her "Three Selves Framework," which breaks down an individual into the concepts of "authentic self, adapted self, and performing self." Bhasin asked attendees, "To what extent have you been encouraging your team members to bring their authentic selves to work?" and discussed methods for managers to leverage the "Three Selves Framework" to help make employees feel more comfortable and accepted in their work environments. Bhasin also shared her inclusive coaching framework, which is meant to help workplace leaders better identify which feedback they provide is constructive and which of it is based on inherent biases.

The afternoon programming was split into hour-long breakout panels. During the first track, attendees had three breakout panel options to choose from:

The first panel option, "Inclusive Leadership, The Foundation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within Your Organization," featured presenters Hon. Rupal Shah, Hon. Anne C. Dranginis, (Ret.), Margaret Castinado, Beck Fineman, Marilyn J. Ford, and Eboni S. Nelson. This diverse panel of lawyers, judges, and law professors broke barriers within their respective legal careers, with each being the first person of their background or identity to achieve their specific leadership role. They shared their personal experiences and explored the meaning of inclusive leadership and how to be an inclusive leader within the legal profession.

Another panel, "Promoting DEI in Corporate Legal Departments and when Retaining Outside Counsel," featured presenters Peter Lee and Marin Lorenson and moderator Moy N. Ogilvie. Attorneys Lee and Lorenson spoke about their companies' DEI initiatives and how DEI considerations are assessed when retaining outside counsel. While discussing the processes that her company has set in place, Lorenson, who is employed with The Hartford, pointed out that competency in

diversity, equity, and inclusion is “an essential component of leadership in today’s world.”

The third breakout panel option, “Promoting Access to Justice While Advancing Racial Justice,” featured presenters Kelsey Bannon, John Doroghazi, Michelle Pallak Movahed, and Na-Tonia Trammell and moderator Natalie Wagner. The panelists discussed how the access to justice gap relates to racial justice and how the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated both issues. They also shared the efforts that those within the legal community have made towards mitigating the gap in access to justice and promoting racial justice with new pro bono initiatives and focused projects.

The second track had three breakout panel options for attendees to choose from:

The breakout panel, “Building and Positioning your Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Team for Success,” featured presenters Alfredo G. Fernández, Daryl McGraw, Tara Pollard, and Asker Saeed and moderator Jenn Shukla. This panel, made up of directors of diversity, a diversity committee chair, and a diversity consultant, presented different models that DEI professionals and teams can utilize to bolster their efforts. The panel discussed differences in appropriate techniques, organizational formats, goals, and assessments for success between small and large organizations.

Another panel option for attendees was “Understanding and Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment in the Legal Profession,” which featured presenters Jonathan G. Martinis, Dr. Arin Reeves, and Marcy T. Stovall and moderator Daniel A. Schwartz. Focusing on acts of overt discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, this panel discussed studies on the impact that these acts have on the legal profession. They also presented on how states, including Connecticut, have implemented new rules of professional ethics to combat these types of transgressions.

The third breakout panel option of the afternoon was, “Words Matter V. II,” which featured presenters Margaret I. Castinado, Aigné Goldsby, Carolyn A. Ikari, and Kimberly Jacobsen. The panelists discussed the evolving terminology related to identity and inclusivity as well as how the use of different types of language directed towards social, racial, and ethnic groups can inflict both intentional and unintentional harm. One panelist, Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen spoke about the responses that negatively affected her when she spoke with others about her diagnosis of Parkinson’s Disease. She encouraged attendees to “really listen to what a person is telling you before responding” when talking with someone to lessen the chance of inadvertently saying something offensive or upsetting.

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The Connecticut Legal Community’s Diversity & Inclusion Pledge & Plan

The Connecticut Bar Association began an initiative to bring together legal leaders in the state to enhance diversity and inclusion in the Connecticut legal community in 2016 and continues to accept signatories to join the collective pledge, reflecting the commitment of Connecticut legal organizations to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environments and for a collaborative plan to achieve this goal. The pledge and plan is a multi-year commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion in legal organizations, with different focuses each year to help signatories attain their diversity and inclusion goals.

As of October 19, 2022, the following organizations have signed onto the Connecticut Legal Community’s Diversity & Inclusion Pledge and Plan:

Boehringer Ingelheim USA Corporation	Greater Hartford Legal Aid
Brown Paindiris & Scott LLP	Halloran Sage
Carlton Fields PA	Kalon Law Firm LLC
Carmody Torrance Sandak & Hennessey LLP	Letizia Ambrose & Falls PC
City of New Haven Office of the Corporation Counsel	Locke Lord LLP
Cohen and Wolf PC	McCarter & English LLP
Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities	McElroy Deutsch Mulvaney & Carpenter LLP
Connecticut Bar Association	Morizio Law Firm PC
Connecticut Bar Foundation	Murtha Cullina LLP
Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice	New Haven Legal Assistance Association
Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services	Pullman & Comley LLC
Connecticut Fair Housing Center	Robinson+Cole
Connecticut Legal Rights Project Inc.	Ryan Ryan Deluca LLP
Connecticut Legal Services Inc.	Saxe Doernberger & Vita PC
CVS Health	Shipman & Goodwin LLP
Danaher Lagnese PC	St. Onge Steward Johnson & Reens LLC
Day Pitney LLP	Statewide Legal Services of Connecticut Inc.
Eversource Energy	Stockman O’Connor PLLC
Finn Dixon & Herling LLP	Udpike Kelly & Spellacy PC
	Verrill Dana LLP
	Wiggin and Dana LLP
	Yale-New Haven Health System

If you are interested in your organization becoming a signatory to the pledge and plan, please download a copy and submit a signed copy to ctbar.org/pledgesubmission.

