



THE NEW ELLIS GROUP

Monday Monday

Connecting the Dots with Karen Kaplowitz



*Helping you create and reinforce the habits of successful career building,
gleaned from my work as a business development strategist, trainer and coach*

Volume 15, Issue 17

September 13, 2021

The Privilege of Being a Lawyer in Troubled Times

Reproductive rights. Voter suppression. Climate change. Worldwide pandemic. Those are the current issues that give me the most anguish. It is hard to believe how serious our challenges are in 2021. Having been born right after WWII, the idea that we would limit any part of our democracy is sacrilegious. With anti-Semitism having driven my family to escape Eastern Europe for a country with religious freedom, laws which impose one group's religious beliefs to restrict women from abortions even when they have been victims of rape or incest are terrifying. With the stakes so high, one thing regularly cheers me: seeing lawyers step up to challenge blatantly unconstitutional, anti-democratic, and anti-scientific laws and regulations. Lawyers are not the only professionals who can make a difference, but we are uniquely empowered to take action which can have impact. As you weigh your own priorities, here are some questions to consider:

- Is there a legal organization that is tackling the issues that are most pressing to you for whom you can volunteer to do legal work?
- Is there a lawyer in your firm whose current pro bono work you can support?
- Can you mentor a more junior lawyer who needs help to launch a pro bono project?
- Do you have clients whose social justice efforts you can join? [Kudos to Lyft and Uber for defending drivers who are sued under the Texas vigilante laws.]
- Does your alma mater have a legal clinic whose students you can advise?
- Can you help direct your neighbors and friends to pro bono lawyers for their pressing legal needs?
- Are you in a firm, or a practice group within your firm, whose work is aligned with your values?

As lawyers we are privileged to have very concrete ways to challenge injustice and to solve problems. If you are losing sleep about the state of the world we are leaving for our children, have you found your own path to contributing to a more just future?

Example: A corporate associate sought out guidance from her practice group leader on ways that she could contribute to pro bono work that did not involve litigation. The practice group leader suggested that she start by talking to lawyers in the firm that specialized in client work that promoted social impact investing. She learned that the firm had pioneered a social enterprise and impact investing practice group.

When she met with the head of the social enterprise and impact investing group and shared her specific interest in protecting reproductive rights, the group's leader suggested that she talk to partners who worked with several clients whose investments might interest her. The partner also recommended that the associate meet with the firm's lawyers who specialized in tax credits and incentives to discuss whether investors could steer investments to states which protect reproductive rights. The associate was excited to investigate whether the firm could help clients benefit from tax credits and incentives in pro-choice states which compete on attracting investments with states like Texas that are restricting reproductive rights.

Are you taking full advantage of your opportunities as a lawyer to impact the issues that are of most concern to you through pro bono work and client work? Would you sleep better if you did?