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Advertising: advertise@ctbar.org

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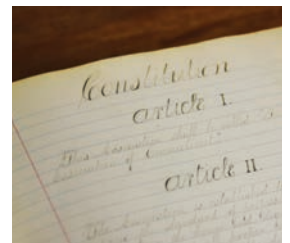
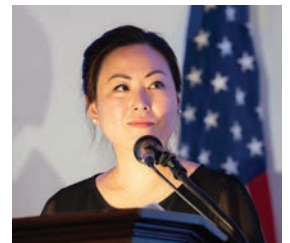
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Lessons from Lincoln on Defending the Rule of Law

By JAMES T. (TIM) SHEARIN

When I spoke at the 2024 Connecticut Legal Conference as the incoming president of the Bar Association, I noted that while the association is not a political entity and, such, remains quiet with respect to political issues, it would not remain quiet if and when the rule of law and the independence of our judges was under attack. I didn't know last June that the current political climate would provide as many opportunities for us to address the importance of the rule of law. It thus became the focus of my column for the last four issues.

Many of you have reached out to me to express your despair with recent court-related headlines, struggling to figure out what we *should* and *can* do. For what it is worth, I thought I would offer two lessons we might take from history. First, as difficult a position as we may now find ourselves in the current political climate—and this applies regardless of which political party may be in charge—this is not the first time the rule of law has been under attack. To be certain, never before has it occupied such a centerpiece of attention, given the rapid and voluminous nature at which information—some of it actually news—is disseminated, but we have been here before. Second, as we have in the past, we can preserve the rule of law by standing up. And standing up is what we need to do now.

On January 27, 1838, Abraham Lincoln delivered what has since become known as the Lyceum Address. He was 28 years old and had just moved to Springfield, Illinois. The country was in the throes of

James T. (Tim) Shearin is the CBA's 101st president. Attorney Shearin is the immediate past chairman of Pullman & Comley LLC. He has wide-ranging experience in federal and state courts at both the trial and appellate levels, and before arbitration and mediation panels. He represents clients in a wide variety of litigation matters.



perhaps its worst chapter in history—slavery—the horrific treatment of a group of people solely because of their skin color.

The backdrop of Mr. Lincoln's speech was the indiscriminate hanging of gamblers and the killing of a free black man, Mr. McIntosh, who had been accused but not tried or convicted of murder. Mr. McIntosh was seized by residents of St. Louis, dragged through the suburbs, chained to a tree, and burned to death. The incident reflected the then divisiveness in the country with emotions running high, not dissimilar to where we find ourselves today, albeit not resulting in horrific killings.

Lincoln started his speech extolling the "fundamental blessings" that had been enjoyed by the citizens all bequeathed to them by those who fought to establish the country. Lincoln credited our forefathers for creating "a political edifice of liberty and equal rights" and recognized that his generation was bound to ensure that such would not be "undecayed by the lapse of time and untorn by usurpation." He

recognized that the challenge to America's "political edifice of liberty and equal rights" would not come from outside, but from within: "If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher."

Lincoln's concern was the "increasing disregard for law which pervades the country; the growing disposition to substitute the wild and furious passions, in lieu of sober judgment of Courts; and the worst and savage mobs from the executive ministers of justice." He went on to describe the dangers of the unchecked assault on the institutions that ensured an orderly society and the consequences of not addressing it. His words were prophetic. "[I]f the laws be continually despised and disregarded, if the rights to be secure in their persons or property, are held by no better tenure than the caprice of a mob, the alienation of their affections for the government is the natural consequence; and to that, sooner or later, it must come." Said without the eloquence of Lincoln, if the rule of law is abandoned, it is only a matter of time before our very democracy will falter.

But Lincoln had an answer, and it was simple. “Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his prosperity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least particular, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate the violation by others. As the patriots of seventy-six did to the support to the Declaration of Independence, so to the support of the Constitution and Laws, let every American pledge his life, his property and his sacred honor;—let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father and to tear the character of his own and his children’s liberty. Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles to her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries and in colleges; let it be written in Primers, spelling books, and in Almanacs; let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, in colors and conditions, sacri-

fice unceasingly upon its altars.” In short, commit. Commit to the rule of law. Commit to what it means as a guaranty of life and liberty. Commit to the understanding that it undergirds our very system of government.

Lincoln also taught us what our commitment should look like. It isn’t passion. It isn’t matching rhetoric with rhetoric. For Lincoln, passion could “be our enemy.” Instead “[r]eason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned, reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defense. Let those materials be molded into general intelligence, sound morality, and in particular, a reverence for the Constitution and Laws.” That lesson rings true today, even more so as social media has given everyone a stage to emote, often with misinformation. Meeting a venom-laced assault on our courts with a venom-laced response to the speaker solves nothing. Those who would attack the Court for political gain are already lost. Our focus should be on Lincoln’s common man. Our voices must be a reasoned explication of the importance of

the rule of law and the need to revere it. Our voices must teach. Our voices must inspire belief.

The political divide in this country is nothing new. There has always been division. It may seem like the present situation is more heart-wrenching and anger-driven than it has been in the past, but I suspect past generations would take issue with that. The lesson to learn is that we have persevered. It may have taken longer than anyone expected at the time, but we are still a nation of the “fundamental blessings” that Lincoln addressed. The challenge for all of us is how we hold on to those “fundamental blessings” and Lincoln’s words tell us how: reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason. As lawyers, we have a unique and important role to play. We must lead the charge. We must defend our judges and their application of that law. We must do that in schools, factories, local boards and commissions, charitable groups, where anyone will allow us to comment, and we must do so without political rhetoric. We must protect the rule of law. So, speak up! ■



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Professional Discipline Digest

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 1 | By JOHN Q. GALE

Reprimand issued by agreement for probable cause finding of violation of Rule 1.5. Attorney will provide Disciplinary Counsel and clients with an updated retainer/engagement agreement within 60 days and pay complainant restitution of \$500 within 30 days. *Hyman v. Marshal David Gibson*, #23-0310.

Reprimand issued by agreement for violation of Rules 1.15, 8.1(2) and 8.4(4) and Practice Book Section 2-27. Attorney agrees to take 2 hours of CLE in IOLTA account management within 3 months in addition to annual CLE requirements. *Staines v. Sally Lynn Pruitt*, #23-0264.

Reprimand issued by agreement for probable cause finding of violation of Rules 1.15, 8.1 and 8.1(2) and Practice Book Sections 2-27 and 2-32(a)(1). Attorney agrees to submit to an audit of his IOLTA account looking backward for two years and quarterly thereafter for one year and to retain services of an accountant / bookkeeper for these purposes. *Slack v. Donald Crew McPartland*, #23-0231.

Presentment ordered for violation of Rules 1.1, 1.2(a), 1.3, 1.4(a)(2), 1.4(a)(3), 1.4(a)(4), 1.4(b), 1.5(b), 1.15(b), 1.15(e), 1.15(j)(3), 1.16(d), 3.2, 8.4(1) and 8.4(3) where attorney, with a substantial history of discipline, engaged by client to probate the estate of her deceased mother failed to provide an engagement letter, lost original documents including an original Will for over a year, failed to tell client of loss, failed to communicate with client, failed to respond to client's attempts at communication, continued to represent client during a period of suspension (for other reasons) without notifying client of suspension, failed to return documents to client upon termination of representation, and failed to notify probate court of existence of original Will. *Murphy v. Michael A. Peck*, #23-0199.

Presentment ordered for violation of Rules 1.1, 1.3, 1.4(a)(2), 1.4(a)(3), 1.4(a)(4) and 8.1(2) and Practice Book Section 2-32(a)(1) where attorney, with a substantial history of discipline, engaged by client to represent client in criminal matter failed to appear in court, failed to notify client of his non-appearance, failed to communicate with client, failed to provide client with requested discovery, failed to provide client with updates on case, and failed to answer grievance complaint. Attorney's motion to dismiss proceeding based upon fact that he was already suspended was denied. *Morales v. Corey Allen Heiks*, #23-0007.

Presentment ordered for violation of Rule 8.1(2) and Practice Book Section 2-32(a)(1) where attorney, with a substantial history of discipline, engaged by client to represent client in child support and custody matter failed to respond to disciplinary counsel's request for IOLTA records and failed to answer grievance complaint. Complainant did not appear for hearing and attorney asserted Fifth Amendment throughout the hearing, so further findings were limited by the record. Attorney failed to pay small claims judgment of client for return of retainer monies; Disciplinary Counsel therefore directed to add violation of Rule 8.4(4) to presentment. *Capeles v. Corey Allen Heiks*, #22-0693.

Presentment ordered for violation of Rules 1.1, 1.3, 1.4(a)(2), 1.4(a)(3), 1.4(a)(4), 1.4(b), 1.5(b), 1.15(e), 1.15(j), 1.15(j)(3), 1.16(d), 3.2 and 8.4(3) where attorney, engaged by client to pursue legal action against care providers for client's son, failed to file suit; failed to notify client of his failure to file suit; failed to communicate with client and keep client reasonably informed; failed to prepare an engagement letter; failed to return file to client upon request; and, for 6 years, allowed client to believe suit was filed. *Grainger v. Joseph S. Hubicki*, #22-0669.

Prepared by CBA Professional Discipline Committee members from public information records, this digest summarizes decisions by the State-wide Grievance Committee resulting in disciplinary action taken against an attorney as a result of violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct. The reported cases cite the specific rule violations to heighten the awareness of lawyers' acts or omissions that lead to disciplinary action.

Presentments to the superior court are de novo proceedings, which may result in dismissal of the presentment by the court or the imposition of discipline, including reprimand, suspension for a period of time, disbarment, or such other discipline the court deems appropriate.

A complete reprint of each decision may be obtained by visiting jud.ct.gov/sgc-decisions. Questions may be directed to editor-in-chief, Attorney John Q. Gale, at jgale@jqglaw.com.

Reprimand issued by agreement for probable cause finding of violation of Rule 1.15(b). Attorney agrees to take 2 hours of in-person CLE in IOLTA account management within 9 months in addition to annual CLE requirements. Attorney must open a new IOLTA account and provide quarterly reconciliations to the Grievance Committee. *Slack v. Lawrence Thomas Somma*, #22-0340.

