

Inside Yale Law School, Season Two, Episode 6

Robert Post

[SOFT MUSIC PLAYING]

This is Inside Yale Law School, the podcast series designed to give you a peek inside the scholars, the thinkers, the teachers, and the game-changers of Yale Law School. I'm Heather Gerken, the dean, here to open a little window into the world of this remarkable place.

It's plain to me that when you're dealing with communications at the scale of the internet and social media, you can't have law. Because law requires human judgment. And human judgment doesn't function at the scale of the internet. So the internet is going to be governed by AI. And the issue will be how you politically legitimate the operation of an AI. And that seems to me the fundamental legal question/political question here.

We are continuing our series of special episodes commemorating Yale Law School's bicentennial. And today, I am delighted to have the former dean and current Sterling Professor of Law Robert Post join me in the studio. Robert, thank you so much for taking the time to meet today.

It's such a pleasure to be here, Heather.

Well, it's a delight. So I want to talk a little bit about the law school that we both love. And I think you would agree it is a place that prizes individuality and a heterodox view of the world among its students and faculty. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what you think sets Yale apart from its history and what makes the place special?

Well, to me, what has always made Yale special is exactly what you just mentioned. It prizes eccentricity. And I myself, I'm in love with eccentricity. And if a person is idiosyncratic, that makes them interesting to me.

And so when we have students, what we try to do with our educational system is to keep them who they are and educate them to what they already are. So I'll give you a simple example. My wife Reva Siegel and I were once recruited by Harvard to go up there and start a program in legal academics. This is before I was dean.

And we both have taught a seminar here for many times called "Democratic Constitutionalism". And this is a seminar about the boundary between law and politics-- how political mobilization changes the nature of constitutional law. Law is distinct from politics. And yet, law is influenced by politics. How do you conceptualize that boundary and that dialectic?

And so it's a course that isn't your ordinary law school course. It's not doctrinal. It's not black letter. It studies the phenomenon of law formation.

And so we taught that seminar up at Harvard. And I had the opportunity to compare students at Harvard Law School and students at Yale Law School. And each-- whenever we teach this seminar, the students produce a paper. And the papers at Harvard, I would say, were much more professionalized, and disciplined, and perfected than the papers of the students at Yale.

They were precise. They were clear. But each paper asked a question that could be answered, which means they asked a trivial question. Whereas, the papers of the students at Yale-- they were bigger. They were sloppier. But they asked questions that mattered to the students-- questions which were deep enough that they couldn't be answered.

So we realized-- Reva and I realized that if we were to go to Harvard, we would have to de-professionalize the students before we could teach them to be academics. And we didn't want to have to do that. And that's one reason we said no.

But the bottom line is that what we preserve at Yale is the individuality of the students. And we make the law go to the student, not the student to the law. And that's an extremely precious gift that we give our students. And it's unique.

So you have been a student here, a faculty member here, a dean here. You talk about '74 to '78. Could you talk a little bit about how the place has changed since you were a student here?

Well, that's an interesting question. I would say, when I was a student here, you did not have the same emphasis on public interest. The clinics were nothing like what they are now. I mean, we had great clinical teachers, first-generation clinical teachers-- Denny Curtis and Steve Wizner. But they were teaching the traditional lawyer-client relationship in a case.

And I think under Harold's leadership, who was the dean before me-- Harold Koh-- we began to staff our clinics with the like of Mike Wishnie and Muneer Ahmad. And now clinics are in the business of law reform and policy-making-- totally different sense of what the clinics do here. And that has taken over the interest of the students in a way that would not have been the case when I was here. That's one major difference. The second major difference is that faculty members now, in a way that was not true when I was here, are policy entrepreneurs. So when I was dean, to recruit a faculty member, you needed to create a center, particularly if they were in a public law area. So to recruit Abbe Gluck, you had to create a health center-- something like that.

And the reason why faculty members want centers now is they want to have new ideas about how to use law to reform a subject matter area, but they want to be able to implement it, to push it to make it real in the world. And that's what these policy centers do, which makes Yale fill a gap at Yale University. Yale University has no public policy school. But we are the public policy school now for Yale because of these centers-- totally new. There wasn't anything even approaching that when I was a student here.

So especially for domestic policy, since of course we have the wonderful Jackson School-- but this is a perfect segue. Because you graciously gave the nod to Harold. But a lot of the growth of the clinics and their importance grew under your deanship. But I remember coming to you when I wanted to start a clinic. And the thing that was so fantastic is, I brought my students in. And they were meeting the great dean and the great First Amendment scholar. And you got down with us in the weeds of the doctrine within about three seconds. And I got to see Robert Post, the lawyer. And you made my clinic possible as well as so many others in all of those centers you built. It's really extraordinary.

