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Newsletter

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FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENTS

Dear Coalition Members in Washington D.C., New York, and Chicago,

Many of you may not be familiar with the Coalition's National Board. So, we thought we would take the opportunity in this newsletter to give some background.

As you know, the Coalition started in Chicago by a group of women responsible for their law firms' women's initiatives seeking to share ideas about what worked in their own firms. In its infancy, the Coalition faced many of the same problems that other new, young organizations face. It worked through those issues and created organization documents and policies to guide its growth. Over time, though, some of our members found opportunities outside of Chicago and let us know that they really missed the Coalition's fellowship and programming. Talking to them, we realized that many cities did not have an organization like the Coalition. This seemed like a real need that we could fill. But how?

First, the Chicago chapter created an expansion committee, to explore geographic areas likely to support and benefit from a Coalition chapter. We looked for locations with a robust legal community, areas that did not already have an organization focused on the same mission as the Coalition, and with enthusiastic attorneys (both from law firms and in-house at companies) willing to take on leadership roles in the new chapter. Once we identified New York and the attorneys who were interested in starting the chapter there, the expansion committee decided to create a national organization with local chapters. The national Board was formed as an umbrella to share the hard-earned experience and knowledge of the Chicago chapter, to ensure that all geographic locations are working to advance the Coalition's

mission, and to help the new chapters avoid some of the growing pains any new organization faces. Since that time, we have added Washington, D.C. as a Coalition chapter and hope to identify new locations for additional chapters in the future.

To help a new chapter, Board members provide the charter, bylaws of the sister chapters, presentations about the Coalition, information about past programming, and make themselves available to answer questions as they arise. The National Board includes leadership and representatives from every chapter and works to ensure coordination and support for every chapter. We are here for you and want to help every chapter grow and succeed!

To help promote unity among the chapters, the National Board has also offered some programming available to all chapters, such as Ashley Nelson's "Mindful Leadership" workshop in 2020. The mission of the National Board is now to oversee expansion, assist with organization of the current chapters, provide national support for the current chapters including through the newsletter and the website, and to coordinate programming so that all chapters can benefit from the joint efforts of the organization. In the future we aspire to have one or two National events annually that will bring the Chapters together to further the mission in a more holistic way. The two-part 2020 Leadership Forum was one great example of the chapters working together to benefit the whole organization and we hope to increase this coordination going forward.

Margo Wolf O'Donnell
Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff LLP

Julianne Hartzell
Marshall, Gerstein & Borun LLP

Anne Larson
Ogletree Deakins

2020 National Leadership Forum

In a year of unprecedented challenges, the Coalition was able to come together to celebrate its work, its leaders, and those who inspire us most during the first-ever **virtual National Leadership Forum**.

The New York Chapter hosted part one of the Forum on October 22, and was honored to present its two Leadership Awards to **Mehtap Cevher Conti** and **LaDonna Lusher**. Mehtap is a partner in aviation finance at Hogan Lovells, and served as President of the New York Chapter in 2020. LaDonna is a partner in employment and discrimination law at Virginia & Armbinder. Both Mehtap and LaDonna have been instrumental in the building of the New York Chapter of the Coalition, and were central to its success this past year, as we pivoted to a virtual format and explored new avenues of engaging our members and supporters.

The New York Chapter's Inspiration Award was presented to the **Honorable Tanya R. Kennedy**, Associate Justice of the Appellate Division, First Department, of the New York Court System. Justice Kennedy is a former president of the National Association of Women Judges and has served as a role model and mentor to women and African American attorneys. In her acceptance speech, Justice Kennedy encouraged those more advanced in their careers to provide access and opportunities to colleagues just coming up in the field, and urged us to use the privilege of our legal education to be bold and fearless in our advocacy around issues of racial justice.