Wellness

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lowed for our feeling, then what? When you face an unpleasant situation, what do you do? Do you focus on the unpleasant situation or finding a solution? If there isn't a solution, do you focus on the situation, the lack of solution, or do you shift to something else? When you hit a dead end, are you frustrated and hopeless? Or do you see your journey down this path as a learning opportunity and look to try another path? We are not in control of events, but we are in control of what we pay attention to, how we respond, and whether we continue forward or stop. We can create a world of excitement, curiosity, learning, opportunities, and hope or we can create one of fear, hardships, barriers, and despair. This is our choice, our power.

Victor Frankl famously noted: "When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves." I hope that you join me and rise to the challenge, cultivate an IRAC mindset through continual practice, and create that better world for yourself! ■

NOTES

1. Satterfield, J. M., Monahan, J., & Seligman, M. E. P. (1997). Law school performance predicted by explanatory style. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 15, 95-105.

DE&I

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee co-chair Salihah R. Denman provided closing remarks for the Summit, thanking those who attended, stating, "With your help, our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts will move forward." She pointed to the CBA Future of the Legal Profession Scholars Program as one of many important projects being undertaken to increase diversity in the legal profession.

Thank you to the presenters and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Summit Committee members for organizing an interactive and engaging event and to all our sponsors for making the event possible. ■

Top Lessons Learned

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addressed above, including: whether vaccines can and should be mandated; whether COVID-19, "long COVID," and complications of pre-existing conditions which were caused by COVID-19 qualify as a disability under Americans with Disabilities Act and corresponding state law; whether work-from-home accommodations will be more often considered a "reasonable accommodation" by the courts; whether certain expenses incurred by employees who work from home, such as cost of equipment and household utilities, must be reimbursed by employers; what other work-related activities constitute on-the-clock work versus off-the-clock work, such as requiring testing or checking emails from home; and whether COVID-19-related injuries are compensable claims under the Worker's Compensa-

tion Act. What remains clear, however, is that employers and employees must continue to have open conversations about these matters. An employer's focus on employees' needs, desires, well-being, and engagement have substantial impacts on employees. Despite the pandemic, it is important that we, as humans in a workforce, are professional, appreciate others' efforts, and recognize the hard work of the members on our team. ■

Cindy M. Cieslak is the secretary of the Labor & Employment Section of the Connecticut Bar Association and the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division Delegate for the Young Lawyers Section of the Connecticut Bar Association. She is a partner at Rose Kallor LLP in Hartford, where she focuses her practice on labor & employment litigation, as well as independent workplace investigations.

Housing Matters

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vice-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-12D.pdf.

10. In April 2022, the Washington Post reported that rents in Hartford County increased 10.1% since 2019. By comparison, of the counties that make up New York City, the largest increase was in Brooklyn at a 2.8% increase. Abha Bhattarai, Chris Alcantara and Andrew Van Dam, *Rents are rising everywhere. See how much prices are up in your area*, WASH. POST, April 21, 2022, www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2022/rising-rent-prices.

In 1960, 11.9 percent of Connecticut renters paid over half of their income on housing costs. That number steadily increased over time. 58 years later, in 2018, 21% of renters paid over half of their income on housing costs. Over the next two years, that number exploded to 26.9% of renters paying over half of their income towards housing costs in 2020. Connecticut saw a nine increase over 58 years, versus a six percentage increase in 2 years. One might imagine what the 2022 data will show. PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES, HOUSING IN CT 2022, (Jan. 2022), <https://www.pschoosing.org/sites/default/files/Housing%20in%20CT%20finale%202022.pdf>.

11. Camila Vallejo, *In Connecticut, rental vacancy rates are the lowest in the U.S., leaving renters with few options*, CONN. PUBLIC, August 26, 2022, www.ctpublic.org/news/2022-08-26/in-connecticut-rental-vacancy-rates-are-the-lowest-in-the-u-s-leaving-renters-with-few-options

Young Lawyers

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erly understand the intricacies of a case or close a complex transaction. We do not shy away from the tough conversations in those situations. It's time we start putting in the hard work and make that same effort for each other. Our profession will be better for it. ■

President's Message

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the old short calendar system. Mentors of old taught us how to be lawyers and the long-gone short calendar motion practice was our playground to earn our litigation stripes. We cannot fail our younger lawyers. Together we can create an efficient calendar that helps to lay the foundation for successful litigation careers. ■

NOTES

1. www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/committees/commercial-business/practice/2018/how-judiciary-is-helping-younger-lawyers-close-the-experience-gap
2. *Id.*
3. *Id.*