Well, I mean, there's a number of things that I want to say about that. The first is, I think the dean should be the person who says yes and encourages faculty like yourself to express yourself. And to your immense credit, you're not just a black letter scholar. You're also a scholar who intervenes in the way of this clinic.

And that's amazing, Heather. And that you wanted to use the institutional resources of the school to do that-- that's exactly what a dean is for, is to encourage that kind of initiative and that kind of relationship with your student. That's the function of being a dean. And so it was a great pleasure to do that. But also, I could see where the interests of the students were.

I think now we have an issue of balancing. I mean, I know students now who take four clinical courses in a semester. And I don't know whether that's the right thing or the wrong thing, but it's something we're going to have to think about. But it was important that they grow.

And so as you may know, I changed the administrative structure of the dean's office. We have deputy deans under the dean. And so they're-- I think under Harold, there had been a deputy dean basically for curriculum and who does what one deputy dean now does. And there was another deputy dean for what he called intellectual life who did all of the lectures and things like that.

And my feeling was, I'm going to do the intellectual life, but the clinics needed immense centralized administrative support. Because we had issues at that time-- and I'm sure you've solved all of them, but we were starting to solve all of them-- about malpractice insurance, about standards of ethics, about conflict checks. And we have many, many growing clinics. And we're a little bit like a law firm. So you needed to have centralized administration to make this work. And we didn't have an administrative apparatus that could do it.

So I created a deputy dean for clinical and a deputy dean for non-clinical education. And I think that really went a long way toward legitimating the clinics and bringing them into the central educational project of the school. And I also, as you know, changed the voting patterns of what clinical professors could vote on.

Yep. It was extraordinary. And we've kept those traditions. It's really mattered in terms of knitting our community together.

Together. I know. It's so important. Because in so many schools, the clinical professors can be hived off. And that was a very bad thing.

Can we talk a little bit about Baker Hall, which is--for-- we are actually doing our podcast in our recording studio, which we never had before. But Baker Hall was one of your extraordinary accomplishments. It was desperately needed. It's the first building we built in 100 years. And you did it during the Great Recession. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Well, so I-- just to give a little background, when I became dean, it was 2009. And our endowment had just plummeted 35%. And as you know, we're—

Welcome to dean.

Exactly. [LAUGHTER]

We're a school that-- we're not a tuition-driven school. Tuition pays-- at least it did in my day-- about 35% of our budget. Is that approximately where it is now? And so most of the rest has to come from endowment. And if your endowment goes down 35%-- it's averaged over the years, but it's a huge hit. Kate Stith, who was the interim dean before I became dean, did a yeoman's job in doing cuts. But I came in. And I had to make a lot of cuts. But the crucial issue was to make the cuts in a way in which the faculty didn't feel them.

So one of the projects that Harold had foreseen and made provision for was that we were running out of space. I think during Harold's deanship, the last dorm room in Sterling Building had been cannibalized. So we had no dorm rooms.

And that's important. And it was especially important to alumni. But even more important is, we had no room for growth. We didn't have room. We didn't have enough classrooms for our curriculum. We didn't have enough offices for our administration.

And I don't need to tell you this. I'm sure you're struggling with the same problem. And so we desperately needed space. And it would be a wonderful thing if we could bring back campus living to students who wanted to live on campus near the Law School.

Now, Harold had gotten a commitment from the Yale administration for Baker Hall. Baker Hall at that time was a swing dorm. They used it to house students who were displaced as they revamped all the colleges. They were redoing all the colleges. And it was a miserable building. It looked like Motel 6. And if you remember, back then, the faculty voted that we should not take Baker Hall because it was such a miserable building.

8-foot ceilings. She was built like a brick house.

[LAUGHS] Exactly. It was just terrible. And worse than that, you know the university has now built the new colleges. I think that they were beginning to think about taking back Baker Hall because they wanted to build around the cemetery. And Baker Hall is an extremely strategic location for that.

And so the administration at that time was thinking of reneging, I think, on the commitment. I got a lot of signals like that. I did the best I could when-- one of the demands I made when I became dean is that we would get the fourth floor of the building for various centers. I thought possession is 9/10 of the law. But it really wouldn't have helped if they had done it.

