

## LIVE FROM THE ZOOM STUDIO

BY SHELLI FEDULLO

**A**s I write from my improvised workplace in the living room, AKA the Zoom Studio, wearing today's chic work ensemble: a black tee shirt accompanied by black and white flowered microfiber lounging slacks (my euphemism for pajama bottoms), I look toward the dining room and imagine myself the hostess at a gourmet dinner party. The party is catered (this is imagination, not delusion), leaving me in a glamorous hostess outfit to engage with the guests. The two between whom I have seated myself, Control and Change, have always had an uneasy relationship. Control is pale, looks sullen, forlorn, and dejected, and with downcast eyes listlessly pushes food around on their plate with a fork. Change is cheerful with a good appetite, but still quiet. It is my job to keep conversation going, and I ask, "So, tell me, how have you two been?" Control looks up, looks down at their plate, looks up again, glares at Change and says, "How do you think I have been doing? As everyone knows, things have not exactly been peachy for me." Change immediately responds, "I understand this has not been easy for you, but if you would only stop whining, we can make this work."

I am not really someone who actually throws dinner parties (despite the very strong appeal of the hostess outfit); my

metaphorical gathering was a way to help me try to frame and mediate the internal conflict I have been struggling with since



March. It started the day I packed files into a huge suitcase, grabbed my favorite picture of my mother from my 31st floor office windowsill and rushed home where, like everyone else, I stayed, and stayed, and stayed, and stayed. Certainly, 2020 has put my relationship, and maybe yours, with Change and Control to the test. We have experienced profound changes in how we live and how we work. We have limitations around our ability to control aspects of our lives, which we have always taken for granted. In a profession steeped in precedent, we have been faced with sudden and unprecedented change. I speak just for myself, but it is a safe bet I would not be alone in confessing that being "chill" does not top the list of either my professional or personal characteristics. Sure, being a control "freak" is undesirable, but is being a control "enthusiast" that rare among lawyers? So, how do people who are hardwired to take control of situations respond when a pandemic suddenly has taken control of us all?

The answer is that finding solutions to difficult challenges is what we do. We are hardwired to be nimble problem solvers, and we have adapted. In some ways, we have adapted so well that certain changes, which

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had the presumptive expiration date of “when things get back to normal” may have very long shelf lives. In this edition, Philadelphia lawyers Mark Aronchick, Keir Bradford-Grey, Hillary Ladov, Arly Smith-Pearson, Professor Louis Rulli, Jordan Stokovsky, Amber Racine, Sozi Tulante, and Felix Yelin have each responded to questions around how they have been navigating the “new normal” of the pandemic and what they see ahead.

Although I wish it could have been over lunch, Reggie Shuford, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania ACLU, the Philadelphia Bar Association’s Diversity Chair, and this year’s recipient of the Justice Sonia Sotomayor Diversity Award, and I spent Zoom time together last month in an interview for this edition. Reggie’s passionate commitment to the protection of civil rights and the promotion of diversity and inclusion are powered by his empathy, humanity, and personal grace. Our conversation included his thoughts on how people of goodwill can have the hard, but necessary, conversations around racial injustice and privilege in ways that promote understanding and forward momentum for imperative changes which are long overdue.

In July, we lost an American hero with the passing of the iconic civil rights leader, United States Representative John R. Lewis. Almost 57 years after being the youngest speaker at the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, his last public appearance in June was in Blacks Lives Matter Plaza in Washington D.C. In this edition, Editorial Board member and former Chancellor, Albert S. Dandridge III, shares a poignant tribute to his personal hero.

As much as I would like to end on an upbeat note, it would be disingenuous to confine discussion of the pandemic

to its impact on our law practices and to my personal musings. Today, a week before we go to press, the COVID-19 death toll in the United States has reached approximately 194,000. A recent model by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington forecasts that American deaths will exceed 410,000 by year’s end. In the face of a literal existential threat, it is unfathomable that refusal to do something as basic as wear a face mask to protect ourselves and others has become, for many, a symbol of political fealty. It is unfathomable that with 4% of the world’s population, our nation has suffered at least 22% of confirmed worldwide COVID-19 deaths. Science should be apolitical. Stark data should out-trump wishful thinking and positive spin. Bombastic rhetoric is not going to save American lives. Leadership will. This year, we have to vote like our lives depend on it. ■

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