

FOLLOWING THE FELLOWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE JAMES W. COOPER FELLOWS OF THE CONNECTICUT BAR FOUNDATION
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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

Hon. Juliett Crawford
Chair of the Fellows



In the Spring of 1995, following the lead of other state bars and the American Bar Foundation, the Connecticut Bar Foundation created the James W. Cooper Fellows program. James W. Cooper was an accomplished lawyer and past president of both the Connecticut Bar Foundation and the Connecticut Bar Association; the new program named in his memory sought to identify similarly distinguished members of the bar who were well-regarded for their legal ability and dedication to the legal community. According to Judge Raymond Norko, a member of the first selection committee, they sought out the “crème de la crème” on whom to bestow the honor of being named a Fellow. The selection committee examined the quality of the Fellow’s legal work, their contributions to the legal profession,

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service to the community, and demonstrated efforts to improve the legal system.

From that initial class over 25 years ago, the Fellows have continued to grow in stature and number, leaving a tangible, positive mark on the Connecticut legal landscape. Today there are over 1340 Fellows and Life Fellows who have supported Foundation programs and initiatives with their time, energy, resources, knowledge, and financial contributions. Since 1995, the Fellows have produced

influential programs including educational symposia, roundtables, and colloquiums; established student programs such as the statewide high school essay contest; served as Hartford Promise student mentors; administered fellowships for law students committed to public service; and established and maintained programs that celebrate the history of attorneys in the state by preserving oral histories of women attorneys and attorneys of color, among other projects.

The topics of Fellows programs over the years have been varied, timely, and significant. These include, among others:

- Opioid addiction;
- Veterans issues;
- Immigration;
- LGBTQIA issues;
- Systemic Racism;
- Conservatorship;
- Human trafficking;
- Alternative dispute resolution;
- Immigration;
- Career satisfaction;
- Legal aid;
- The rule of law;
- Disabilities, diversity, and inclusion;
- Capital punishment;
- and so many more.

Our Fellows programs have received attention across the state, and on the national level as well. Specifically, the Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series on Racial Inequality, launched jointly with the Connecticut Bar Association in 2020, has received national recognition, and continues its second year of critical conversations on topics related to systemic racism. In addition to work done in furtherance of the Foundation's mission and in connection with Fellows' activities, many individual Fellows have also been recognized for contributions to their communities and the bar through other organizations and programs. Our Fellows are an impressive group, with significant achievements both professional and personal.

Given the rich history of Fellows programming, the wealth of talent among the Fellows' ranks, and the mission and purpose of the CBF itself, we created this newsletter to honor all three. Thus "Following the Fellows," which aspires to quarterly publication, is intended to:

1. allow speakers from past programs to further elaborate on those topics, and to share deeper insights and views;

2. spotlight individual Fellows and their achievements outside the CBF; and
3. showcase some of the CBF's grantees and their initiatives.

We are grateful for the efforts and expertise of Attorney Jack Steigelfest, who is spearheading this new initiative. If you have ideas for future articles, a suggestion for a Fellow we should spotlight, a desire to write a piece yourself, or an interest in helping with future issues, please reach out to us at ctbf@ctbarfdn.org.

Thank you for your continued commitment to the CBF and its programming.

FELLOWS PROGRAMMING: **Religious Faith and the Practice of Law Roundtable**

Jose (Joe) Santos, Esq.
Fellow



On December 14, 2021, the Fellows hosted a virtual conference on “Faith and the Practice of Law.” Four panelists and about twenty-five participants

zoomed in for an engaging and at times highly personal discussion of the role of religious faith in daily legal practice. The key questions were, and are: Does faith have a role in legal practice? Is faith relevant in our work as lawyers; is it important? These are intensely personal questions, and of consequence in our profession. The most meaningful parts of our lives are not separated from what we do, often intensely, for so much of our day.

At the outset I want to distinguish this discussion from the historical role of religion in law as addressed by most commentators. There are full libraries of analyses and commentary on that topic. Our discussion was not jurisprudential but quotidian, less philosophical and more personal. We may not think about it frequently, at least not consciously, but for many legal professionals, faith is a constant teacher, motivator, and source of meaning in what we do. It also can be challenging. For example, a lawyer may be tasked with defending a law the lawyer considers immoral, such as a government attorney tasked with upholding the constitutionality of death penalty laws.

For all the participants at the conference, at least those who voiced opinions, faith is both relevant to and an important part of their practices. One spoke of how the rhythms of the religious calendar gave them meaning beyond the value of accomplishments in legal transactions. They said it gave them balance while also providing a periodic distance from what can be an overwhelming stream of client and adversarial demands. Another spoke of how they counsel their clients and parishioners on a myriad of issues, thereby fusing legal practice with personal, non-legal issues – a type of legal to medical equivalent of treating the whole person and not just an isolated condition. Another spoke of the joy of taking time from billing hours to counseling clients on personal matters unrelated, or only tangentially related, to the legal issues that brought them together.