And then Peter Salovey became president. And I went to him. And I said, I cannot raise the money to redo this building unless I have a firm commitment. And I'm getting all these conflicting signals. It should have been, if they were keeping the commitment, an easy thing to say, yes, you have it. But it took him two to three weeks.

And I'm sure he was at that time fending off the demands for the buildings and grounds administration saying, we need that space. And he came back to me. And he said with a very mournful air, I would say-- he said, we made a commitment, we should stick by a commitment. And it was one of the great things that Peter did for the Law School.

And so then I could fundraise for the building. And my goal was to leave you, my successor, with no debt-- to raise enough money that we could cover the entire cost of maintenance out of endowment funds and

of redoing the building so that it wouldn't add a penny to the operating costs of the school. That was one goal.

And the second goal was to make it actually attractive-- [LAUGHS]-- which is not an easy thing to have done. Because it turns out that the space is-- it has low ceilings. And it was cubical in a way that made you feel like you were in prison.

So we had to break out spaces, break between floors of a building that's built on a cubical principle. And that's a very expensive thing to do. So it raised the money that it cost in the redoing of it. But we managed it. And I think it's a very attractive building, myself, now.

Oh, it's spectacular. [LAUGHS] So thank you to Peter. Thank you to you. Thank you to the Bakers, Christina and Robert Baker, for the gift that made it possible. And I will say, Robert, I remember-- you put me on the committee before I became dean that was working with the architects. And I remember watching you. And you would think about the color of the slate and everything else. And I have no aesthetic judgment whatsoever. And I would sit in the back, and raise my hand, and say, how much does this cost? [LAUGHTER] But it's beautiful. And it's become-- your idea was, don't reproduce Sterling, but create a light and airy cousin. And that's exactly what we have. And it's wonderful.

So today, there's a conference in Baker which we couldn't have held in Sterling. So the faculty are using it. We have students who are living here who actually quite enjoy it, I think. We tried to make-- we couldn't make spacious apartments, but they're like New York efficiency apartments.

Oh, they're much nicer than that. [LAUGHS] I once called them "dorms." And a student took me aside and said, Dean, they're apartments. And they're lovely. And they have beautiful-- they're beautiful furniture. And the students have midnight impromptu dance parties in the middle of finals. It's just magic—

That's fabulous.

--that people are living and learning under the same roof once again. It's fantastic.

Yeah.

So Robert, I remember in 2017, when I became dean and you handed over the Mace-- [LAUGHS] The Mace.

You told me I was going to be maced. And I had no idea-- [LAUGHS] --what kind of hazing ceremony was going to be involved. But one of the things that you said as you passed me the baton, literally and figuratively, was, let the flowers bloom under you. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the flowers for you. What were the flowers for your deanship?

I don't know. I want to say that I had a lot of conversations with Martha Minow, who was the dean at Harvard when I was the dean here. And Martha used to always say that the dean was always the smallest person in the room because your job was to facilitate others.

And I think we very much had the same idea of what a dean should be doing, which is, it's not us that you're featuring. It's you. It's our faculty, our students. And let them take the lead. And if they're succeeding, that's the measure of your success.

And actually, it was kind of surprising to me. I mean, I would say mostly I'm an introvert. I really don't socialize very much. I keep to myself. It's not a great qualification to be dean, I want to say.

But I had the sense of just enormous affection for the faculty who were doing the work of the school when I was dean. I just loved watching them do their work. I loved watching them have this idea and that idea and being able to say yes, and make it happen, and make it work, and fundraise for them so that they could do what they wanted to do.

It just gave me immense pleasure. And it was a pleasure that was sort of mixed with a great deal of affection, which surprised me. Because I'm not normally that sort of a-- I'm not effusive that way typically. And I'm pretty shy. But this was like-- it gave me just tremendous satisfaction to do that. And it stayed that way. Like, your success, your tremendous success is the success of the school. And it's wonderful, just wonderful.

Well, we have to talk about the book. It's The Great Holmes Devise. It's been a project of 35 years?

On the Taft court. And I wonder if you could-- so first, explain what it is so that people who aren't familiar with this sort of part of the world would know what it is. But then maybe talk a little bit about the book itself.

So when Oliver Wendell Holmes died, he had no family. And he left his estate to the government. So the government takes money from your estate when you die, but they've never had anyone give them money. And they didn't know what to do with it. So they sat on it for about 20 years. And they eventually decided they're going to fund a quasi-official history of the Supreme Court of the United States.