Finally, **Professor Susan Herman**, President of the American Civil Liberties Union and Ruth Bader Ginsberg Professor of Law and Brooklyn Law School, offered a keynote presentation focused on the legacy of Justice Ginsburg and her historic role in creating equality, which was delivered with refreshing optimism. Professor Herman, who received the New York Chapter's 2019 Inspiration Award, provided personal reflections and insights about Justice Ginsburg's life and jurisprudence. She recounted how although Justice Ginsburg was widely known for her dissents, she began her famous legal career as a consensus builder. Professor Herman also provided hope for the future of the Court based in historical context, at a time when it is easy to become discouraged by recent events.

On November 5, the Chicago Chapter hosted the second portion of the National Leadership Forum, kicking off the celebration with a cocktail demonstration by **Rysse Goldfarb**

of [MommyMixology.net](https://www.MommyMixology.net). They then toasted to their fabulous award winners!

In light of the pandemic and the financial hardships so many in our community are facing this year, the Chicago Chapter decided to award two scholarships to high school students interested in studying law: **Nicole Aguilar Medina** of Josephinum Academy of the Sacred Heart, who wants to be a judge, and **Amparo Rocha** of Our Lady Of Tepeyac High School, whose goal is to defend those who cannot defend themselves. These high school students are a good reminder that the future is bright!

The Coalition then honored **Vanessa Tiradentes** of Gould & Ratner LLP as the Chicago Chapter's Leadership Award winner. Vanessa provided a great example of how we can assess our own leadership qualities – by asking five people close to you to provide the words they would use to describe you. Vanessa noted that when she tried this exercise, the responses she heard – “team player,” “leader,” “lion,” “genuine,” “trustworthy and good listener” - were all great leadership qualities. The exercise helped her take stock and embrace those leadership qualities more fully. As Vanessa noted, 2020 reminds us that we can't control everything, but we can focus on what we can control in ourselves.

The Chicago Chapter also honored **Stephanie Scharf** of Scharf Banks Marmor LLC as their Inspiration Award recipient. In her acceptance speech, Stephanie recalled noticing early in her career that women were leaving the legal profession and were having a very different experience practicing law than men. Using her experience as a social scientist, Stephanie realized the power of data to persuade when anecdotes would be dismissed: “If it's measured, it's real.” Based on this drive, Stephanie embarked on a number of projects throughout her career to survey and document why experienced women leave law firms. Stephanie noted that through this work, she also came to appreciate the value of being brave and of forging ahead even when one is not quite sure what will happen next. “You often have to take the path that is not very well walked,” Stephanie says, “but when you do, you very quickly find people to walk with you.”

To round out the awards portion of the evening, **Laura Schumacher**, Vice Chairman, External Affairs and Chief Legal Officer accepted the Benchmark Award on behalf of AbbVie. Laura noted the extraordinary challenges we are all facing—from the global pandemic, to the economic downturn, to the ongoing struggles of racial equality, and to the US election that just seems to keep on going—and she noted that the impact was particularly felt by working women who must now balance the roles of employee, parent and educator all at once. When describing AbbVie, Laura noted, “[we] work for a company that focuses on improving the lives of people and the communities

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we serve. We take our responsibilities very seriously. We believe that one of our responsibilities is to be a force for change. To increase the diversity within our company and within our profession. And we believe it's a moral imperative to use our position and our platform to be a champion to drive the change that we all want to see." Laura reminded us of the power of our connections citing the African proverb: "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together."

Finally, the Coalition ended the evening with an inspiring presentation from keynote speaker **Kailei Carr**, CEO and

founder of the Asbury Group, a transformational leadership organization working with high profile leaders. Kailei is also the founder of the award-winning podcast, *Beyond the Business Suit*, designed to provide professional women with inspiration to thrive at work and beyond. Kailei shared her thoughts on how leaders can prepare themselves to handle these challenging times now and in the future, and how women, in particular, are well-equipped to take on the complexities the next decade may have in store for us.

To view a recording of either program, please [click here](#).

