

ISSUE NO. 05  
Spring 2019

# Newsletter

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## FROM THE CHICAGO PRESIDENT

### Carolyn A. Blessing

President, Chicago Chapter of the Coalition  
of Women's Initiatives in Law  
Partner, Locke Lord LLP



Dear Coalition Members and Supporters:

I hope you have all had a healthy and successful start to 2019 and are managing to stay warm – spring is right around the corner! I am so honored to serve as President of the Chicago Chapter of the Coalition this year, and I am excited for a year full of opportunities to grow, strengthen, and inspire our Coalition community. As many of you know, my main goals for this year are to engage with our National Board and our sister chapters to grow our community and make our National organization stronger, to continue to polish our website to really make it a useful resource and marketing tool for the Coalition, and to continue to truly inspire our members and leaders.

In the current socio-political climate there are more and more conversations at a national level about the role of women and how to support and promote women in professions like ours. The Coalition is now, as much as it has ever been, an important part of this conversation. We have always been fully committed to supporting and advancing women in the legal industry, and over the past year we have gained even more momentum. Through

our programming, networking and credentialing, I am excited to continue helping our diverse membership tackle challenges, achieve their full potential, and have the conversations necessary to ensure that they – and their female colleagues – are being recognized and rewarded for their accomplishments.

On the National front, I am so pleased to share that this is the first iteration of our newsletter that reflects the National Coalition. Within this newsletter you will see upcoming events for both the Chicago and New York Chapter, as well as information regarding the launch of our Washington D.C. Chapter on **April 3, 2019**. I encourage all of you to look at these upcoming events and share these opportunities with your colleagues in each of these cities. By engaging more women and growing our sister chapters, we bring more voices to our conversations and strengthen our community. You will also see member spotlights from both Chicago and New York so that we can all get to know some of the extraordinary women that are involved in our chapters.

Regarding our website, I am happy to report that Sonya Rosenberg and Malaika Tyson are working with our

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administrators at Glatz to evaluate our website platform and identify ways that we can fully leverage this resource – in Chicago, New York, and on a National level. Sonya and Malaika will be working both with the Chicago Board (that initiated the website project) and the National Board to ensure that we are improving our website with both our current chapters and the future growth of the Coalition in mind.

As for inspiring our membership, we kicked off the year here in Chicago on January 10th with a sold-out advance screening of *On the Basis of Sex* (the biopic about Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg) and our Post-Holiday Celebration – complete with incredible SWAG bags compiled by Marcia Owens and Jessica Cooper. On February 7th we had a fireside chat with Elizabeth Alexander, where she shared her thoughts and research on gender dynamics in the workplace (focusing on the legal industry), including strategic communications and preparedness for high profile discrimination/harassment cases and the impact of the #MeToo movement. I was pleased to see many of you on February 20th at our annual General Counsel/Managing Partner Program featuring keynote speaker Arin Reeves and a dynamic panel of managing partners and general counsel including Talita Ramos Erickson, General Counsel for Barilla; Judge Patricia Brown Holmes, Managing Partner of Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP; Kathryn (Ryndy) Ditmars, General Counsel of JLL Americas and Global Corporate Solutions; and Andrew Kassof member of Kirkland and Ellis's Global Executive Management Committee who discussed sexual harassment, lying, and the #MeToo movement. On March 12th we had a brown-bag webinar on Imposter Syndrome that was highly anticipated and very well received.

As you can see from the list of upcoming events in this newsletter, we have great programs in store for April and May, including the Coalition 10th Anniversary Event: Presidents Panel on **April 24th** at Latham and Watkins. This is the first National Board event and the first time we will have all nine past-presidents of the Chicago Chapter in one place to tell us about their paths to success, the role the Coalition has played in their careers, and their vision for the future of the organization.

Finally, it is once again the season where member firms and companies turn in their membership forms. I would encourage any of you who are interested to seriously consider becoming more involved in the organization either as a formal Delegate, Alternate Delegate, or Associate Delegate from your organization; joining a committee; or just committing to attend some of the amazing programming we have in store this year. It is through the participation of each and every one of you that we grow as a community and become a better resource for all involved. Trust me when I say that the relationships you form through the Coalition are very rewarding – both professionally and personally.