Reprimand issued for violation of Rules 4.1, 4.4(a), 8.1(2), 8.4(1), 8.4(3) and 8.4(4) where attorney, as successor counsel in personal injury matter, failed to notify prior counsel of settlement; failed to protect and pay prior counsel's fee in accordance with Formal Opinion 31; and failed to respond

Continued on page 36 →

News & Events

Kimberly Jacobsen Receives the 2025 Ladder Award

The CBA Women in the Law Section, in association with the CBA Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Women in the Law Committee, presented the 2025 Ladder Award to Attorney Kimberly Jacobsen at this year's Pathways to Leadership for Women Lawyers event on March 6 at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville.

The Ladder Award was created by the YLS Women in the Law Committee in 2007 to honor a woman attorney who has “left the ladder down” for women to follow in her footsteps and values the importance of leadership development, mentoring, and supporting junior lawyers in their journeys to success. Attorney Jacobsen joins a prestigious group of past awardees that includes Hon. Anne C. Dranginis, Rosemary E. Giuliano, Kathleen L. Brandt, Margaret A. Deluca, Hon. Elizabeth J. Stewart, Maureen Danehy Cox, Hon. Nada K. Sizemore, Diane W. Whitney, Tanya A. Bovée, Hon. Maria A. Khan, Deirdre M. Daly, Hon. Lynda B. Munro, Elaine S. Amendola, Elizabeth A. Alquist, Tanyee Cheung, and Hon. Evelyn M. Daly.

Women in the Law Section Chair Michelle M. Napoli initiated this year's event with welcome remarks and an introduction for the evening's keynote speaker, Nina T. Pirrotti. Attorney Pirrotti spoke of her personal experiences and challenges as a woman in the legal field and how years ago she faced sexual harassment from a partner at the law firm she worked at. After leaving this law firm, she noted how she later developed professional relationships with several positive role models in the profession, all of whom were men. “I think my experience is a product of the era of my forma-



(L to R) YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Audrey E. Trace, CBA President James T. (Tim) Shearin, 2025 Ladder Award winner Kimberly Jacobsen, YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Kara A. Newell, CBA President-Elect Emily A. Gianquinto, Keynote Speaker Nina Pirrotti

tive years as a lawyer, where there was no sexual harassment training, there was no recognition of the value of work/life balance, and the opportunities for women to rise to the top were rare and when there were it was only when she was willing to be *one of the boys*,” stated Attorney Pirrotti. “Look where we are now... It is a balm for the soul to reflect upon how far we have come in the empowerment of women.” She further emphasized that some of the most remarkable women today are the survivors of sexual harassment and assaults who have empowered others through their disclosure of workplace abuses that previously went largely unreported and unaddressed.

Following the keynote speech, Young Lawyers Section Women in the Law Committee Co-Chairs Kara A. Newell and Audrey E. Trace introduced and presented the Ladder Award to Attorney Jacobsen. In her remarks, Attorney Jacobsen conveyed her personal journey as an attorney living with Parkinson's Disease. She explained that after graduating with a bachelor's degree in sociology in 1991, she decided to enter law school due to a downturn in employment opportunities at the time. She began her career at Statewide Legal Services, where she gained appreciation for the work of helping those in need find justice in the legal system, which led her to later join the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO).

Today Attorney Jacobsen continues to serve as the Managing



(L to R) YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Audrey E. Trace, 2025 Ladder Award Winner Kimberly Jacobsen, CBA Executive Director Lina Lee, YLS Women in the Law Committee Co-Chair Kara A. Newell

PEERS AND CHEERS

Lynda Lee Arnold and **Paul J. Knierim** have been named principals at **Czepiga Daly Pope & Perri**. Arnold is a member of both the CBA Elder Law Section and the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys, and has been helping clients with their elder law, estate planning, asset protection, and estate administration needs for over 20 years. Knierim is a member of the CBA Estates and Probate and Elder Law Sections as well as the Connecticut Bar Foundation and Connecticut Probate Assembly (Emeritus); he has more than two decades of service in the judiciary, formerly as head of the Connecticut Probate Court system.

Greg Pepe, a founding partner of **Neubert, Pepe & Monteith, P.C.**, was honored by St. Martin de Porres Academy at its Spring Fling Gala, along with his wife Ann Baker Pepe, for their significant contributions to the people of Greater New Haven

Reid & Riege is celebrating its 75th anniversary in business. Since its establishment in 1950, they have remained dedicated to delivering top-notch legal services across diverse industries, establishing a reputation built on integrity, expertise, and a steadfast commitment to clients. The firm remains dedicated to innovation, client-centered service, and legal excellence.

Robinson+Cole is pleased to announce the election of **Gregory J. Bennici** as a partner. He is a member of the firm's Managed Care + ERISA Litigation group and regularly litigates disputes related to group and individual welfare benefits, Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), managed care contracts, health insurance, disability insurance, and life insurance coverage.

Director and Commission Attorney of Employment Litigation at CHRO. She noted the importance that she has placed on mentoring others at the organization, stating, "Mentoring is the greatest, I always get more than I put into those situations. If I take someone under my wing, I'm always learning more from them." Towards the conclusion of her remarks, she explained that she was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease in 2019. "I'm lucky, I had amazing colleagues who really felt really close at the time and the support and love I got was overwhelming," stated Attorney Jacobsen. "So, I decided I'm a lawyer, and what I am going to do is some kind of



(L to R) 2025 Ladder Award Winner Kimberly Jacobsen and CBA Women in the Law Section Chair Michelle M. Napoli

awareness regarding this kind of disease. She continued by describing how over the past several years she has continued working professionally, while also produced YouTube videos, social media posts, and publications about living well with Parkinson's to raise public awareness of the disease. ■

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IN MEMORIAM

Donat C. Marchand, who served as the president of the CBA during the 2000-2001 bar year, passed away in March. Originally from Westmore, VT, Attorney Marchand's family moved in his youth to Taftville, CT, where he graduated from Norwich Free Academy. He later received a BS degree from the University of Connecticut's School of Business Administration and earned his JD from Harvard Law School in 1958. That same year, he moved to Wisconsin, where he completed ROTC at Truax Air Force Base before accepting a U.S. Air Force posting in Wiesbaden, Germany.



After completing his military commitment, Attorney Marchand returned to Connecticut and accepted a job at the Greenwich law firm Parker Badger and Fisher. He later moved to another Greenwich-based firm, Ivey Barnum and O'Mara LLC, where he remained for the rest of his career. While practicing, he earned a Master of Laws in taxation from New York University in 1967. Throughout his legal career, Attorney Marchand was active as a leader in several professional organizations, including as president of the Greenwich Bar Association and president of the CBA.

During his tenure as CBA president, the association underwent important changes and introduced new initiatives. He was the first president to helm the CBA at its then new headquarters in New Britain.

His presidency also oversaw the signing of the first contract to provide CBA members with an online legal research platform; the establishment of the CT Bar Institute, Inc.; and the introduction of the CBA Workers' Compensation Specialist Certification program. In many ways he helped to modernize the CBA for the new millennium.

Outside of his professional activities, Attorney Marchand was also committed to his local community, having served on Greenwich's representative town meeting, as chair of the board of Greenwich Library, and as a member of the boards of Greenwich's Sacred Heart School and Pathways, Inc., a local mental health and rehabilitation non-profit organization.



CBA Members, Family, and Friends

SUMMER OUTING

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday, June 22 | Holiday Hill, Prospect, CT

Join the Connecticut Bar Association for a fun-filled outing with family and friends! Enjoy a day of relaxation, great company, and exciting activities.

Learn more at ctbar.org/SummerOuting.



When Nursing Homes Fail, I Fight.

I'm Jeremy D'Amico. I'm a trial lawyer. A fighter. And when nursing homes abuse, neglect, or injure their residents, I don't let it slide.

I've spent my career preparing for these battles.

I trained at the elite, invitation-only Gerry Spence Trial Lawyers College. I've taken on big cases — at 30, I stood in front of a jury and helped win one of the largest personal injury verdicts in Connecticut history.

No one outworks me. No one is more prepared.

Nursing homes promise care and dignity, but too many put profits over people. When facilities are understaffed, undertrained, or simply indifferent, the elderly suffer. Bedsores, falls, malnutrition, medication errors, abuse — these aren't just accidents. They're preventable, inexcusable failures. And I hold them accountable.

I don't push paper. I take cases to trial.

I build airtight cases, find the evidence nursing homes try to hide, and make sure juries see the full truth. I fight the good fight for families who trusted a facility to care for their loved one, only to be met with silence and excuses when something goes wrong.

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A Night of Honor, Inspiration, and Community: 2025 Celebrate with the Stars

Over 250 legal professionals, community members, families, and friends attended the twelfth annual “Celebrate with the Stars” awards dinner on April 9 at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville to honor individuals who have made an impact on the Connecticut Legal Community.

The event began with a welcome from the CBA’s new executive director, Lina Lee, who introduced herself to the attendees and congratulated this year’s awardees. “Tonight is a very special celebration. We’re not just celebrating titles or positions; we’re celebrating individuals who have made a day-to-day commitment to upholding excellence and high standards,” stated Lee. “They are those who pave the way and make sure the standards of our profession are at the highest and the path is well-paved for the next generation.” Following her welcome, CBA President James T. (Tim) Shearin took to the stage to begin the night’s presentation. President Shearin gave a special thanks to Governor Lamont for providing a proclamation in honor of Celebrate with the Stars as well as Attorney General William Tong, who sent citations thanking each of this year’s awardees for their valuable contributions to the state’s legal community.

CBA President James T. (Tim) Shearin, President-Elect Emily A. Gianquinto, and Vice President J. Paul Vance jointly presented the first recognition of the evening for members of the bar admitted in 1975, who were honored for their 50 years of practice with half-century pins.

The night’s awards presentation began with **The Hon-**

orable Anthony V. DeMayo Pro Bono Award. The winners of this award, as selected by the Pro Bono Committee, exhibit commitment to pro bono service and serve as role models for the profession. This year’s winners included **Paul T. Kelly** and **Jeffrey L. Meyers**, both of whom have provided significant legal services to those in need without expectation of payment.

Young Lawyers Section (YLS) Chair Vianca T. Malick presented the **Young Lawyers Section Vanguard Award** to **Alison J. Toumekian**. Attorney Toumekian was recognized for her significant contributions to the YLS through seven years of service on the YLS executive committee as well as for

her role as the representative for District Two (Connecticut and Rhode Island) in the American Bar Association’s Young Lawyers Division.