Money Doesn't Lead To Happiness in Law – Here Is What Does

By: Paula Davis-Laack, JD, MAPP



The global pandemic upended the way law firms and corporate legal departments did business in 2020. Many firms furloughed employees and/or cut pay in order to navigate what became an immediate crisis to business. Most firms have been able to withstand these economic pressures with many now offering their associates bonuses this fall as a way to replace income that may have been lost due to cost cutting measures imposed due to COVID-19, and/or as a way to thank associates for staying on board. As firms and legal organizations look to next year and beyond, much is being written about the competition for lawyer talent, with many firms and related articles focused on [money](#) as a way to retain talent and inspire loyalty.

What the legal profession continues to miss, though, is that money, while a key component of any compensation package, isn't what inspires loyalty,

happiness or well-being in law (or within the workplace generally). It may be commonly thought that money motivates (reward an activity and you'll get more of it), but the research shows that the [relationship](#) between external rewards, like money, and motivation is far more complex. In fact, extrinsic incentives can actually lead to [counterintuitive](#) consequences, turning interesting tasks into a grind, play into work, and upending performance and creativity (e.g. in a series of different studies, incentivized groups took much longer to come up with solutions to a task; for tasks that required problem-solving and innovative thinking, rewards killed creativity; and people who were paid to give blood actually donated less because it interfered with their basic desire to just do something because it felt good.)

So, if the use of external rewards is murky at best when it comes to

motivation and morale, what does work? One of my favorite studies on lawyer motivation and well-being was published several years ago by Kennon Sheldon and Larry Krieger. They discovered that the things that lawyers think will make them [happy](#) in the profession (e.g., money, prestige, making partner, status) are exactly the opposite of what actually does lead to well-being in the law, and scientifically, have little to no correlation with happiness (including attorney income, which they found had a very weak correlation of .19 with motivation and well-being). Instead, the study revealed that autonomy, belonging and competence were most strongly correlated with motivation and well-being – all of which have been called into sharper focus by the pandemic. I call these your ABC Needs:

Autonomy. You feel like you have some choice as to how and when you





perform the various tasks that make up your job and in how you execute your daily responsibilities; you have a say in the way things are done; and you can take initiative and make decisions about your work. Autonomy does not mean going it alone or individualism. One of the positives to come from the pandemic is that it showed leaders that you really can do good work from anywhere, and this flexibility is crucial to well-being. Take this short quiz to see how you rate (answer yes or no to each statement):

1. I feel like I have some choice in how I execute my day-to-day responsibilities.
2. I have a say in the way my day-to-day work gets done.
3. I am part of the decision-making process on changes that impact me and my work.
4. I have the necessary skills and support to improve my day-to-day work.

Leaders can [create](#) the perception of autonomy in those they lead by clarifying responsibilities, explaining requests (particularly ones that require lawyers to do things like give up part of a vacation or work over a holiday last minute), asking open-ended questions, and encouraging self-initiation.

Belonging. This is your desire to feel connected to others; to feel like you belong to groups that are important and significant to you; you feel cared for by others; and you value creating high-quality relationships. Lawyers already suffer from high rates of [loneliness](#), and the pandemic has not helped in this regard. Sheldon and Krieger's study

further clarifies that relationships, in all forms (to self, others, work, community and to your direct partner/supervisor) are the ultimate key to lasting satisfaction in the legal profession.

Competence. You feel like you're getting better at goals that matter to you; you feel effective in your work role and you want to continue to grow and develop as a professional and master new skills. Leaders can develop this need with broad information sharing. Never before has transparency been more important as everyone seeks to navigate a pandemic without an end date. Transparency gives your lawyers the information and knowledge they need to make good decisions.

