



Promoting Healthy, Productive, and Socially Responsible Workplaces

**INTELLECTUAL ACTIVISM: USING BLOGS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
TO ADVANCE A HUMAN DIGNITY AGENDA**

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I. Intellectual Activism: Research & Ideas Leading to Action

*Using scholarly work as the intellectual
base for change-directed initiatives*

- A. Intellectual Foundation
- Original research and analysis, leading to a reasoned, prescriptive conclusions
 - Genuine hypotheses vs. researching to support pre-ordained conclusions
 - An authoritative article or book typically constitutes this foundation
 - While that foundational piece may not be the most frequently read expression of your ideas, it provides intellectual “ownership” of the subject matter
- B. Intellectual Activism
- Breaking down, chopping up, and simplifying your foundational piece:
 - ~op-eds, newsletters, multidisciplinary, and non-academic publications
 - ~position papers
 - ~amicus briefs
 - ~legislative and regulatory drafting
 - ~blog posts and website material
 - Speaking appearances
 - ~academic, non-academic, multidisciplinary, and community venues
 - ~legislative and regulatory hearings
 - ~electronic media of all types (TV, radio, webinars, podcasts, etc.)

- Interaction
 - ~the importance of talking to “non-experts” (*i.e.*, people)
 - ~discussion groups
 - ~social media
 - Creative and artistic works, performances, demonstrations, and exhibitions
 - Creating a center, institute, or initiative
 - Importance of affiliations
- C. Downsides and Tradeoffs
- Scholarship vs. advocacy
 - Repetition
 - Opportunity costs (brand new work, scholarly “fame,” etc.)
- D. Attitude, Role, and Practice
- Intellectual activism as instruction and direction
 - Intellectual activism as exchange, interaction, and revision
- E. Workplace Bullying as an Example
- Started with a question, not a conclusion, leading to a 2000 law review article
 - Shorter articles in bar ass’n journals, journals in other disciplines, newsletters, etc.
 - Legislative drafting and advocacy: Healthy Workplace Bill
 - Affiliation: Workplace Bullying Institute (<http://www.workplacebullying.org>)
 - Scholarly and practitioner conferences, mostly interdisciplinary
 - Public outreach (unions, bar associations, etc.) and social media (Facebook)
 - New Workplace Institute and *Minding the Workplace* blog (<http://newworkplace.wordpress.com>)
- F. Lessons
- Responsibly bold beats playing it safe
 - Be ahead of the curve, then be restlessly patient
 - Criticism of your work means you’re making an impact
 - Be both an expert and a reflective lifelong learner
 - Be entrepreneurial

II. Minding the Workplace Blog

<http://newworkplace.wordpress.com>

- A. Generally (launched in late 2008)
- Dominant themes: Psychological health at work, workplace bullying, employment law & policy, economics & job market, social justice
 - Target readership: Scholars & practitioners in employment relations, employment law & policy stakeholders, graduate students, interested members of general public, media
 - Niche blog – roughly 1,500-1,800 hits per week

B. Benefits & Tradeoffs

- Circulate ideas and information to an invested/interested readership
- Organizing tool for legal reform
- Genuine exchanges with the public, especially via social media
- Multidisciplinary readership with scholar/practitioner interaction
- Occasional media attention and speaking invitations
- Time consuming – 4-8 hours/week
- Usually no immediate payoff – takes time & effort
- It can get obsessive for some bloggers

C. Advice

- Do you really, really want to do this?
- Who are your projected readers?
- Be committed to writing at least weekly, preferably more
- Think and write like a journalist or columnist

III. Social Media – Facebook

(<http://www.facebook.com>)

A. Organizing options

- Lots and lots of people are on FB
- Format provides options for creating affinity pages and groups
- Mix of social, family, work, activities, etc., can be awkward

B. Workplace bullying

- Considerable activity on FB
- Global exchanges (U.S., Canada, Australia, especially)
- Dedicated pages to workplace bullying
- Allows for linking of blog posts, news reports, announcements
- Scholars, practitioners, activists, workers, bullying targets

Some of these ideas have percolated in:

David C. Yamada, *Therapeutic Jurisprudence and the Practice of Legal Scholarship*, 41 UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS LAW REVIEW 121 (2010), available at:

http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1585311

David Yamada, *The Adult Educator as Public Intellectual*, in ANDRE P. GRACE & TONETTE S. ROCCO, ET AL., CHALLENGING THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF ADULT EDUCATION: JOHN OHLIGER AND CONTRADICTIONS IN MODERN PRACTICE (SAN FRANCISCO: JOSSEY-BASS, 2009), available at:

http://suffolk.academia.edu/DavidYamada/Papers/201158/The_Adult_Educator_as_Public_Intellectual

The Healthy Workplace Bill: What's it all about?

