

# The young, the old and the in-between

By Sharon J. Arkin



Although the topic of this Editor's Message is a serious one – the abuse of both the elderly and the young – I have to start with something that struck me as funny. I'm sorry, I know it's not right, but I just can't help it.

I noticed online today, an article about Facebook. (See, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/dead-people-will-outnumber-living-facebook-problem-183152738.html>.) The article notes that “[a]nalysis by the Oxford Internet Institute suggested, based on 2018 user levels, at least 1.4 billion members will die before 2100. [¶] That means the dead could outnumber the living by 2070.”

Seriously? Wow. Just wow. The article goes on to note that “[i]f Facebook continues expanding, the number of deceased users could reach as high as 4.9 billion before the end of the century.” Omg! The point of the article is actually focused on what happens to protect the privacy of the deceased's posts and information. But, really, the statistics are just mind-boggling.

I can't wait to see what Justice Bedford does with this. Me, I just shake my head and laugh!

In reality, what those statistics bring home to us, however, is how our population is aging and how many of us now

are or soon will be “elders.” Unlike other cultures, who revere the wisdom available from its elders, our culture has long shunted the elderly aside, believing they have nothing to contribute. We see that most obviously in age discrimination cases. But we see it also in elder abuse and dependent adult cases, both in cases involving physical abuse and neglect and in financial abuse. And this edition covers more than just elder and dependent adult abuse, it also discusses sexual abuse of children.

The connecting link is vulnerability. The young, of course, are terribly vulnerable to abuse. But so are the elderly and dependent adults. And the link between those populations is powerlessness. They do not have the power to fight back when they are abused. Children are physically powerless, immature and subject to emotional manipulation. Elders and dependent adults are similarly physically powerless, often suffering from dementia or developmental disabilities, and, again, subject to emotional manipulation. They cannot protect themselves.

As consumer attorneys we have the ability, if not to protect them from their past abusers, to at least obtain compensation for their harm and, hopefully, stop their abusers from finding new victims. As the articles in this edition will confirm, it's a tough practice area, but the rewards are immense. Speak up and help out, when and where you can. ■

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