Rosendo Garza, Jr. was presented with the **Citizen of the Law Award** for his significant contribution to public service not involving professional legal skills, but providing inspiration and contributing to the needy, the good of society, the environment, or our way of life. Outside of his legal career, Attorney Garza is a lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve, serving as an infantry officer. Through multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan he has shown inspiring lead-



The 2025 Celebrate with the Stars Awards Recipients (From L to R Rear) Jennifer L. Herbst, Rosendo Garza, Jr., Jeffrey L. Meyers, John Dankosky, Paul T. Kelly, and Denis R. Caron (Front) Alison J. Toumekian, Livia DeFilippis Barndollar, Hon. Nina F. Elgo, and Sally Zanger



Attorneys Observing the 50th Anniversary of Their Admission to Practice in Connecticut

ership, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to service. “I’m a first generation American, the son of Mexican immigrants who came to this country to rebuild their lives,” noted Attorney Garza. “Because of them I carry a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility and that’s what led me toward a life of service.”

Sally Zanger was presented with the **Charles J. Parker Legal Services Award** for her deep and abiding interest in and dedication to the delivery of legal services throughout her career to the disadvantaged in Connecticut. She is a senior staff attorney at the Connecticut Legal Rights Project where she provides high quality legal services to low-income Connecticut residents with psychiatric disabilities, primarily on matters related to their treatment and civil rights. For over 49 years she has advocated for low-income clients living with mental health conditions.

The **Tapping Reeve Legal Educator Award** was presented to **Jennifer L. Herbst** for her contributions to the legal education of her colleagues as a Professor of Law & Medical Sciences of Quinnipiac University’s School of Law and Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine. She currently serves as a volunteer community member on the Adult and Pediatric Ethics Committees for Yale-New Haven Hospital and is a seminar leader in clinical ethics for the Sherwin B. Nu-

land Summer Institute in Bioethics at Yale.

Radio journalist and moderator, **John Dankosky**, received the **Distinguished Public Service Award** for his significant contributions to society and his distinguished achievements in his profession. He has worked as a journalist, radio host, and moderator of live events in Connecticut since 1994. He currently serves as director

of news and audio for the popular public radio program Science Friday and previously served as news director at Connecticut Public Radio for more than 20 years. “The state of our country right now is such that those who report the news and those who uphold the law are under attack daily. We need more than ever to be courageous in our defense of the truth and courageous in our defense of those with less power,”



New CBA Executive Director, Lina Lee



John Dankosky



Rosendo Garza, Jr.



Livia DeFilippis Barndollar

proclaimed Dankosky. "Together we can use our work and our voices to inform, to lift up, to defend, and to fight the good fight."

The **John Eldred Shield Distinguished Professional Service Award** was presented to **Denis R. Caron** for his outstanding service through the CBA for the benefit of the legal community and the community at large. Throughout his fifty-year legal career, Attorney Caron has provided countless hours to educating members of the Connecticut Bar on the intricacies of foreclosures and real property law, and is the author of the widely renowned *Connecticut Foreclosures: An Attorney's Manual of Practice and Procedure*. Attorney Caron thanked the CBA Special Committee on Standards of Title, which he chaired from 2004-2016, noting, "The work that they do is sometimes relegated to some dusty volume on the shelf, but when it comes time to resolve some title matter that's where you go. It's a group that works hard and does a tremendous service for the Bar."

The **Edward F. Hennessey Professionalism Award** was presented to **Livia De-Filippis Barndollar** for her dedication to the highest ideals and standards as a legal professional. For over 35 years she has helped individuals and families in difficult situations navigate the often-tumultuous world of family law, consistently maintaining her kindness, compassion, patience, and reasonableness. Over the years, she rose through the ranks due to her dedication and commitment to her clients and



CBA President James T. (Tim) Shearin, Executive Director Lina Lee, President-Elect Emily A. Gianquinto, Secretary David M. Moore, and Vice President J. Paul Vance

colleagues and she has proven herself as a leader in the community and mentor to those around her. In her remarks she read from the CBA's Lawyers' Principles of Professionalism, noting their focus on civility, honesty, competency, responsibility, mentoring, and honor. "Meeting these commitments is a special challenge now," stated Attorney Barndollar. "Let's derive the strength to do so from and with each other. In doing so we hopefully can bring public good and preserve the rule of law."

The final award of the evening, the **Henry J. Naruk Judiciary Award** was presented to **The Honorable Nina F. Elgo** for her substantial contributions as a judge of the Connecticut Appellate Court. She is the first Asian Pacific American judge appointed to

both the Connecticut Superior Court and the Connecticut Appellate Court. During her tenure in the judiciary, Judge Elgo has served on various committees designed to improve the court system. Since 2012 she has served as a member of the Connecticut Bar Examining Committee and additionally serves on the Uniform Bar Exam Committee of the National Conference of Bar Examiners.

The night ended with brief remarks from President Shearin on the importance of the rule of law in the United States. He noted how Abraham Lincoln, as a young attorney in his Lyceum Address, had warned that the fundamental blessings of American liberty and justice faced greater danger from influences within our country than from threats outside of it. "For Lincoln, that [danger] was disregard for the rule of law," stated Shearin. "For him, political religion was reverence of the laws. That is our political religion. That is what we must espouse each and every day and that is what we must start preaching to every person we meet because right now the rule of law is under attack." President Shearin further cautioned that, "The rule of law is important because it ensures an orderly and just society, it's the only way this democracy works"

Congratulations to this year's Celebrate with the Stars awardees and thank you to everyone who attended this year's memorable event.



CBA President-Elect Emily A. Gianquinto, Vice President J. Paul Vance, The Honorable Nina F. Elgo, and President James T. (Tim) Shearin

View all the photos from the event at ctbar.org/2025AwardsPhotos. ■

Fighting for Families. Fighting Nursing Home Abuse.

I'm Tom Pettinicchi. I fight for families.

When nursing homes betray our loved ones...

For years, I was a family lawyer. I saw firsthand how families suffer when one member is hurt. I saw how injury, betrayal, and neglect ripple through a family, shaking its foundation.

That experience shaped me.

It made me a better trial lawyer. A better advocate.

Now, I use that experience to take on nursing homes that betray our most vulnerable—our parents, our grandparents, the family members who raised us, who held us together, who were once the strongest among us. When they are neglected, abused, or mistreated, it's not just an attack on them—it's an attack on the entire family.

Nursing Homes count on families feeling powerless.

Nursing homes and insurance companies know how to evade responsibility. They count on families being too overwhelmed, too heartbroken, too unsure of what to do next. That's where I come in.

I build cases that force them to pay attention. I prepare for trial like it's war — because for my clients, it is. I don't back down. I don't let them make excuses. And I make sure they never forget who they're up against.

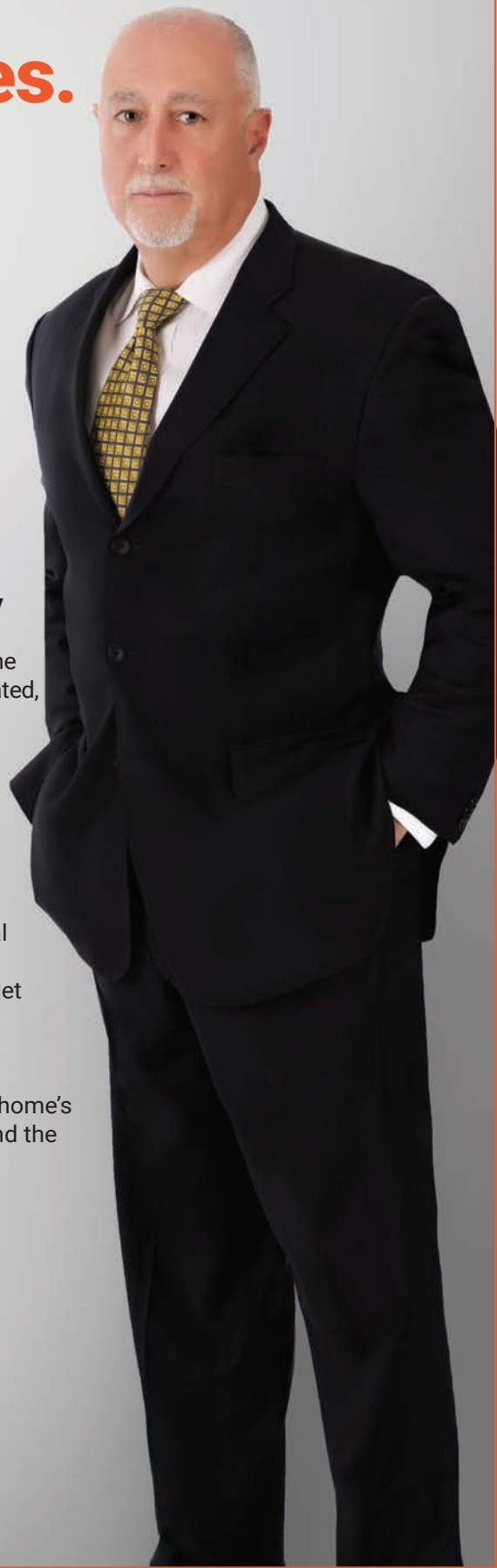
If your family has suffered, I'm ready to fight.

If your client or a loved one has suffered because of a nursing home's failures, I'm here. I will fight for you, your clients, your family, and the justice you deserve. **Because that's what family does.**

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In Celebration.

By LINA LEE

This year we honor a milestone—the Connecticut Bar Association's 150th Anniversary. For a century and a half, the CBA has served as the unified voice of Connecticut's legal profession—steadfast through eras of change, committed through times of challenges, and instrumental in moments of progress. It is an achievement few institutions reach, and one that speaks not just to longevity, but to enduring purpose and relevance.

As we prepare to celebrate this historic moment, we invite our members to do more than reflect—we invite you to reconnect and recommit. Revisit the legacy that was built together and recommit to the shared values and to the role we each play in shaping the next chapter of our profession.

However, before we look ahead, let us take a moment to honor how it all began.

A Bold and Radical Beginning in Uncertain Times

"While there is clear historic evidence that Connecticut was not the first state to establish a statewide bar association, there is also ample evidence to indicate that Connecticut established the taproot source for the modern bar association of today."

The year was 1875. Connecticut, like much of the nation, was in transition—economically, socially, and politically. The textile industry was reshaping towns, political power was shifting, and legal systems were struggling to keep pace. Court schedules were inconsistent. Jurisdictional boundaries overlapped. Standards for legal practice varied widely. The legal profession needed order, structure, and a shared sense of purpose.