Thank you for your support and all that you are doing as part of the Coalition. I hope to see many of you soon at a Board or committee meeting, the Washington D.C. kick-off on April 3rd, or the Presidents Panel on April 24th.

All my best,



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## CHICAGO UPCOMING EVENTS

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**Stay tuned for information regarding the following upcoming Chicago events:**

### **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Presidents Panel**

Wednesday, April 24, 2019

*Hosted by Latham & Watkins LLP*

**Register now!**

### **Stagecraft with Peter Bensing**

Date in April TBD  
*at Bartlit Beck LLP*

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### **Mindfulness Revisited: Exploring Different Approaches to Mindfulness and Meditation that Works For Attorneys**

Wednesday, May 22, 2019  
*at Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP*

# Hope: How to Create The Future You Want

By: Paula Davis-Laack, JD, MAPP



The beginning of a new year is a natural point in time to assess where you're at in life and to set some goals. Given the busyness of life, the ongoing pace of work in the legal profession, and the general tenor of the world in which we live, hope is an important skill to develop. While many people think of hope as an emotion, researchers describe it as a cognitive theory that is tied to goal setting. Hope researcher, Dr. C.R. Snyder, often described hope with this phrase: "You can get there from here." He believed that life is made up of many thousands of instances in which you think about and figure out how to get from Point A to Point B.

Hopeful people share [four core beliefs](#):

1. The future will be better than the present;
2. You have a say in how your life unfolds;
3. There are multiple pathways to achieving personal and professional goals; and
4. There will be obstacles.

High levels of hope have been linked to less absenteeism, more productivity, and greater health and happiness.

This is a summary of some of the hope research:

## Hope and Leadership

Leaders need to be skilled at building hope in their followers. A random sampling of more than 10,000 people was interviewed by a

Gallup Organization [research](#) team and asked to describe a leader that had the most positive influence on their daily life. These followers were asked to describe this influential leader in three words. The research showed that followers want their leaders to meet four psychological needs: stability, trust, compassion and hope.

## Hope and Productivity

Hope and productivity are connected. I suspect that on the days you get the most done you have a strong sense of what your goals are combined with the energy to accomplish what you want. Increased levels of productivity translate into business results. [Hopeful](#) salespeople reach their quotas more often, hopeful mortgage brokers process and close more loans, and hopeful managing executives meet their quarterly goals more often.

## Hope, Stress & Resilience

When you experience stress, how do you respond? People with high levels of hope typically [generate](#) more strategies for effectively coping with a stress producing event and express a greater likelihood of using one of the strategies generated. High-hope people are flexible, accurate and thorough thinkers; that is, they have the cognitive flexibility to find alternative solutions when they get knocked off course.

## Hope and Social Connection

People with higher levels of hope often have close connections

with other people because they are interested in other people's goals and lives. [Research](#) also shows that high-hope people have an enhanced ability to take the perspective of others and enjoy interacting with other people. Higher levels of hope are also associated with more perceived social support, more social competence and less loneliness (an important finding since research has shown that many lawyers struggle with [loneliness](#)).

Hope is a process that includes [three parts](#):

1. Goals: Hope stems from the goals that matter most to us as we shape where we want to go in life and in work.
2. Agency: This is our ability to feel like we can produce results in our lives and make things happen.
3. Pathways: There will often be many routes you can take to accomplish your goals. Being able to identify these different routes, along with the obstacles that might arise, is critical to being hopeful.

How hopeful you are has important work and life implications. It impacts how well you lead, your health, and how productive you are at work. Being a hopeful thinker about the future will help you build your resilience and give you yet another tool for handling stress, change, and adversity.