But all is not roses here. Most of us cannot mentor, counsel, and otherwise support others on non-legal matters as much as we might like. Likewise we often must argue positions that may challenge our personal views. We have businesses to run, hours to bill, clients to respond to on core legal issues,

depositions to take, and both court and conference room “hearings” to attend. There are limits to using the business of law purely as a vehicle for personal counseling and self-expression, as much as that might bring satisfaction. But, there also can be faith-filled meaning even in those core aspects of legal practice. The path lies in our attitude toward the work and its purposes.

Let’s talk about attitude. Long ago there were three stone masons cutting stone for a large religious building. A passerby asked the first mason what he was doing and he responded “I am cutting stone.” The passerby asked the second mason the same question, and he replied “I am working to feed my family.” The passerby kept on going and asked the third lawyer (excuse me . . ., “mason”) what he was doing, and he replied “I am building a Cathedral.” Our attitude toward our work can make all the difference in how we feel about it, how we interact with others, and in its ultimate meaning to ourselves, our colleagues, and our communities. As an aside, it also may have positive impact on our physical and mental health. Is a brief just a brief as cutting stone was to the first mason, is it a way to feed our family (or to buy

the next bigger house or boat), or do we see it as something much greater? That's a question each legal professional (and any person) has to answer for themselves, either alone or in unbillable conferences with the One who we believe, if we believe, matters most.

Our discussion surfaced an important issue, that it seems no longer socially acceptable for lawyers to speak to each other, and in many situations to others as well, about anything to do with God, divinity, or religious faith in general. In an environment that otherwise values self-expression, this aspect of lawyers' lives seems capped. Culture has changed rapidly, and some feel alone, separated at least in the profession from such a fundamentally important part of their identity. The conference was an eye-opener in this respect because it gave some of the participants a renewed sense that they are not alone, that many of "us" lawyers and other legal professionals also have religious faith, and that it matters in our work. In some small way, our desk can be our little altar, a tangible launchpad from which to give thanks for – or lift up -- our successes and frustrations. Perhaps we can do so

even as we eat our lunch bread on it, plan agenda items, and use those action items with the right intentions. One lawyer's comment about the seeming social unacceptability of lawyers speaking about their faith reminded me of the very nice congratulatory party that my now former company organized when I departed. After the kind words from others, I informed that, after more than thirty years of legal practice, I was enrolling in divinity school. Several lawyers came over and quietly shared that they too desired to do something like that. God has more followers in the legal profession than it may seem, imperfect as we may be.

Authentic religious faith creates meaning and fulfillment. As lawyers, we are trained to fight zealously for our clients, and to win. Of course that is in line with our legal system, tradition, and professional duty. But as many depart from religious faith, might the focus on the fight and the win make it perilous to lose our balance? The legal profession has substantially higher rates than the general population of alcoholism, drug abuse, depression, and suicide. Why? For many, stress, long hours, high stakes cases, difficult clients, and an

adversarial system all can take its toll. But that is not going to change. Faith in the Divine, of any religious structure, can bring a human – even a lawyer -- to a more realistic, more balanced, more cosmically connected lifestyle. If I believe that the most important and powerful Being in the universe loves me unconditionally, everything else has a more positive meaning. The question, here, with what attitude will a lawyer engage in legal practice? And what are the underlying supports for that attitude? There are many, of course, but at one extreme is the need to “win” and perhaps not always for the client’s benefit but for the lawyer’s own ego. That may result in a transactional style that can benefit from some reflection. Another embraces the process of finding divine connectivity within the context of the work. The difference between the two attitudes can be as significant as the difference between cutting stone and building a cathedral.

Faith-filled meaning, values, balance and connectivity are possible. We may not talk about them openly but they are around us every day. Recently I had the occasion to be in line for a funeral wake of a lawyer colleague. It was a long line that snaked its way from the

inside of the funeral home to the front, to the side, and far to the back. Hundreds of people stood in below freezing temperatures. We spoke of our colleague, his positivity, the good relationships he built, and the goodness he brought to others personally and through his work. It was beauty in motion; a testament to how a great person worked and lived.

FOCUS ON FELLOWS: Meet Amy Lin Meyerson

Ginny Kim, Esq.
Fellow



Amy Lin Meyerson served on the Connecticut Bar Foundation Board of Directors from 2009-2012 and has been a James W. Cooper Fellow since November 2009.