That June, Hartford's State's Attorney William Hamersley gathered a group

of prominent attorneys to address these issues. On a warm evening, they met in his office to discuss the creation of a statewide bar association—an idea that, at the time, was still new and somewhat radical.

A Century of Evolution, A Mission That Endures

One hundred years later, in 1975, the *Connecticut Bar Journal* offered a powerful reflection on the CBA's first century—one that continues to ring true:

"Most bar associations have three general levels of motivating interests: the promotion of social intercourse among members of the bar and protection of the individual and group interests of lawyers; the maintenance of the dignity of the legal system by continuous upgrading of the judicial system; and the rendering of public services which only lawyers as a group can provide. Whenever a bar association passes a motion, assumes a position, or institutes a program, the underlying motives which brought on the action can be traced back to one or more of these

root concerns. These motivating levels, personal, professional or public, are interconnected and dependent on one another and comprise a recurrent theme in this history.

The functioning process of a bar association that implements these concerns may be roughly divided into a series of four steps. First a felt need of society, the legal profession or its members is brought to the attention of the association. Second, the association grapples with the problem internally, usually by appointing a committee to study the situation and make recommendations. Third, a policy which responds to the program is forged by debate and vote of the association as



They ended the meeting with a resolution: to form a State Bar Association "to maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of law, to cultivate social intercourse among its members, and to promote the due administration of justice."

What they established that night was not simply an organization. It was the beginning of a shared professional identity—an enduring commitment to advocacy, reform, and service that would come to define the Connecticut Bar Association for generations to come.

a whole. And fourth, the association takes tangible action as required by the policy agreed upon.

This process is often cumbersome, but is certainly the most appropriate for a voluntary association. The growth and development of this functioning process in the Connecticut Bar Association is the central focus of this story of its first hundred years. Over and over again, in various disguises, the process of implementing association concerns shaped the development of the group as a spokesman for the legal profession in Connecticut.

Lawyers are and always have been an integral force in the ongoing process of governmental and social development in this country and the association manifested their conscientious efforts to carry out their responsibilities."

- Connecticut Bar Journal, 1975

Honoring Legacy, Empowering the Path Forward

As we commemorate 150 years of the Connecticut Bar Association, we are reminded that legacy is not something we simply inherit—it is something we live into.

The Founders believed that the legal pro-

fession had a duty to rise above individual interests and stand as a collective force for justice, professionalism, and progress. That belief still guides us today. And in this anniversary year, we are channeling that spirit into a series of initiatives that are not just symbolic—they are deeply intentional.

We begin with service. This fall, members across the state will come together for 150 Minutes Community Service Day, a single day of unified action where we give back—each in our own way, but together in purpose. Whether it is volunteering at a legal clinic, mentoring a student, or helping a local nonprofit, the impact of our collective time will speak volumes about what this profession stands for.

The celebration begins at the Connecticut Legal Conference (CLC) Anniversary Kickoff on June 13, 2025, which will serve as the formal launch of our 150th year. With a goal of welcoming over 750 attendees—the event will feature a historical retrospective, distinguished speakers, and special reception and anniversary gift to commemorate the occasion.

Our commitment to the future extends beyond celebration. Through the relaunch of the 1875 Society, we are investing in

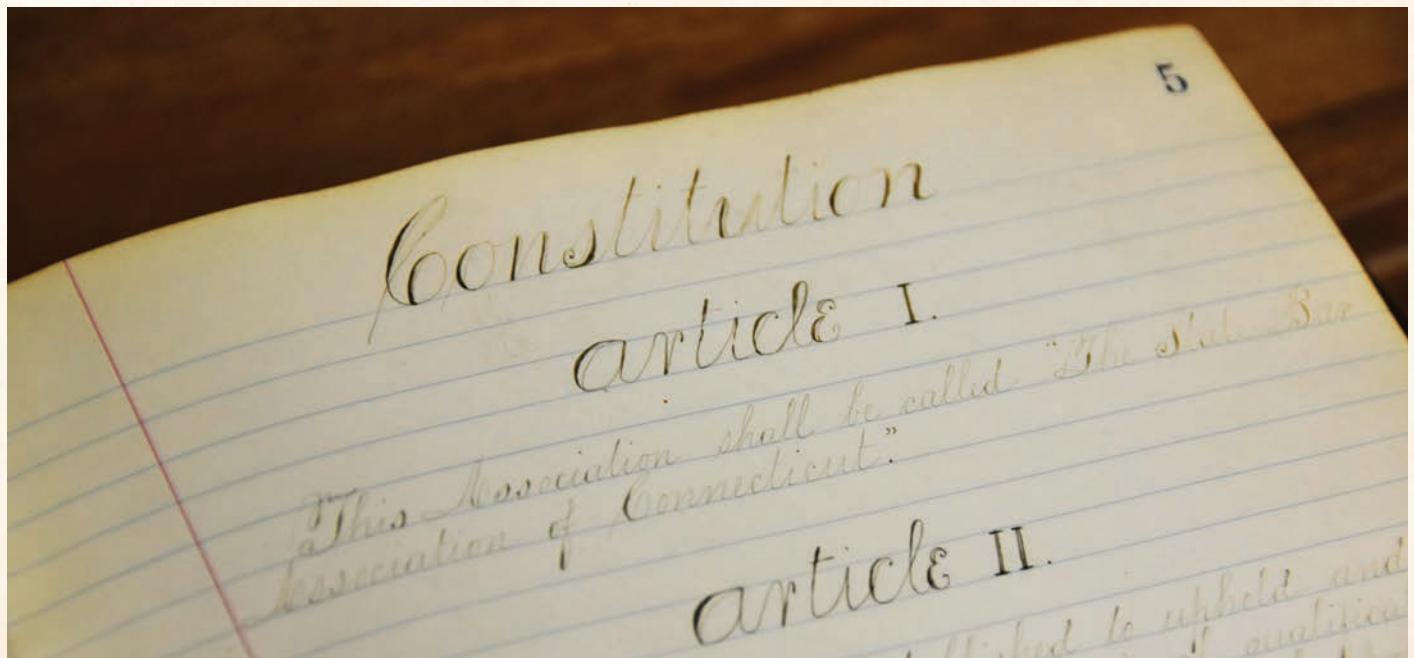
what's next—supporting scholarships, equity initiatives, and access to justice programs that will ensure the CBA remains a resource and a refuge for generations to come.

On October 16, we'll gather for the 150th Anniversary Gala—an evening of celebration, recognition, and recommitment to the ideals that have carried us this far. Proceeds from the gala will directly support legal aid, ensuring that our legacy includes real impact in the lives of those we serve.

Together, these efforts form the heart of this anniversary year. They are not separate programs—they are expressions of our legacy in motion. We are not just celebrating the past. We are building on it. We are carrying forward the work that began in 1875—rooted in shared values, shaped by our collective voice, and driven by a commitment to justice that remains relevant today as it did on June 2, 1875. You can learn more about our 150th Anniversary Celebration at ctbar.org/150Years. ■



Lina Lee is the executive director of the Connecticut Bar Association.



The Connecticut Bar Association's recorded minutes from its preliminary meeting in 1875 included the establishment of the association's constitutional articles and bylaws

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Connecticut Bar Association

Friday, June 13

7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Connecticut Convention Center, Hartford

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Professionals in the State



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- 1 Earn all 12 of your MCLE credits across key practice areas**—access up to six credits in-person and the remainder through a digital catalogue of audio recordings available after the conference.
- 2 Networking opportunities** with over 750 legal professionals from across the state.
- 3 The Featured National Speaker Seminar, “SCOTUS: What’s Next?”** will analyze recent and upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decisions with Justice Joette Katz (Ret.), G. Eric Brunstad, Jr., and Ilya Somin.
- 4 Explore the exhibitor showcase**, featuring legal industry vendors to help your practice. Don’t miss the opportunity to get a complimentary professional headshot!
- 5 Celebrate 150 Years of the CBA at the President’s Reception**
Founded in 1875, the Connecticut Bar Association proudly marks its 150th Anniversary this year—and we’re kicking off the celebration in style at the conference with a variety of special offerings. Stay late, skip the traffic, and enjoy live jazz, appetizers, drinks, raffle prizes, and a special commemorative gift.

Don’t Want to Make the Round Trip in One Day? We’ve Got You Covered.

The CBA has secured a special group rate at the Hartford Marriott Downtown for conference attendees. Whether you’re arriving early or staying after the conference, you can book a room at a discounted rate of \$229 per night. Rooms are limited, so book now at CTLegalConference.com!

DISCOVER EVERYTHING THE CONNECTICUT LEGAL CONFERENCE HAS TO OFFER

7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m.

Registration, Breakfast, and Exhibitors

8:00 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.

UConn & Quinnipiac Alumni Breakfasts

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

Session A Seminars

- A01** Combating Hate Crimes in Connecticut
- A02** vLex Fastcase Training
- A03** Ethics: The Year in Review
- A04** Protecting Yourself, Your Firm, and Your Reputation in Family Law Cases
- A05** Hot Topics in Legal Malpractice and More
- A06** What's Up with Privacy and What's Next?
- A07** Attorney Fee Litigation in Consumer Claims
- A08** Deep Fakes and AI
- A09** Annual Review of Connecticut Supreme and Appellate Court Cases
- A10** Using Statutory Affidavits to Clear Title
- A11** Math for Lawyers: How to Calculate a BCR and More

10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

Break & Exhibitor Showcase

10:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Session B Seminars

- B01** Marketing and Business Development
- B02** Narrative Justice: Storytelling as a Means for Shaping DE&I Initiatives
- B03** Ethics
- B04** Family Law Cases: Year in Review
- B05** Hot Topics in Business Succession Planning
- B06** SCOTUS: What's Next?
- B07** Recent Developments in CT Workers' Compensation

12:15 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.

CBA Annual Meeting and Luncheon

Hear from distinguished speakers and celebrate milestones in the legal community. The CBA's 2025–2026 slate of officers will be installed, including Emily A. Gianquinto as incoming president.