# CHICAGO MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Sonya Rosenberg

Partner at Neal, Gerber, & Eisenberg LLP



## **Describe what you do.**

(1) I provide employment counseling, advising employers on any legal questions pertaining to employees and contractors, write policies and conduct employee training, and negotiate employment-related contracts and restrictive covenants. (2) I litigate employment claims, this side of my practice focused primarily on the defense of discrimination and harassment charges and lawsuits.

## **When did you first join the Coalition?**

Hmm. I'm not sure!  
I think around 2010.

## **What positions have you held in the Coalition?**

My first leadership position was on the Associates Committee's planning sub-committee for the Coalition's inaugural Judges' Panel, which is how I first met Carolyn Blessing! Over the years, I've been involved on our brown bag and outreach and inclusion committees, and on our Board and the Executive Committee.

## **What was your first job?**

I got my first legal job in 2002, as an employment paralegal at a large law firm. That job helped me to begin to learn what would

become my area of practice and gave me a sneak peek into law firm life too. So, I was very selective in my law school course focus, and in looking for a good-home law firm after law school!

## **What is your fondest career memory or highlight?**

To this day, that would be giving an oral argument in the Seventh Circuit as a (very nervous, and excited) second year associate – and winning that case! Other than the sheer awesomeness of that experience for a very green associate, I still feel a boost of confidence when I think of the fact that it was two amazing women, a partner at my law firm and an in-house counsel at the client, who trusted in me, and lobbied for me to get this opportunity. That experience taught me early on what powerful supporters and advocates female attorneys can be for one another -- and, in that sense, truly was one of the inspirations for my increased involvement in the Coalition. I also like to tell the story of how when I showed up to sign in at the Seventh Circuit clerk's office, a young man behind the desk told me, "Oh, don't worry about that. The sign-in is just for the arguing attorneys." Trying desperately to get my nerves and emotions

under control, I responded as calmly as I could, "That would be me." He certainly did not know this, but he actually helped me that day. I walked out indignant and thinking, "For arguing attorneys only... I'll show you!"

## **What is the best advice you ever received?**

That advice comes from my Dad – and you can imagine him saying it in a thick Russian accent: "Do your best, and forget the rest." I immigrated to the U.S. with my parents from the former Soviet Union (St. Petersburg – then Leningrad) in 1991. It has been a long and interesting road from the day I entered my new American middle school as the only immigrant kid who could not speak English, to where I am today. Through it all, I have consistently heard my Dad's voice in my head and have calmly tried to just be honest with my own self about trying to show up as my best self (which may or may not actually work on any given day!). That mindset also has given me license to treat myself kindly and to not get bogged down and dwell in setbacks and failures that I think we all inevitably face along our way.

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**What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?**

First, hang in there. Second, be persistent and unapologetic about pursuing your own definition of success. On the first point, there should be no sugarcoating the fact that no matter where you are – in a law firm, or in-house – starting out in our field, particularly as a woman, is hard. But, as you establish habits and learn to navigate your firm or company, you also inevitably gain a better sense of the direction you want to take and start to better understand and enjoy your substantive area of practice. And that dovetails with the second point. When I was starting out, I heard, for example, that I should hold off on having children until I made partner. I was also told “not to worry” about business development until later on. While I’m sure the advice was well-intentioned, I am glad I also listened to my own inner voice. I had my first child as a junior associate; and, since the beginning of my practice I have been investing a lot of my time into business development. Both these decisions have been incredibly, positively important in my life and in my practice. On a related note, I’m glad to see the discussion among our women begin to

shift from talk that a successful female attorney’s career “requires sacrifices,” to a real recognition and demand that we should be able to have a healthy, balanced practice. When I think of “sacrifice,” I think of giving up something that is important and nourishing to you – you should not have to do that, because if you do it will come back to bite you like a “lose-weight-fast diet.” Certainly, our jobs require balancing and juggling, but I would advise a younger woman lawyer to do that in a way that, big picture, stays true to her own definition of success and does not require her to sacrifice what’s important to her.