Even if you never met Amy Lin Meyerson, there is a good chance she has positively affected your life. Those who know her will tell you that she does not seek the limelight. In fact, she listens as much as she speaks. Her impact on this State, despite a modest and private nature, comes from her unstoppable

vision for what the legal profession can and should be: A force for good that visibly represents the values of a legal system firmly rooted in fairness, justice, and the rule of law.



AMY LIN MEYERSON

To that end, Governor Lamont appointed her Co-Chair of the Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council in June of 2021. Building on her prior work as a Commissioner on the Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission of Connecticut, she and the Hate Crimes Advisory Council members are working, with federal and state agencies, community leaders, and organizations, to raise awareness of

what hate crimes are, increase reporting to protect and support hate crime victims, and hold perpetrators accountable.

The through lines of Attorney Meyerson's career have always centered on collaboration, service and a relentless drive for change through representation. To understand the inspirations that drive her forward, we rewind almost thirty years.

It is 1994, in a restaurant in Atlanta, Georgia. She and a few other Asian Pacific American attorneys meet with the now Honorable Alvin T. Wong and then National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA) President Brian Sun. That evening leads to the formation of the Georgia Pacific American Bar Association (GAPABA), one of the most active and influential regional Asian Pacific American bar associations in the country today. She realizes then that thousands of APA attorneys across the country share her experiences with racism and bigotry, and that there are leaders in the APA legal community taking a stand against prejudice and working to right wrongs.

Even more astounding to her is the fact that these busy, accomplished attorneys give their time to these organizations and to new attorneys and law students. She sees firsthand how the work of a dedicated few can unleash the potential of many, teaching them how to be change agents themselves. Inspired, she organizes the Connecticut Asian Pacific American Bar Association (CAPABA) in 2000 and the CAPABA's Educational Foundation in 2006.

I first met Amy Lin Meyerson around 2001. It started with a friendly invitation to the CAPABA annual dinner meeting. After, she encouraged me to join as a member. I don't know how she found me. I had been in practice for five years by then, but had never before been approached by, or considered joining, a bar association. Of course, I joined. Membership in CAPABA served as a stepping stone to joining other bar organizations. To this day, CAPABA inspires me by its dedication to the community and to improving the legal profession.

With the support and encouragement of those same colleagues, Attorney Meyerson launched her own business and

corporate law practice in 2004. Later in 2004, she was installed as the 17th president of NAPABA. There too, she left a legacy of meeting the needs of the time and collaborating with others. When Hurricane Katrina swept through New Orleans, the city of her birth, destroying property and lives, NAPABA volunteers rushed in to staff free clinics. Also during her term, NAPABA launched a Language Access Project, weighed in on two US Supreme Court Justice nominations and collaborated with the other national bar associations in the Coalition of the Bar Associations of Color.

Invited to join the Connecticut Bar Foundation as a James W. Cooper Fellow in 2009, she was struck by the dedication of the CBF and its volunteers, working on many fronts to increase access to justice and advance the rule of law. She volunteered to serve on the CBF Board of Directors from 2009-2012. Years later, during her tenure as President of the CBA, the two organizations began working together to co-host the Constance Baker Motley Speaker Series on Racial Inequality.

Outside of Connecticut, Attorney Meyerson has served in numerous

capacities with the American Bar Association. As Chair of the ABA's Solo, Small Firm and General Practice Division, 2014-2015, she focused on providing a sizeable return on members' investment in the ABA membership through her ROI initiative: "Reexamine your practice; Outfit yourself with skills and tools; and Initiate something new in your practice and life."

She also built on the GPSolo Division's pro bono commitment to Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) by adding to its training resources and boosting volunteer numbers. Under her leadership, the GPSolo Division coordinated the ABA's Magna Carta Video Competition, in celebration of the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta. Ever mindful of the benefits of representation and collaboration, she brought NAPABA, the Hawaii Bar Association, and the NAPABA Hawaii Chapter together with GPSolo to jointly host their 2015 conferences in Honolulu, Hawaii.

During her term as NAPABA Law Foundation President from 2016 to 2018, she oversaw the creation of several giving programs and scholarships, including the NAPABA Law Foundation

Vanguards, an honorary group of attorneys whose public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the APA community, the welfare of our broader communities, and the highest principles of the legal profession. For her substantial and lasting contributions to the APA legal community nationwide, Attorney Meyerson received NAPABA's 2021 Daniel K. Inouye Trailblazer Award. The award is NAPABA's lifetime achievement award and highest honor.