1:45 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Break & Exhibitor Showcase

2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Session C Seminars

- C01** Winning the Talent War: Strategies to Build Your Dream Team
- C02** Commercial Law and Bankruptcy Year in Review
- C03** The Legal Case for Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
- C04** Ethics
- C05** Sensitive Issues in Custody Proceedings
- C06** Construction Law Year in Review
- C07** Navigating Housing for Low-Income Elders and Persons with Disabilities
- C08** Antitrust in Changing Administrations: Implications for Federal, State, and Private Enforcement
- C09** Kelo 20th Anniversary: Views from the Bench, Bar and Academia
- C10** Real Property Legislative and Case Law Year in Review
- C11** Cognitive Testing in the Workplace

3:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.

Break

3:45 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Session D Seminars

- D01** Work Smarter, Live Better: Productivity Strategies for Success
- D02** Private Securities Offerings: What You Need to Know
- D03** Soule v. Connecticut Association of Schools: Protecting Transgender Rights in Connecticut and Beyond
- D04** Technology and Legal Ethics: Defining "Competence" and Adapting to AI
- D05** Family Law
- D06** The Constitution at a Crossroads
- D07** The PACT Act, Expediting the Veterans Claims Process for Toxic Exposure
- D08** AI Tools for Lawyers: Available Tools, Practical Applications, & Policy Issues
- D09** Box Voir Dire and Other Jury Innovations
- D10** Environmental Justice in Connecticut

5:15 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

President's Reception, Featuring the 150th Anniversary Celebration

EXPLORE RECENT AND UPCOMING U.S. SUPREME COURT DECISIONS

Featured National Speaker Seminar

SCOTUS: What's Next?

In recent years, several of the Roberts Court decisions have overturned or significantly changed Supreme Court precedent. This seminar will analyze some of the notable decisions from the Roberts Court and where the court may be headed in light of the new presidential administration that has also begun to make aggressive changes in the federal government. Moderated by retired Connecticut Supreme Court Justice Joette Katz, presenters G. Eric Brunstad, Jr. (Yale Law School Visiting Lecturer and Senior Research Scholar) and Ilya Somin (George Mason University Professor of Law and Cato Institute B. Kenneth Simon Chair in Constitutional Studies) will explore these topics and more.



Justice Joette Katz (Ret.)
Shipman & Goodwin LLP, Hartford



G. Eric Brunstad, Jr.
Dechert LLP, New Haven



Ilya Somin
Antonin Scalia Law School, George
Mason University, Arlington, VA

PLUS Discover How Executive Power Is Being Redefined

Dive into the pivotal constitutional questions raised by the new presidential administration in seminar **D06 – “The Constitution at a Crossroads.”** Join renowned **Yale Law Professor Akhil Reed Amar** as he explores the evolving impact of executive actions on our nation's founding document. Don't miss this timely and thought-provoking session!



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Protecting the Most Vulnerable: Our Mission to Hold Nursing Homes Accountable.

This is personal.

For decades, we've exposed abuse, neglect, and wrongdoing in Connecticut's nursing homes. We literally *pioneered* this practice. Long before others saw the elder care crisis, we were in court, fighting for justice — and we're not stopping.

The system is broken.

Nursing homes should provide care, safety, and dignity. Too often, they don't.

Understaffing. Neglect. Cost-cutting at the expense of human lives. Preventable falls, untreated bedsores, medication errors, outright abuse. *These aren't accidents — they're failures.*

And we refuse to let them go unpunished.

New policies, same excuses.

Regulations are changing. The federal government is cracking down on understaffing. But bad nursing homes will always find ways to game the system — cut corners, hide the truth, make excuses.

That's where we come in. We don't just file lawsuits — we expose systemic failures. We uncover the real story and fight for families who trusted a nursing home, only to discover neglect and inexcusable harm.

We make them pay.

If your client or loved one has suffered abuse, neglect, or a preventable injury in a Connecticut nursing home, ***you are not alone***. We've spent years holding these facilities accountable — **and we do not back down.**

To our fellow lawyers: You know our track record. If you have a nursing home injury case that needs fierce advocacy, send it to the firm that practically wrote the book on these cases.

To the nursing home industry: We are watching. We are fighting. We will hold you accountable.

We fight for the elderly because they deserve better. We fight because it's right. We fight because no one else will.

If your client or a loved one has been hurt in a nursing home, ***call us now***. It's time to fight back.

Contact D'Amico & Pettinicchi.

D'Amico Pettinicchi.

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Celebrating Ten Years of the CBA Presidential Fellows Program

Apply for the CBA Presidential Fellows Program

By YAMUNA (YAM) MENON

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the Connecticut Bar Association's Presidential Fellows Program. Launched in 2015, the program was created with the objective of identifying young lawyers who demonstrate leadership potential to assist them in developing their leadership skills and enhancing their involvement in a CBA section. These prestigious two-year appointments are the result of a competitive application process that occurs annually in the early fall, following the submission of all applications in the summer.

Many of the past Fellows have gone on to hold CBA leadership positions, as well as other prestigious leadership positions in the legal community at large, including appointments to the Superior Court and as a Workers' Compensation Commission administrative law judge. A member of the first class of Fellows, Emily Gianquinto, will become President of the CBA for the 2025 – 2026 bar year, marking the first time that a former Fellow will ascend to the highest leadership post of the CBA.

The Presidential Fellows Committee seeks to promote the active involvement

of talented lawyers in the leadership and activities of CBA sections. The program aims to serve as a bridge between the Young Lawyers Section and the other sections and to otherwise connect lawyers who have been practicing law for 12 years or less with opportunities for leadership development. Each Fellow is matched with a CBA section that aligns with their interests or practice areas. The Fellows serve as ex-officio members of the section executive committees and work with section leaders on projects or programs or take on liaison roles in order to make the experience more meaningful.



(L to R) 2023-2025 CBA presidential fellows Emilio A. Estrella, Aaron Arias, and Miriam E. Hasbun; 2024-2026 presidential fellows Danielle A. Erickson, Kara Newell, and Jasjeet Sahani; 2023-2025 presidential fellow Tamara J. Titre; and 2024-2026 presidential fellows Benjamin B. Pahlke and Chelsea Donaldson.

The program welcomed five new Fellows in the fall of 2024 as part of the 2024 - 2026 class, bringing a wide range of backgrounds and experiences to the Presidential Fellows Program:



Chelsea Donaldson,
Connecticut Veterans Legal Center



Danielle A. Erickson,
Pullman & Comley LLC



Kara Newell,
Gfeller Laurie LLP



Benjamin B. Pahlke,
Bona Fide Law LLC



Jasjeet Sahani,
Saxe Doernberger & Vita PC

The appointment introduces each Fellow to attorneys who are already actively involved in bar leadership not only through the matching sections, but also through programming designed especially for the Fellows. The Committee plans events and activities geared toward the development of leadership skills that are offered to the current overlapping classes of Fellows and alumni of the Fellows program. Programming for this bar year has included a welcome dinner for the new Fellows and panel discussion at the Grassy Hills Country Club in Orange and a Zoom leadership presentation featuring judges who were former Presidential Fellows and discussed their journey to the bench. Fellows will soon participate in a professional development workshop concerning the intergenerational work

environment and an event at the 2025 Connecticut Legal Conference. Current Fellows are encouraged to engage with Past Fellows as well, creating a unique community for all participants. Fellows also enjoy a waiver of all fees for section membership and attendance at section meetings.

Prospective Fellows must complete an application and also submit two (2) letters of recommendation, a resume, and a cover letter describing why the applicant

is interested in becoming a Fellow and how they plan to contribute to the section. Applications are reviewed and considered by the Presidential Fellows Committee each fall.

Yamuna (Yam) Menon is General Counsel/Assistant State Comptroller at the Office of the State Comptroller. For 2024-2025, she is Chair of the Presidential Fellows Committee, Vice Chair of the LGBTQ+ Section, and a member of the DEI Committee and Government & Public Sector Committee.

The 2025 application deadline is August 15, 2025. The application can be found on the CBA website at ctbar.org/Fellows. Questions about the program can be directed to Yam Menon, chair of the Presidential Fellows Committee, at yamuna.menon@gmail.com.

Taming the Legal Ego: Separating Professional Identity from the Self

By TANYEE CHEUNG

Back in 2021, I came to the realization that during my almost thirty years of legal practice, I had developed a carefully crafted professional identity, which I will call the "legal ego." This persona was built slowly over time and without my realizing, it became my default (even spilling over into my personal realm). My legal ego served as armor, helping me navigate demanding (and sometimes difficult and harsh) clients, supervisors, and opposing counsel, challenging negotiations, and the constant intellectual demands of the profession. I saw the value in the armor but realized that my legal ego could also undermine my well-being. I wondered, might legal egos contribute to our profession's troubling rates of burnout, anxiety, and depression? Would awareness mitigate some of these dangers? What could be done to tame the legal ego?

How the Legal Ego Gets Formed

From the first day of law school, attorneys are trained to "think like a lawyer" - to analyze relentlessly, argue persuasively, anticipate problems at every turn, and "win."

The legal ego typically embodies several characteristics:

- A problem-focused orientation that excels at identifying what could go wrong
- A drive for perfectionism and intolerance of mistakes
- An adversarial readiness that remains vigilant for challenge

- A tendency toward intellectual dominance and authoritative expression
- A constant comparative assessment
- A strong attachment to outcomes, wins, and being right

These characteristics can help us perform at a high-level but if we aren't careful, we can embody these traits in an unhealthy way. Over-identification with these characteristics can lead to rigidity and righteousness. Before one even realizes, our minds and bodies can adopt a constant state of defensiveness or discomfort. Mistakes made and criticisms received become a chink in the armor and the legal ego demands us to protect it. We become so engrossed in this task that we forget that we are not the legal ego and that our work doesn't define who we are.

The Antidote to Over-Identification: Witness Consciousness

How might the legal ego typically spring into action, and what can we do about it? Let's take the example of an attorney who receives a harshly worded email from opposing counsel / client / supervisor / partner criticizing a recent filing or draft of a legal document. For some of us, the legal ego immediately springs to defense-generating internal dialogue about counterattacks and rehearsing brilliant rebuttals. For others, the legal ego might feel bruised, triggering anxiety about our abilities or how we are perceived. Unchecked, the legal ego might fire off a scathing email adding to tensions or it might ruminate about how the email undermines it and start to conjure feelings of unworthiness. These paths utilize energy unnecessarily

and obscure the clearest path forward.