Here are important sources of motivation, happiness, and well-being for lawyers, separate and apart from money, that are much more likely to inspire loyalty:

- Flexibility – having a choice and say in how you execute the tasks you need to complete and where and how you work
- Being part of a high-quality team that both expects hard work but is made up of good people who you want to work with every day
- "You Matter" cues like making eye contact and calling a person by name
- Faster track to partnership
- Broad information sharing & transparency
- In-time feedback
- Access to professional development opportunities
- Being given greater responsibility for hiring, pro bono activities and other tasks that are both

visible and important to the firm or organization

- Opportunities to lead or develop new programs/training/affinity groups
- Opportunities to speak, write or otherwise represent the firm or organization
- Recognition & respect
- Opportunities to do more work that is personally meaningful
- Just ask! Ask your lawyers what matters most to them and what is personally motivating. When you do, you will likely hear other very important ways you can tap into sources of intrinsic motivation.

It's not wrong to reward people financially for hard work. It's actually quite important. Just know that external rewards, by themselves, likely aren't going to motivate talented professionals to stay at your organization. People need to know now, more than ever, that you care, and leaders in law have a great opportunity to pivot toward inclusion of these types of resources – will they take it?

[Paula Davis-Laack](#) will publish her first book on March 16, 2021 about burnout at work (published by the Wharton School Press). It is called *Beating Burnout at Work: Why Teams Hold the Secret to Well-Being & Resilience*.



Apochromatik

By: Leslee Cohen

On September 10th, I was one of the fortunate attendees of the Coalition's webinar [Career Development During Covid-19](#), featuring Certified Career Development and Career Transitions Coach Amy Gardner. I found the advice provided by Amy throughout the presentation to be salient and practical and, as I noodled on the issues I was facing at my own firm over the next few days, I decided to reach out to Amy for her thoughts. Sending that email turned out to be life changing for me.

My business boutique firm (Hershman Cohen LLC) had added one new attorney immediately prior to the Covid-induced work-from-home order, and a second new attorney during quarantine, plus a new COO/paralegal who took over our operations last month. Another of our lawyers was struggling with e-schooling her very young children. I was finding it incredibly difficult to foster a sense of culture and communication and to integrate the three new members into our small firm while we were all separated physically. I also had never led a team before and (for those of you who know me, this won't surprise you) I am much more comfortable with equality than leadership so that was a struggle as well—and one which I wasn't even aware I was encountering.

During that first half hour call with Amy and her amazing partner/husband, Keith Sbiral, somehow this dynamic duo was able to cull out the three issues facing our team—communication, trust and building a sense of shared mission. I knew I had found the right resource to help me solve our problems. Amy and Keith (through their company, [Apochromatik](#)) were a pleasure to work with through the retention process and in planning a team-building session for the firm. They promised that, even though we would be on Zoom, it would feel like we were on a desert island together.

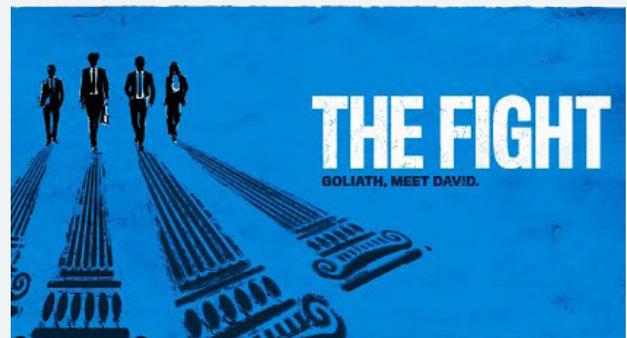
They were right. The session started with an anonymous poll asking everyone to rank how they felt about being there—the numbers were not encouraging. However, two hours later the same poll revealed an opposite response. In that short period of time, Amy and Keith led us through the process of getting our misconceptions about each other out in the open in a completely non-threatening way. They helped us realize a vision for the firm we all wanted to build and identify specific steps we each committed to take to get there. They turned us into a TEAM rather than a set of individual wonderful people and excellent lawyers and now, everything is different between us. I have retained them going forward to continue to guide us as we grow.

I asked to write this article for the Coalition's newsletter because I wanted each of you to know about the gift of Apochromatik and to consider engaging their services if you are struggling with intrafirm communication and trust issues during this crazy remote work time, especially since working from home seems to be a trend for the future. I have no doubt that they would be an excellent resource for other issues firms are experiencing as well. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you would like to know more--and stay well!

