

# Generational Conflicts

By CHRISTOPHER A. KLEPPS

**T**he power of nostalgia has always fascinated me. That sentimental affection for the past can bring temporary happiness and comfort. (I will admit I'm guilty of rehashing stories for the hundredth time with my college friends.) On the other hand, that wistful longing can sometimes result in a jaded worldview: a belief that everything was better in the past and that things are always getting worse. I think that contributes to generational conflict.

As a kid, I heard countless times how my generation was coddled, lacked toughness, expected success to be handed to us, and did not value hard work. I remember one of my baseball coaches saying in response to a perceived lack of effort by one of my teammates: "That *never* happened when I played. We *always* ran hard. You all don't know how to play the game." In short: "my generation is better than yours."

Those stereotypes never made much sense to me. My teammates worked hard. They cared. They put in the work. They wanted to be better. I saw it firsthand every day at practice. Still, I was just a kid. Maybe my coach was right. More importantly, I had no way to prove he was wrong. Did we really not know how to play baseball the right way? Did we actually lack toughness? How much harder *was* it ten or 20 years ago? It didn't seem probable, but the adult-driven narrative made it at least *possible* that we Millennials weren't as good or driven as the players who came before us.

I realized the silliness in that premise around the time I turned 30, when I be-

*Christopher A. Klepps is the chair of the Connecticut Bar Association Young Lawyers Section for the 2022-2023 bar year. Attorney Klepps is senior counsel at The Hartford where he provides legal advice regarding coverage issues on a wide variety of claims, as well as manages litigation involving The Hartford throughout the country.*



gan seeing some of my fellow Millennials making those *same* comments about Generation Z. Time had passed, so it was apparently our turn to tell the next generation that they lack toughness, bemoan participation trophies, and tell anyone who will listen about how difficult, but better, it was when we grew up.

Unfortunately, these generational biases and stereotypes are not only visible on athletic fields, cocktail hours, and Facebook memes. They pervade all aspects of life, including the workplace, and certainly they are alive and well in the legal field. They also are not confined to the older criticizing the younger. They go both ways and are counterproductive to a positive work environment.

Recently, I watched a TED Talk by social psychologist Dr. Leah Georges on "How generational stereotypes hold us back at work." Dr. Georges noted that this is the first time in history that five generations are interacting at work. Conflict exists because each generation tends to feel that the next is (at least partially) flawed, inadequate, lazy, ungrateful, and soft.

These broad generational labels and stereotypes are damaging in the workplace, and, according to Dr. Georges, are based on a fallacy that all people in a particular cohort are alike. Yet Millennials, for example, are roughly comprised of those born between 1981 and 2000. That is a *20-year* gap. It simply does not make sense that 40- and 20-year-olds share the same value system simply because they are defined arbitrarily as Millennials.

Dr. Georges posits that each "generation" is much more similar than they are different. Although interests may vary, values stay the same. Employees, regardless of age, want flexibility, support, appreciation, and to do work that matters. None of these values are tied to a specific generation.

Dr. Georges' solution is to reject broad generational stereotypes and to instead meet people in their "onliness"—the spot where each person stands in the world—and to find common space and values. If we speak to one another on an individual level, rather than based on sweeping generalizations, the conversation at work will no longer be about generations. It will be about people.



Image credit: rudall 30/Stock/GettyImage Plus

Dr. Georges’ lecture resonated with me because her findings made sense and her solution was simple: treat people like they matter.

The legal profession seems to be at a tipping point. Driven by the changes necessitated by the pandemic, many younger professionals are demanding lasting work-life balance, which may mean the ability to work remotely, fewer billable hours, or better pay. They are also demanding commitments to DE&I initiatives and implementation of technology.

Furthermore, due to increased ability to work remotely, they have more options than ever before to make a lateral career change if they are unsatisfied with their current situation.

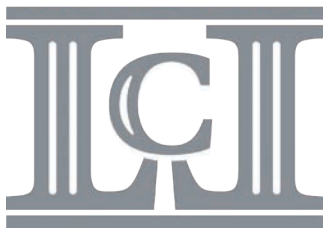
Older or more experienced professionals may believe that younger lawyers are entitled, or that they took the easy way out by switching jobs (or even professions). Younger professionals may believe that their superiors do not care about them and are difficult, out of touch, and unable or unwilling to adapt.

Dr. Georges would caution to not draw these kinds of sweeping stereotypes. It’s easier to conclude that younger professionals are entitled or lazy than it is to find out on an individual level why *that person* may be seeking greater work-life balance or better pay. Similarly, it’s easier to assume that a superior lacks compassion or ability to innovate than it is to find out why *that person* may have a different viewpoint.

Attorneys excel at meeting their clients in their onliness. It’s the only way to prop-

*Continued on page 40* —

**LAWYERS  
CONCERNED FOR  
LAWYERS  
CONNECTICUT INC.**



## Serving the Needs of the Connecticut Legal Community

Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers – Connecticut, Inc. (“LCL-CT”) is a Connecticut non-profit corporation created to provide assistance to Connecticut lawyers, judges and law students who experience substance use disorders, mental health issues, stress, age-related problems or other distress that impacts the individual’s ability to function personally and professionally.

LCL services are available at no cost to all attorneys, judges and law students in the State of Connecticut.

All LCL services are strictly confidential and protected under C.G.S. §51-81d(a), as amended.

**Visit our website: [www.lclct.org](http://www.lclct.org)**

**Contact LCL today for FREE, CONFIDENTIAL support  
HOTLINE: 1-800-497-1422**

---

## Wellness

Continued from page 37

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

Continued from page 33

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

Continued from page 21

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 Compensation 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

Continued from page 29

Office-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](https://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](https://www.ctpublic.org/news/2022-08-26/in-connecticut-rental-vacancy-rates-are-the-lowest-in-the-u-s-leaving-renters-with-few-options)

---

*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.*

---

## Young Lawyers

Continued from page 39

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

Continued from page 5

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