How can we begin training ourselves to recognize the "voice in our head" telling us how to act and feel? For me, the teachings of Michael Singer, a lifelong spiritual learner and teacher and an accomplished businessperson (he started many companies and became chairman of WebMD) was the start of a continual practice of releasing the legal ego. A basic tenet of his teachings focuses on the concept of "witness consciousness," the ability to observe one's thoughts, emotions, and identity constructs without becoming absorbed by them. By cultivating a mindset where one recognizes these reactive thoughts and is conscious of, but not drawn into, the chatter, we can calm our inner voice and create space for a more centered response. Witnessing the thoughts generated by the legal ego without letting it control the situation is what Michael Singer describes as "stepping back into the seat of consciousness."

This step allows us to objectively view the situation, separating true facts from opinions and conjectures. By recognizing that the legal ego has been trained to fight and/or fret, the attorney sitting in the seat of consciousness can choose to act with intention rather than allow the legal ego to react.

The Inner Courtroom: Quieting the Constant Judgment

The legal ego has been trained to evaluate, assess, and judge. Judgment might be of our critic, or it might be of ourselves (our own worst critic). Too often, judgement

can become hyperactive, taking up all the air in the room. The secret to centeredness is to first quiet the judge. Let it know that evaluator and assessor need equal time. Whether judging others or oneself, learn to separate the actual message from the message heard by the legal ego.

In the above scenario where the legal ego is critical of others, that might look like the following:

- "Maybe X was having a bad day, they could have just been affected by their own personal situation."
- "I don't know why X was so harsh, but it doesn't really affect the underlying discussion."
- Can I address X's comments without lashing out OR feeling the need to defend myself?"

In the scenario where the legal ego is critical of oneself, that might look like the following:

- "Just because X has certain opinions, doesn't make them true."
- "Even if I missed a point, one mistake doesn't define me. Let me focus on finding a solution, rather than beating myself up."

The goal is to address the underlying legal issue without tying personal worth, resentment, or anger to the solution.

The Professional Paradox: Excellence without Attachment

A common objection to spiritual practices in high-performance fields is the concern that non-attachment can diminish professional excellence. There is a belief that if one is not obsessing about their work, their performance will suffer. In reality, releasing attachment to outcomes and opinions of others paradoxically improves performance. Motivation is no longer based on fear or pride but by doing the best job we can. By remaining centered and not focused on the outcome or other's opinions, we act more rationally. We know that success can take many forms beyond the narrow definition of "winning."

For attorneys, this means practicing law

with full commitment to professional excellence while releasing the personal identification with results.

This might look like:

- Preparing thoroughly for a hearing while releasing anxiety about the judge's ruling.
- Making compelling arguments without tying personal worth to their reception.
- Advising clients skillfully while releasing the need to be perceived as all-knowing.
- Negotiating assertively while remaining inwardly undisturbed by the other side's tactics.

As Michael Singer notes, "The truth is that most of life will unfold in accordance with forces far outside your control, regardless of what your mind says about it." This perspective doesn't diminish professional responsibility but contextualizes it in a way that prevents the enormous stress of believing we can and must control everything.

Practical Practices for Legal Professionals

1. Morning Identity Separation Practice

Before checking emails or entering "lawyer mode," spend 5-10 minutes in silent awareness, reminding yourself: "I am not my thoughts. I am not my accomplishments. I am not my legal identity. I am the consciousness that witnesses all of these."

This brief practice establishes a foundation of awareness that can be returned to throughout demanding days. It reminds you to pause.

2. The Billion Things Rule

Attorneys can often perceive themselves as having more responsibility and control than they really do. While twenty people might have reviewed a brief or contract, they feel the full weight of the blame on their shoulders where there is an error. Conversely some, based on training to defend the legal ego, absolve themselves of any responsibility, placing the blame else-

where. Neither are likely true, and both utilize energy in non-productive ways. Remove blame from the equation entirely and focus on lessons learned.

This might include writing a brief reflection and consciously acknowledging that a billion actions contributed to the result. Provide realistic tangible actions (with a risk/reward understanding) that can be used for future transactions/cases. Keep the knowledge you have gained while letting go of the emotions and baggage that might have arisen during the process.

3. The Trigger Witness Practice

Identify your specific professional triggers (e.g. certain opposing counsel, particular client behaviors, or specific types of feedback from supervisors). When these arise, practice Michael Singer's teaching of observing your reaction with curiosity rather than identification.

Note the physical sensations, the thoughts that arise, and the emotions generated. Check to see if your body has gone into an automatic flight, fight, or fret response. Use the moment as an opportunity to remind your body that better decisions are made when those automatic feelings are released. Practice remaining centered in these situations. It takes time but it's worth it!

The Freedom Beyond Professional Identity

In legal education and practice, little attention is paid to the psychological impact of crafting and maintaining a professional identity that is often problem focused and highly critical. The profession's troubling mental health statistics likely reflect the consequences of this oversight.

By applying non-attachment/identification teachings, attorneys can begin to experience "unconditional well-being," a sense of well-being that isn't dependent on case outcomes, partner approval, client satisfaction, or billable success. Rather, our well-being comes from objective view of our efforts and work.

Continued on page 36 —

CBA Launches New Pro Bono Program: Lawyers in the LGBTQ+ Center

By EMILY A. GIANQUINTO

The CBA's roster of pro bono opportunities grew this year with the addition of "Lawyers in the LGBTQ+ Center." Once a month, volunteer lawyers meet for 20 to 30 minute sessions over a three-hour period with members of the LGBTQ+ community to provide advice and counsel on legal issues. While the program currently operates in one location in Norwalk, its organizers hope to expand to other cities across the state and to offer expanded time slots for the meetings, perhaps by introducing virtual meeting options.

The program came out of discussions between Jenna Cutler, co-chair of our LGBT Section, and Rachel Simon, executive director of Triangle Community Center (TCC) in Norwalk. TCC provides programming and resources that nurture growth and connection within the LGBTQ+ community throughout the state. While TCC's Care Coordination

its members with legal assistance in a friendly environment.

The clinic, which is held on the third Thursday of each month from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., got up and running quickly. Cutler and Simon met to discuss the program late last fall, after the election; the LGBT Section's proposal was approved

judgment. While not every issue was within the volunteers' knowledge base, every client received guidance on their next steps or was connected to a queer friendly practitioner in the relevant practice area.

If this all sounds familiar, it's because the clinic is modeled after the CBA's Law-

yers in Libraries program, which has expanded to 10 libraries across the state. Cutler said she hopes to have the same success with this program: "Ideally, I'd like to have

a clinic in at least Norwalk, New Haven, and Hartford. We're starting out slower for now to see the response and get a foundation built."

"For the legal community, what's nice is that these are short time slots, especially once we get set up to do some of them by Zoom, so it's not a big time commitment," Cutler said. "Also, the malpractice insurance is through the CBA, so volunteers know they're covered."

Clients for the clinic are currently secured through TCC's network and word of mouth. "The challenge for now in terms of growth is that our program is really engrained in the legal community versus the broader queer community," Cutler said. "We're working on promoting this outside of the bar association, to more community groups and locations." The LGBT Section worked with CBA



**Triangle
Community
Center CT**

by the CBA in early February, and the first session was held in February. While walk-ins are welcome, advance signups, handled by TCC, guarantee clients spots in the three-hour sessions. Six people signed up for that first session, seeking advice on issues concerning immigration, second-parent adoption, employment and housing discrimination, and designating healthcare proxies from two volunteer attorneys. Seven people

signed up for the March session, seeking counsel on similar issues as well as end of life planning and information about who to collect on a small claims

"...every client received guidance on their next steps or was connected to a queer friendly practitioner in the relevant practice area."

team currently facilitates name and gender marker changes and supports clients through navigating many systems, it was looking to more directly connect

staff to create a flyer promoting the program, and Cutler also recently wrote an article about the first clinic in *The Hartford Times*.

Members can get involved in several ways:

- **Volunteer to staff a clinic in Norwalk.** If you're interested but can't make the trip to Norwalk, please let them know anyway, so they can build a roster of volunteers for future geographic expansion or Zoom consult sessions.
- **Volunteer to accept referrals on specific legal issues.** Cutler said immigration is a particular need, and TCC has some limited funding available to assist its members in paying some minimal fees for consultations with immigration lawyers given the current demand for their services.
- **Identify queer-friendly community spaces or organizations** in other areas of the state that might be willing to host a monthly clinic session.
- **Promote the program in your communities.**

Any help members can offer is valuable. "While this clinic might seem narrow in that it only pertains to one community, the issues are so vast and they change so frequently, especially with the current administration's actions, that the work is really cutting edge," Cutler

said. "And even a short consult like this has a big impact for these clients, because it's in a safe space with friendly advisors."

If you're interested in getting involved in this new program, please email Jenna Cutler at JCutler@barclaydamon.com or reach out to CBA Access to Justice Director Jenn Shukla. ■



Emily A. Gianquinto is the CBA president-elect. Attorney Gianquinto is special counsel at McCarter & English LLP, where she counsels employers on day-to-day employment matters and represents them before federal and state courts, administrative agencies, and mediation and arbitration panels. Her experience includes litigating all manner of business disputes.

LAWYERS in the **LGBTQ CENTER**

3rd Thursdays from 3-6pm
650 West Ave, Norwalk CT

A monthly program offering free volunteer legal services in 20-30 minute appointment slots for LGBTQ+ folks seeking legal counseling support.

Walk-ins welcome but RSVPs encouraged to guarantee your spot.

25 Years of CAPABA

By DAN A. BRODY

The Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association (CAPABA) is the only association geared towards Asian Pacific American attorneys in Connecticut, with the mission to support Asian Pacific American attorneys and communities and those interested in Asian Pacific American legal issues throughout the state of Connecticut. CAPABA's membership is open to all attorneys, law professors, law students, and other interested individuals practicing or residing in the state of Connecticut. CAPABA was formed on May 1, 2000 as a 501(c)(6) organization by Attorney Amy Lin Meyerson, who also served as its first President. When Amy moved to Connecticut in 1999, she found that our state lacked a bar association that represented the needs and promoted the legal career development of Asian Americans. Thus, she set out to create the Connecticut affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA), which is the nation's largest Asian Pacific American membership organization representing the interest of 80,000 attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students and with over 90 affiliates is the national voice for the Asian Pacific American legal profession. Both CAPABA and NAPABA promote justice, equity, and opportunity for Asian Pacific American attorneys and foster environments for professional development, legal scholarship, advocacy, and community involvement.