**To what do you attribute your success?**

Hmm. I have no secret recipe to share! What I can say is I have tried to be sincere about pursuing my career interests, without compromising what’s important to me personally, and that, along the way, I have placed the most emphasis on my relationships with family, friends, and with my clients, many of whom have ended up becoming my close friends.

**What’s your favorite Coalition program you’ve attended?**

The Outreach and Inclusion Committee’s Diversity Panel that

we hosted at NGE in the Fall of 2017, with Tiffany Harper of Grant Thornton, Sonia Menon of NGE, Mandi Wolfman of Honigman, Lakeisha Marsh of Akerman and Yondi Morris of KMR Law Group on the panel. That event opened my eyes in new ways to the severe diversity and inclusion-related issues that law firms, in particular, continue to grapple with, and also focused the Coalition’s own commitment to improve in its efforts in this area, staying true to our mission of supporting and advancing all women attorneys.

**Where do you hope to be in 5 years?**

To be honest, I am not sure! What I am sure of is that I’d like to continue to grow in my practice, and, beyond that, to actively participate in the building movement to advance (many more) women to real positions of leadership in the law. On a gloomy winter day in 5 years (and every year in between), I’d like to be either on a scenic ski hill out West somewhere, or walking with my daughter on my favorite beach in Sarasota.

**Coffee or tea?**

Coffee (and at least 3-4 cups a day of it please, or I’m useless!).»

# New York Chapter

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Nneoma Maduike

Partner at Otterbourg P.C.



### **Describe what you do.**

I am a transactional attorney representing financial institutions and private and public companies in connection with various financing transactions such as asset-based lending and corporate matters such as equity issuances, acquisitions, and debt offerings.

### **When did you first join the Coalition?**

I joined the Coalition in 2016 and was a proud member of its steering committee.

### **What positions have you held in the Coalition?**

I was the president of the New York chapter of the Coalition during the 2018 calendar year. I was also the vice president during the 2017 calendar year and the treasurer during the 2016 calendar year.

### **What was your first job?**

I was a corporate transactions associate in the Boston office of Sullivan & Worcester LLP.

### **What is your fondest career memory or highlight?**

In the most recent past, the day I found out I made partner at my firm.

### **What is the best advice you ever received?**

One of the best pieces of advice is that I should just "go for it".

### **What advice you would give to a woman lawyer just starting out?**

To learn and believe in the value that you bring to your work and your practice.

### **To what do you attribute your success?**

Without a doubt, the mentors and sponsors I have fortunately met along the way.

### **What's your favorite Coalition program you've attended?**

Building Your Brand Through Social Media. Generally, any program surrounding how to build your career, brand, and business development are particular favorites.

### **Where do you hope to be in 5 years?**

Professionally, I hope to continue to rise in my practice and my career and to continue to mentor other women attorneys.

### **Coffee or tea?**

The obviously superior tea. »

## NEW YORK UPCOMING EVENTS

### **Global Perspectives: IP Litigation and Women at the Forefront of Change**

Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Co-Sponsored by Women In Intellectual Property

### **Upcoming in 2019:**

- Rooftop Networking Events
- Leadership Forums
- Brown Bag Webinars
- CLE & Networking Opportunities

# Washington, D.C. Chapter



## The Coalition is Expanding

*Welcome Women Attorneys to  
the Washington, D.C. Chapter!*

Bring a friend and join us at the official launch of the Washington DC Chapter of the Coalition of Women's Initiative in Law, which includes women lawyers within the DC Metropolitan Area. Why become a member? Ask any of these women, the Coalition DC Chapter Steering Committee:

**Amy Epstein Gluck**

FisherBroyles, LLP

**Marjorie Just**

Offit Kurman

**Nicole Kobrine**

Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP

**Lisa Bleier**

SIFMA

**Merry Campbell**

Shulman Rogers

**Victoria Ortega**

Blank Rome LLP

**April 3, 2019**

6:00 - 8:00 pm

Cocktails & light appetizers will be served.

Hosted By:

**Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP**

2900 K Street, NW

North Tower, Suite 200

Washington, DC 20007

**Register now!**

**Questions or Comments?**

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