Oct 4 by David Yamada



Deb Caldieri, Crystal Novitch, Greg Sorozan, and David Yamada testify in support of the Healthy Workplace Bill before a committee of the Massachusetts state legislature, July 2011

The Healthy Workplace Bill (HWB) is model legislation I authored that provides severely bullied employees with a legal claim for damages, creates legal incentives for employers to act preventively and responsively with regard to bullying behaviors, and protects those who have made complaints or filed suit about workplace bullying from retaliation.

Variations of the HWB have been introduced in over 20 state legislatures since 2003. Thanks to the work of advocates across the country, we are getting closer and closer to making this bill a law.

Educational slideshow about the HWB

Toward that end, we now have an excellent slideshow that explains the need for, and basic provisions of, the HWB, courtesy of Deb Falzoi, communications director for Massachusetts Healthy Workplace Advocates. It's worth a good look and sharing with others.

Deb is a professional web designer and computer graphics expert who understands the need to present our case in more creative ways than asking people to read fact sheets and testimony. She's crammed a lot of useful information into this short slideshow, in very digestible fashion.

It's a winner of a presentation. [Go here to get it.](#)

Readers who would like to join the nationwide effort to enact the HWB can visit the [campaign website](#).

<http://newworkplace.wordpress.com/2011/10/04/the-healthy-workplace-bill-whats-it-all-about/>

From the Chronicle of Higher Education (February 2010)

Critical Mass: What Others Are Saying About the Alabama Shootings

The shootings last week at the University of Alabama at Huntsville, which left three faculty members dead and two more professors and a department assistant wounded, has transfixed the academic world. Amy Bishop, an assistant professor of biology at the university, was arrested at the scene and has been charged with murder and attempted murder. What role did the stresses of the academic life, particularly the denial of her bid for tenure, play in triggering the attack? Was race a factor? The availability of guns on campus? How universities handle mental illness? Here is what others have to say. . . .

David C. Yamada, professor of law and director of the New Workplace Institute, Suffolk University: In recent years, several well-publicized acts of violence by unstable students have caused colleges and universities to beef up their emergency-response protocols and to take student mental-health issues more seriously.

But frankly, there has been very, very little attention devoted to faculty mental health, much less the risks of personal violence committed by fellow faculty members. In fact, I fear that the increasingly bizarre details surrounding Bishop's life history (how she killed her brother in 1986, perhaps accidentally; being a suspect in a mail bomb investigation in 1993) will allow us to dodge these matters, instead of using this as a wake-up call. ...

More often than not, professors are deeply drawn to their work and bring to their academic appointments a track record of high achievement as students. They are invested in the value system of academe and take its judgments seriously. Their social skills vary greatly. Some may be the life of the party, but more frequently, terms such as "intense," "eclectic," and "quirky" apply. ...

Decisions over who is invited to become a permanent member of a faculty go to the core of academic life. Indeed, it is my belief that once a school's tenure process is perceived to have lost its base integrity, everything else is up for grabs. ([Minding the Workplace: The New Workplace Institute Blog](#))

From CNN.com (November 2011)

Sexual harassment settlements: 'cost of doing business'

By **Emanuella Grinberg**, CNN

GOP presidential contender Herman Cain finds himself [addressing allegations of inappropriate behavior, made by two former female employees](#) of the National Restaurant Association when he led the organization in the 1990s. . . . He acknowledged Monday night that there was a settlement, contradicting a statement earlier in the day in which he said he had no knowledge of a settlement.

... But there are greater collateral effects of concealing real instances of harassment, said David Yamada, Suffolk University law professor and director of the [New Workplace Institute](#) in Boston.

"Employers become complicit in shielding themselves and the individual harassers -- many of whom are management level or supervisors -- from genuine accountability," he said. "If the confidential settlement does not result in any concrete discipline or discharge of the harasser, there's a decent chance it will happen again to another employee."