With the encouragement and support of NAPABA, UConn and Yale Schools of Law, the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) and other attorneys of color, Amy established a small but dedicated network

of attorneys of Asian and Pacific descent who shared the vision of creating a NAPABA affiliate in Connecticut. The CBA lent its assistance by hosting CAPABA's website during its early years, and UConn and Yale Schools of Law hosted functions where prospective CAPABA members could meet to facilitate its foundation and CLE programs.

CAPABA's inaugural officers and directors were Amy Lin Meyerson (President and Director), Mony P.B. Yin (Vice-President and Director), Mary Chang (Secretary and Director), Ivan K. Fong (Director) and James Wu (Director).

CAPABA's First Annual Dinner was held on July 30, 2001, at Butterfly Restaurant in West Hartford with approximately thirty attendees. In 2003, only three years after its incorporation, CAPABA hosted its first NAPABA Northeast Regional Conference, which drew a substantial number of attendees. In 2008, 2011, and again in 2018,

CAPABA hosted the NAPABA Northeast Regional Conferences, drawing hundreds of attendees from multiple states. Every year since its founding, CAPABA's Annual Gala Dinner attracts lawyers, judges, law students, and other legal professionals to gather in a celebration of the year's accomplishments and to look forward to those to come. Our Annual Gala Dinners also provide us an opportunity to recognize those in the legal profession who have provided exemplary service and support to our mission or the APA community.

In 2006, the CAPABA Educational Foundation was established as a non-profit educational affiliate of CAPABA. Each year, the Foundation oversees the annual award of the CAPABA Educational Foundation Scholarship. The Scholarship is intended to be awarded each academic year to an Asian Pacific American law student who demonstrates leadership potential, excellence in academia, and a firm





commitment to and involvement with the Asian American community in Connecticut. Scholarships are awarded each year at CAPABA's Annual Gala.

CAPABA celebrated its 20th anniversary in the middle of the global COVID-19 pandemic on May 20, 2020 and pivoted from in-person events to online events throughout 2020 and 2021, including a Wine and Whiskey Tasting, a panel on Anti-Asian Violence, and holiday parties, as well as outdoor get-togethers. While we were unable to celebrate our 20th anniversary in person, we did so by holding a joint Virtual Annual Gala with the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association (CHBA). Our members also were active during the pandemic in their communities. CAPABA Board of Director Ginny Kim helped organize the CBA's pandemic pro bono clinic and President Dan Brody volunteered and took on the clinic's first pro bono case. CAPABA also was active during that time in responding to incidents of anti-Asian hate crimes and incidents occurring in our state and even to our members. CAPABA members, including Attorney General William Tong, participated in communities' rallies and events, participated on educational panels and programs, and gave interviews to media outlets.

This year's 2025 Annual Gala will celebrate CAPABA's 25th Anniversary and there is

so much to be thankful for and celebrate! In our last bar year, we attended and publicized *The Far Country*, a powerful play by Lloyd Suh and a finalist for the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, which connected members to the history of Chinese immigration in the early 20th century. We held cultural gatherings like our Lunar New Year celebration, Voter Registration collaboration, and Hot Pot dinners to strengthen the ties within our community. We have also worked to bring in the next generation, with renewed efforts to connect with law students, including a presence at the Connecticut Bar swearing-in ceremonies. Beyond our CAPABA community, we continued to collaborate with numerous partner organizations, including other affinity bar groups, Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity and NAPABA to improve diversity in the legal profession and positively impact our community through activities such as NAPABA's lobby day and get-out-the-vote campaigns. Lobby day allowed our members to raise awareness on matters affecting the Asian and legal community, such as historical laws that prevented Chinese individuals from holding real estate, including the Alien Land Laws and other discriminatory property restrictions. Members worked to ensure that our community's voices were heard by encouraging voter engagement within the Asian community through voter registration events, and we continue to hold these

events monthly. We also saw our members participating on panels addressing critical issues such as microaggressions, offering tools to help our community navigate and overcome these challenges, and serving on the state's Hate Crimes Advisory Panel. Through vital collaborations, we were able to shine a light on resources and support to our communities, such as promoting the Connecticut Information Center's hate crime reporting tool—an essential resource in raising awareness and empowering individuals to report incidents of hate.

CAPABA has steadily grown, and today proudly includes attorneys in the private and public sectors, in-house counsel, judges, professors, law students, and others who support CAPABA's mission. CAPABA currently has three regional committees in Fairfield County, Hartford County, and New Haven County to better serve the needs of APA communities throughout Connecticut and to provide more frequent and readily accessible opportunities for CAPABA's members to attend and participate in various events and initiatives throughout the year and collaborate with each other. ■



Dan A. Brody is a Counsel at Robinson & Cole LLP. He is a member of the firm's Litigation Section and focuses his practice on complex business litigation matters, government and internal investigations, corporate compliance, and criminal defense.

Checklists

By CHARLES D. RAY

Checklists are wonderful things, especially when your life gets hectic and time is short. Going on vacation? Do we have our boarding passes? Are the doors all locked? Is the oven off? Having a routine (if not an actual list) can be a stress saver in many situations. And in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's decision in *Wisniewski v. Palermino*, 351 Conn. 390 (2025), attorneys would be well-advised to update their own routines and checklists.

In 2018, Edward Wisniewski asked Attorney Palermino to assist him with estate planning documents. Mr. Wisniewski owned a security account valued at over \$845,000 and decided he wanted to divide that account, upon his death, in five equal shares to his daughter, three of his grandchildren, and a friend. Attorney Palermino prepared a will that provided for the five equal shares and Mr. Wisniewski died soon after the will was completed. The problem that divided the Supreme Court soon became apparent—Mr. Wisniewski's daughter was named as the sole beneficiary of the security account and ended up with all the money.

Two of the grandchildren and the friend sued Attorney Palermino, alleging: 1) professional negligence for failing to advise Mr. Wisniewski to make sure that his beneficiary designations complied with the wishes he expressed in his will; and 2) breach of contract for failing to draft the will in accordance with Mr. Wisniewski's wishes. The trial court dismissed the professional negligence claim for lack of standing, "reasoning that an attorney cannot be held liable to third-party beneficiaries of a will under Connecticut law, except for

errors related to drafting or executing the will. The trial court eventually dismissed the plaintiffs' contract claim, resulting in an appeal to the Appellate Court, which the Supreme Court transferred to its own docket.

The case was originally argued to a panel consisting of Chief Justice Mullins and Justices McDonald, D'Auria, Ecker, Alexander, and Dannehy. Those six divided 3-3 on the outcome, so Judge Westbrook was added to the panel and became the deciding vote in reversing the judgment of the trial court, at least in terms of the professional negligence claim. The majority's decision was penned by Justice McDonald and joined by Justice Ecker, Justice Dannehy, and Judge Westbrook.

Let's start with the general rule: "attorneys are not liable to persons other than their clients for the negligent rendering of services." As is the case with most general rules, however, this one has exceptions. Indeed, in *Stowe v. Smith*, 184 Conn. 194 (1981), the Court held that third-party beneficiaries could sue an attorney "for errors related to drafting, preparing, or executing a client's will." And then in *Krawczyk v. Stingle*, 208 Conn. 239 (1988), the Court rejected a claim of improper delay in preparing documents, but left open the possibility "that an attorney may still have a duty to third-party beneficiaries of a will if the balance of public policy considerations warranted imposing a duty." The *Krawczyk* Court identified five relevant factors: 1) whether the primary purpose of the transaction was to benefit the third party; 2) the foreseeability of harm to the intended beneficiaries; 3) the proximity of

the injury to the conduct complained of; 4) the policy of preventing future harm; and 5) the burden on the legal profession if liability is imposed.

In *Wisniewski*, the plaintiffs argued that the attorney failed to meet the standard of care in two respects. First, by failing to tell Mr. Wisniewski that he should change the beneficiary designations on the security account to match those in his will. Second, by failing to ensure that Mr. Wisniewski actually made those changes. In response, the defendant argued that imposing either of the duties alleged by the plaintiffs would violate the long-standing notion that an attorney owes a duty only to his client, interfere with the attorney-client relationship, increase litigation and legal costs, and run counter to rulings in other jurisdictions. In short, Attorney Palermino argued that he prepared Mr. Wisniewski's will exactly as he was asked to and, under existing law, that should be the end of the case.

Applying the *Krawczyk* factors, the majority concluded that: 1) the primary purpose of the transaction was to benefit the third-party beneficiaries of the will; 2) it was foreseeable that the plaintiffs would be injured by the defendant's failure to advise Mr. Wisniewski to change the beneficiary designation on his security account; 3) this may be a case where the interests of the beneficiaries loom larger than those of the client; 4) denying liability in this situation would deprive the client of his wishes and deny the intended beneficiaries any recourse for their losses; and 5) imposing liability in this situation would not unfairly burden the legal profession.



The dissenters - Chief Justice Mullins and Justices Alexander and D'Auria - take up the case of the defendant attorney. For them, the overriding principle is the central tenet of the attorney-client relationship. Namely, "the attorney's duty of [e]ntire devotion to the interest of the client." Recognizing the previously approved narrow exceptions to this rule, for errors in drafting or executing a will, the dissenters "would not go any further."

As to specifics, the dissent disagreed with the notion that the primary purpose of the attorney-client relationship was to benefit the plaintiff's beneficiaries. In this regard, the allegations of the complaint became important, with the dissent noting that "the complaint does not contain allegations establishing the significance of the [security] account relative to the decedent's other assets, if any." Setting aside the particulars of the complaint, however, the dissent's "primary concern" was "the impact of the majority's decision on the attorney-client relationship and the burden

on the legal profession that will result."

Focusing on the sanctity of the attorney-client relationship, the dissent takes the view that unlike drafting or execution mistakes that are plain to see, imposing liability in this situation will require courts, juries, and parties to "invade the attorney-client relationship and to reveal confidential and privileged communication." The dissent envisions a case in which an attorney is sued by a disappointed third-party beneficiary and is unable to rely on his or her deceased client for supporting testimony. Even if the attorney were to prevail at trial, the action would require the attorney to "bear the costs of litigation and to divulge all the confidential and privileged communications between the attorney and client." For the dissent, these costs are too high. And if liability is imposed in this situation, "attorneys may become distracted by concerns about this liability and lose the proper focus on the client's interests."

