



YLD PRESIDENT

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A new breed of young lawyers

Many of our parents or grandparents lived through the Great Depression and emerged from that harrowing experience more hardworking, grateful and determined not to be wasteful or take anything for granted. As I take the helm as this year's president of the Young Lawyers Division, I can't help but think that today's young lawyers share the same traits as the post-Depression generation.

I graduated from law school in 2010, at a time when the legal market was as bleak as it has ever been. It seemed the class of 2008 experienced the first signs of job offers being pulled and firms tightening their belts, and the class of 2009 saw the near complete evaporation of on-campus interviews and were left scrambling for any available work. As my class entered into its third and final year, most of us knew that we were staring into the darkness, and finding employment would be very challenging. Fast-forward to today and I am now a fifth-year attorney at Gallagher & Kennedy and nearly all of my classmates have found work of some kind. Not all of them are satisfied with their position, and many are underemployed, but the young lawyers who have known nothing but the recession are a force to be reckoned with.

Today's young lawyers are under more pressure than ever before. As many of us know, young lawyers are facing an unprecedented crush of student loan debt. It is seemingly impossible for many of them to buy a home, make car payments or meaningfully contribute to their retirement accounts due to the strain of student loan payments. Young lawyers are also in oversupply and there is significant competition for almost any open position. While some may become overwhelmed by the challenges, there seems to be an emerging and growing group who are living proof that "when the going gets tough, the tough get going."

Like Great Depression survivors, many of Maricopa County's young lawyers are doing anything they can to be valuable to their profession and to an employer. They are anxious to network, get involved and make themselves more marketable. They understand the precious value of a job and take deliberate steps to add value to their firm and make themselves indispensable. It doesn't take much effort to see the influx of these motivated young lawyers.

For instance, just last month, the YLD board had its first contested election in several years, as 10 candidates ran for four open spots. We also saw two young lawyers join the MCBA board of directors, and the board is now occupied with more young lawyers than ever before. This trend is not limited to the MCBA. The State Bar board of governors also added new board members in June, several of whom are young lawyers and former YLD board officers.

A few years ago, I spoke with a senior partner at a large local law firm and asked him what impression he had of young

lawyers. Predictably, he said that young lawyers "didn't want to work hard." This is a message that young people, not just lawyers, hear from older Americans. I don't just mean now. There is extensive research

indicating (and I'm paraphrasing here) that older people can be a bit judgmental. Specifically, older generations from the time before the Baby Boomers and Generation X always thought that the younger generation was self-centered or lazy. I'm not sure Tom Brokaw would agree with people calling "the Greatest Generation" a bunch of entitled slackers.

Regardless of the perception of some older lawyers, there is a silver lining of becoming a lawyer during a dreadful economic period. We don't know anything else. While some older lawyers are just holding on until they retire, or desperately hoping that "good times come again," we live under no such assumptions. While there are still far too many young lawyers struggling, it has been

encouraging to see so many of them take charge of their careers.

I feel honored to serve as your president — and getting to work with and meet so many motivated young lawyers is a big reason why. I am excited for the YLD to continue and expand successful programming including the Barristers Ball, Race Judicata and the Necessities Drive. I am also anxious to roll out new programming that has been the brainchild of several wonderful YLD board members. I believe that the MCBA and the YLD, in particular, is in a great position to enrich our legal community more than ever before. In 2015, and over the next decade, I can't predict what Maricopa County's young lawyers might accomplish, but I wouldn't bet against them. ■