To Attorney Meyerson, the Connecticut legal community is special. She appreciates that lawyers here can pursue as many different and fulfilling legal careers as they do volunteer service projects. She believes lawyers have a special responsibility, given their training and skills, to help society achieve the aspirations set forth in our Constitution. For her many achievements, the University of Connecticut School of Law honored her in its alumni Gallery of Pioneers in September 2019. Speaking of "pioneering," on July 1, 2020, Attorney Meyerson was installed as the 97th President of the Connecticut Bar Association, becoming the first APA attorney to serve in that capacity.

Attorney Meyerson took the helm of the Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) in July 2020, just as the twin tsunamis of a racial justice reckoning and global pandemic peaked. Speaking out swiftly to denounce racism and insurrection, she put out clear and unequivocal calls for justice, equity, and the rule of law. Building on the work started earlier that year, the CBA continued to provide resources and relief to solo and small firms. For those seeking a way to help, the CBA added more pro bono clinics to bring free legal services to those in need.

Amidst the turmoil, Attorney Meyerson also saw opportunities. The legal profession, long sluggish in adopting new technologies, was forced to embrace change more rapidly than ever. The CBA forged ahead too, hosting virtual forums, clinics, and even a first Zoom swearing-in ceremony with the US Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces with Chief Judge Stuckey. With the exigencies of the time still fresh, but the future firmly in mind, she spearheaded the CBA's current three-year strategic plan to add more resources for solo and small law firms, connect more in-house counsel, and

leverage the skills of experienced attorneys to broaden the CBA's reach and impact across the profession and in Connecticut's communities.

Today, Attorney Meyerson serves on the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association, where she brings her energy and passion for the profession to honorably achieve its potential. She continues to work for justice and fairness through the Connecticut Hate Crimes Advisory Council, which just launched its new website of resources.

Attorney Meyerson's decades of service to the profession reflect the intensity of a marathon run at full sprint. Her many accomplishments could fill a bibliography appended to this article. It is fitting that Governor Jodi Rell proclaimed April 26, 2006 as Amy Lin Meyerson Day in Connecticut, in conjunction with the Edwin Archer Randolph Award recognition given to her by the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity that year.

But the grace of Amy is that she prefers we focus on the collective work yet to be done. She is most gratified when reflecting on the many connections she has seeded and the

work she has catalyzed. If you have not met her yet, and I hope you do, she would encourage you to just get active with one of our state's many wonderful bar organizations. Chances are, you'll meet her there.

CBF GRANTEES: **Right to Counsel Program**

Tiffany Walton
Grants Program Director



EvictionHelpCT, Connecticut's Right to Counsel program for eviction defense, launched on January 31, 2022. The program is a result of [Public Act 21-34](#) that was passed in June 2021. The program provides free legal representation to income-eligible tenants at risk of eviction or loss of a housing subsidy. The Connecticut Bar Foundation is administering the program and direct legal services are being provided by CBF grantees Connecticut Legal Services, Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, Greater Hartford Legal Aid, and New Haven Legal Assistance Association. Hotline management and phone advice are being provided by

Statewide Legal Services.

Connecticut's Right to Counsel [RTC] for eviction defense is funded by federal pandemic relief dollars for the first two years. The program will be reviewed by the Legislature to determine if further funding will be provided. The CBF has engaged Stout, a global advisory firm, to conduct quantitative analysis of the program. Stout has conducted analysis in other jurisdictions across the country that have enacted RTC programs or are trying to get RTC legislation passed. Yale researchers Annie Harper, PhD and Danya Keene, PhD will also conduct a qualitative evaluation of the program. Both researchers have done previous work around poverty and housing insecurity and will explore the conditions and circumstances in Connecticut in which eviction occur.

In the first phase of EvictionHelpCT, legal representation is available in fourteen zip codes across eight cities and towns around the state. These zip codes represent the highest numbers and rates of eviction filings, with 25% of eviction filings statewide occurring in these locations.

Four of the cities represented appear on Princeton University's Eviction Lab's list of top 100 evicting cities nationwide, with three CT cities among the top 50 highest eviction rates. Over time, as more lawyers are hired and trained, the list of zip codes will grow to cover more cities and towns across the state.

As a snapshot, the RTC hotline received 310 calls between February 5 and February 11. Since the launch of the [EvictionHelpCT website](#), over 1,000 users have visited the website. Analytics show that Hartford and New Haven are the locations where people are accessing the website in the highest numbers. The website data correlates with the RTC hotline activity, which shows Hartford callers in RTC zip codes represent the highest percentage of callers at 38%, with New Haven at 31%.

EvictionHelpCT is an exciting opportunity for legal representation in Connecticut. There are continuing efforts to increase utilization of the program and increase program coverage areas.

You can learn more about the program and support right to counsel work by visiting the website [here](#).

Questions or Comments?

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