In sorting through all of this, it is important to note that the majority adopts its new rule of liability in a very fact specific situation—a failure to advise a client that they need to make sure that their beneficiary designations match up with what they want to put in their will. The majority specifically rejected the plaintiffs' claim that an attorney has an obligation to ensure that the proper designations have been made, so we may never see the problems envisioned by the dissent come to fruition. In other words, is this an exception in name only and one that may never apply again? Or is this the first step on a path that will allow the exceptions to swallow the general rule? We will likely find out in the future. In the meantime, polish up those checklists! ■



Charles D. Ray is a partner at McCarter & English LLP, in Hartford. He clerked for Justice David M. Shea during the Supreme Court's 1989–1990 term and

appears before the Court on a regular basis.

DEI—The Newest “Dirty Words”

By VIANCA T. MALICK

On the first day of his second term, President Trump issued Executive Order 14151 titled “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing.”¹ In an attempt to terminate DEI initiatives across the federal government, President Trump claims that such programs have caused “immense public waste” and “shameful discrimination.”² But what is “DEI”? The acronym standing for “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” has increased in popularity over the last several years, but has also increased in criticism, causing widespread disagreement as to what DEI actually means.

The origins of DEI date back to the 1960s anti-discrimination legislative movement, which included the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967.³ Usually lumped together as one, DEI actually refers to three pillars of policy that, when implemented together, prevent discrimination and create more inclusive environments for those from marginalized groups.⁴ “Diversity” refers to the representation of people from a variety of backgrounds at all levels of an organization (different races, genders, economic statuses, sexual orientations, etc.).⁵ “Equity” focuses on fairness and impartiality, such as whether people are being fairly compensated, treated, and considered for advancement opportunities at an organization.⁶ “Inclusion” is about whether people feel like they belong or are valued in an organization.⁷

In the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the murder of George Floyd, and the #MeToo movement, DEI initia-

Vianca T. Malick is chair of the CBA Young Lawyers Section for the 2024-2025 bar year. She is an Assistant Attorney General in the Infrastructure and Economic Development Section of the Connecticut Office of the Attorney General where she primarily handles defensive litigation on behalf of several state agencies.



tives increased in popularity but also garnered increased criticism creating a “flashpoint” in American politics.⁸ The most common criticism? Meritocracy. DEI is often misconstrued as reverse discrimination that credits race and gender over individual merit.⁹ DEI and meritocracy, however, are not oxymorons. Rather DEI supports merit-based decision making by correcting power inequities and breaking down barriers that hinder the success of qualified people from such marginalized groups.

In February, the CBA Young Lawyers Section held its diversity dinner at Café Fiore in Cromwell. Moderated by Cromwell Mayor James Demetriades, attendees participated in a frank discussion of the current state of DEI in our country. Sharon Brown, DEI Partner at Barclay Damon LLP, and State Representative Jack Fazzino of District 83 addressed common misconceptions regarding DEI and the impact the president’s executive orders have on companies and organizations that wish to continue their commitment to DEI without breaking the law.

Attorney Brown and Representative Fazzino also discussed the impact of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*.¹⁰ Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. sued Harvard University and the University of North Carolina alleging that the universities’ admissions practices were discriminatory, because they used race and gender as one of many factors when making admissions decisions.¹¹ On June 29, 2023, the Supreme Court held that the universities’ approaches for achieving diversity violated the law thereby ending the use of affirmative action in higher education.¹² Attorney Brown noted that people often confuse DEI with affirmative action, but the two are not the same. The Supreme Court’s decision addressed programs that use race- or sex-based preferences; it has no applicability to businesses that wish to continue their DEI programs that don’t involve affirmative action.

Unfortunately, between the end of affirmative action and the President’s executive orders, diversity, equity, and inclusion are now “dirty words” and many U.S.

companies are clawing back their DEI initiatives across the board. In August 2024, Ford Motors and Lowe's announced they will no longer participate in external diversity surveys and will be consolidating their employee resource groups.¹³ In November 2024, Walmart confirmed it will not renew its commitment to the Walmart.org Center for Racial Equity.¹⁴ In January 2025, McDonald's announced it will retire goals for achieving diversity at senior leadership levels and Target amended its "Belonging to Bullseye" strategy ending programs to aid Black employees in building their careers and efforts to recruit more diverse suppliers.¹⁵

Despite the many companies dismantling their DEI programs, others have recommitted to their DEI initiatives. In January, Costco's Board of Directors voted against a proposal from the National Center for Public Policy Research to evaluate the risks associated with their DEI efforts.¹⁶

Companies like Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan have also publicly reaffirmed their commitment to increasing diversity.¹⁷

I am not sure what the current state of DEI will be when this is published. As of March 2025, the president's executive orders regarding DEI have been largely blocked by federal courts.¹⁸ My hope is that DEI initiatives will not be something of the past, but rather only the beginning of our efforts to create a true meritocracy where everyone can succeed without the barriers discrimination has plagued many of our citizens with. ■

NOTES

¹ Exec. Order No. 14151, 90 Fed. Reg. 8339 (Jan. 20, 2025).

² See *id.*

³ See Kiara Alfonseca, *A Look at What DEI Means Amid Trump Executive Orders*, ABCNews (Jan. 24, 2025, 1:47PM), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/dei-programs/story?id=97004455>.

⁴ See *id.*, see also, Jessica Guynn, *DEI Explained: What is DEI and Why is it so divisive? What you need to know*, USA TODAY (Mar. 4, 2025, 10:53PM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2025/03/04/trump-dei-backlash-explained/81170427007/>.

⁵ See Kiara Alfonseca, *A Look at What DEI Means Amid Trump Executive Orders*, ABCNews (Jan. 24, 2025, 1:47PM), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/dei-programs/story?id=97004455>.

⁶ See *id.*

⁷ See *id.*

⁸ See Jessica Guynn, *DEI Explained: What is DEI and Why is it so divisive? What you need to know*, USA TODAY (Mar. 4, 2025, 10:53PM), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2025/03/04/trump-dei-backlash-explained/81170427007/>.

⁹ See *id.*

¹⁰ 600 U.S. 181 (2023).

¹¹ See *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, 600 U.S. 181, 197–98 (2023).

¹² See *id.* at 230.

¹³ *Which US Companies are Pulling Back on Diversity Initiatives*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 7, 2025, 4:07 PM) <https://apnews.com/article/dei-diversity-equity-inclusion-companies-law-suits-2193ef0a864db968e6934f971f78e8f2>.

¹⁴ See *id.*

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to prior counsel and Disciplinary Counsel's requests for details of the settlement. *Millman v. William John Hennessey*, #23-0165.

Discipline imposed under Practice Book Section 2-37(a)(5) for violation of Rules 1.8(h)(1), 1.8(h)(2), 3.3(a)(1) and 8.4(4) where attorney, who was alleged to have taken a \$750 retainer to draft a Will, denied receiving the retainer, denied meeting the proposed testatrix and did not draft any Will. When complainant daughter sought the Will after the death of her mother, attorney paid her the sum of \$750 requiring her to sign an agreement prospectively limiting his liability although daughter was not represented by other counsel. Attorney ordered to take 6 hours of in-person CLE in ethics within one year in addition to annual

CLE requirements. *Williamson v. Jamaal T. Johnson*, #23-0050.

Discipline imposed under Practice Book Section 2-37(a)(7) for violation of Rule 1.15(b) where attorney, with no intent or harm to any client, failed to keep accurate ledgers for all client's funds in his IOLTA and failed to remove earned fees in a timely manner. Attorney ordered to provide quarterly audit reports of his IOLTA for two years. Panel noted Respondent's dedication and service to his clients. *Slack v. Jeremiah Nii-Amaa Ollennu*, #23-0122.

Discipline imposed under Practice Book Section 2-37(a)(5) for violation of Rule 8.1(2) and Practice Book Section 2-32(a)(1) where attorney failed to respond to disciplinary complaint believing it to be fraudulently filed and, when contacted

by Disciplinary Counsel, failed to file information in accordance with procedural framework. Attorney ordered to take 2 hours of in-person CLE in ethics within 9 months in addition to annual CLE requirements. *Berrios v. Elizabeth Jane Rohback*, #22-0505.

Reprimand issued for violation of Rules 1.5(a), 1.5(b), 8.4(1) and 8.4(4) where attorney, in divorce matter, sought to collect a \$75,000 "bonus fee" from client after a successful mediation based upon a fee agreement which did not provide client with the ability to reject any claim for a bonus. Client had paid attorney's firm \$96,000, not including any bonus. Client ultimately sought new counsel who finalized matter substantially in accord with the mediation results. *Dangremond v. Jeffrey Hill*, #22-0158.

Taming the Legal Ego Continued from page 27

It allows attorneys to practice from a place of centered awareness rather than anxious attachment. Attorneys can focus their energy on the task at hand, rather than on defending themselves or on the fears and insecurities that can come from that inner voice. From this space, legal work becomes something attorneys do rather than something they are. Challenges are viewed on parity with success, both contributing to our growth.

As Michael Singer writes: "There is nothing more important to true growth than realizing that you are not the voice of the mind—you are the one who hears it." For attorneys whose minds are particularly active and whose professional identity is particularly strong, this realization can be profoundly liberating.

The legal profession requires its practitioners to construct and inhabit an identity defined by analytical prowess, adversarial readiness, and perfectionist standards. Witness consciousness offers a pathway to practicing law skillfully while shedding the identity that can often cause anxiety and stress. Reminding us that beneath the suits, arguments, and legal brilliance exists a consciousness that witnesses it all, untouched by the day's perceived victories and defeats.

This separation of professional identity from authentic self may be the most powerful wellbeing practice available to attorneys in a profession that demands so much of mind and spirit. ■



Tanyee Cheung is a debt finance partner at Finn Dixon & Herling LLP and is chair of her firm's Wellness Committee. Attorney Cheung received her Master's in applied positive psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and is a certified positive psychology coach and sleep coach. You can connect with Attorney Cheung at tan@thronow.com.

The Newest "Dirty Words" Continued from page 35

¹⁵ See *id.*

¹⁶ See Kiara Alfonseca, *These Companies are Standing By Their DEI Policies Amid Backlash*, ABCNEWS (Jan. 23, 2025, 9:20PM), <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/companies-sticking-dei-amid-backlash/story?id=118037109>.

¹⁷ See *id.*

¹⁸ Judge Largely Blocks Trump's Executive Orders Ending Federal Support for DEI Programs, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 21, 2025, 9:01PM), <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/21/nx-s1-5305287/trump-dei-programs-executive-order-judge>.

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