Film Screening: *The Fight*

This past fall, the Coalition's National Board sponsored special limited-time film screening of [The Fight](#). From the producers of the documentary RBG, *The Fight* chronicles a team of ACLU lawyers battling for civil rights at a defining moment in American history, and celebrates the unsung heroes who fiercely work to protect our freedoms.

If you missed this opportunity to view this film, you are still welcome to purchase your own personal screening for \$12—and when you do, \$5 of that fee goes directly to the Coalition! Please [click here](#) to register.



Chicago Chapter

CHICAGO HAPPENINGS

October 17 was the perfect fall day for the Chicago Chapter's first Coalition Charity "Duathlon"- a walk, run or ride 5K to benefit the nonprofit [Bottom Line](#). We started out by getting motivated together during a virtual Zoom warm-up, then participants ran, walked, or biked (both outside and on Pelotons!) all for a great cause. Thanks so much to all who participated and contributed to the work of this amazing organization, which helps high school kids who grow up in low-income communities, or are first-generation immigrants, get into and successfully complete college.



And on October 1, following the theme of finding success in a post-Covid recovery world, the Community Outreach Committee proudly presented the Coalition's annual student event, this year titled, *How to Land a Job in Law During a Global Pandemic*, co-sponsored by the Chicago-Kent College of Law. Panel speakers included Emily Fess (Senior Associate General Counsel / Senior Employment Counsel at Rush University Medical Center), Avanti Bakane (Partner, Gordon & Rees - Commercial Litigation, and Privacy, Data & Cybersecurity), Malaika Tyson (Shareholder, McAndrews Held), Maria Maras (Senior Intellectual Property Counsel, Accenture), and Maya Ganguly (Assistant General Counsel at Illinois State Treasurer), and they offered practical tips for navigating a career path in the legal field during challenging times. Participants had a chance to network in small breakout sessions and engage with mentors and Coalition members.

New York Chapter

NEW YORK HAPPENINGS



The New York Chapter of the Coalition held their 2020 Annual Meeting and Holiday Celebration on December 9, in collaboration with fine jewelry company Kendra Scott. Thanks to all who were able to join us for this festive event. Along with the representatives from Kendra Scott, we were honored to welcome representatives from [TakeRoot Justice](#), a nonprofit that provides legal, participatory research and policy support to strengthen the work of grassroots and community-based groups in New York City to dismantle racial, economic and social oppression.

Our members were delighted to have an opportunity to do some holiday shopping while Kendra Scott generously agreed to donate a portion of the sales to this important cause. Please visit [TakeRoot Justice](#) to learn more about this nonprofit and its necessary work for New York City.

Washington, D.C. Chapter

WASHINGTON, D.C. HAPPENINGS



This fall has been all about staying connected! On October 6, we hosted a Virtual Happy Hour and Networking event, and on November 21 the DC New Moms Group hosted its second Mommy & Me Virtual Playdate. Both events were great opportunities to catch up, support each other's work, and converse about topics important to Coalition members.

WASHINGTON, D.C. MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Congratulations to **Marjorie Just** (left), who has been named to Washingtonian Magazine's list of Top Lawyers for 2020 in the field of Divorce and Family Law; and to **Amanda Varma** (right), who has been named to Washingtonian Magazine's list of Top Lawyers for 2020 in the field of Tax Law.



Setting Up Your Member Profile

If you haven't already, we encourage all members to take a moment to set up their personal profile on the Coalition website! These profiles will all feed into a database searchable by all members, and include fields for area of practice, years practicing, and more. The more information we have included, the more useful the tool will be.

To get started, visit your Chapter (**Chicago**, **New York**, or **Washington D.C.**) and click "Member Login" in the upper right.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at info@thewomenscoalition.com. Thank you!



Congratulations to the Newly-Elected Officers and Boards of Directors!

We thank you for your service and look forward to an exciting year ahead.

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