So it's edited by someone appointed by the president, confirmed by the Senate, with an editorial board-- same. So this is a quasi-official history which is divided by volumes that correspond to the period of chief justiceship. And it's been a very long, very troubled history. My volume, which is the Taft court, 1921 to '30, was originally given to Alexander Bickel in 1953.

Mm. Goodness. [LAUGHTER]

And he didn't finish it. And he died. And then it was given to Robert Cover.

Oh, my goodness.

And he didn't finish it. And he died.

Robert-- [LAUGHS] And you still took it under those circumstances.

And they offered it to me. And I doubled my life insurance. [LAUGHTER] And I said yes. And I didn't think I'd make it. [LAUGHS] So the Taft court covers the period '21 to '30. And it was actually-- I thought I had drawn the short straw. I bet you can't name 15 cases that come from 1920-- no one can.

And like, who ever heard of the Taft court? Because the '20s was such a muddled time in our jurisprudence. It was neither fish nor fowl. It was before the crisis of the New Deal and after progressivism. So what was it exactly?

And so it took me many years to get going and to think through what the real issues were. But what crystallized it for me was Trump. Because Harding is elected in 1920. Harding is the president that appoints Taft. He appoints four justices in less than 15 months in order to push the Court to the right. Because remember, his platform is, let's return the country to normalcy.

So the Court is pushed to the right with an agenda to go right, which is like Trump with his three appointments. And in part, the book is about what it was like to do that and why the Court overreached leading to the crisis of the New Deal.

But more fundamentally than that, the '20s was a time of intense polarization. It was so polarized that, as you know, in 1920, it's the one and only time in the history of the country that Congress did not reapportion based on a census. And the reason they didn't reapportion is because people had moved to the cities. And there would have been more people who were what's called "wet"-- who were anti-prohibition-- than "dry"-- pro-prohibition. And the dries were not about to give up power in Congress. So anything that anyone said in this intensely polarized environment of the 1920s-- it was industrial warfare. There was incredible racial violence. So the decade was the time of a resurgence of the KKK, 100% Americanism-- an immensely polarizing decade.

And the issue was, if you're a justice, how do you speak in the accents that would be received as law rather than as your personal predilections? Which is the same problem the Court has now. And so the book is a study of the various narratives used by different justices in the 1920s, in which they would embed their opinions that would, they hoped, give them the solidity and the legitimacy of law that's for everybody rather than just, my political point of view. So how do you make law under conditions of polarization is a major theme of the book.

So it's so funny that you say that. Because the question I was about to ask you was, how do you teach con law these days?

Yeah. [LAUGHS]

What I said to that conference was that I always regret that I don't spend as much time in the classroom as I did before. And I always used to regret that I wasn't teaching con law. But con law these days is really hard to teach because the gale forces of polarization have upended structures that we thought were pretty sturdy. And it really changes how you think about the project. So I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about what you're doing inside the classroom when you're teaching our students con law.

It's an immensely difficult problem. And it's a different problem-- I teach con law as a first-semester subject with a small group, typically. And then I teach con law subjects to advanced students.

But in the first-semester class, I teach it as a rule of law class-- what does it mean to have the values of the rule of law. And I teach the rule of law not as a cognitive thing but as a characterological thing-- what do you have to be committed to if you're committed to the fact that we have law here. And those are aspects of professionalism that separate us from politicians.

And so I put that front and forward as we watch con law develop and always take it back to the rule of law points in it-- not strictly stare decisis, but how you translate your political vision-- because everyone's going to have a political vision-- into and make it distinctly legal. And I say to the students at the outset it's

like this is a process of socialization into law. And that means changing who you are. It's not just a cognitive issue.

And so that's what I try to do. I teach it as a public law methods course. And I try to give as much space for the students to have whatever political view they want. That's not my business, is to adjust that. But my business is, if you're going to say that, then you have to take this if you're in a legal system. You can't have both.

So which do you choose? How do you choose? How do you make an argument in the legal system to someone who disagrees? What's plausible given what you now know? What isn't plausible? et cetera. When I teach, like, First Amendment to advanced students, I have very distinct ideas what is the only way to make--

You invented part of the field.

[LAUGHTER]

--what's the only way to make sense of this. So I don't-- I'm not teaching that as a character law. I'm teaching it as, substantively, how would you make sense of this area.

Mm-hmm. I want to go back to the First Amendment. First, I want to ask you a little bit about AI. Because I know that's actually been something you've been thinking about a lot. It's something that every dean on this campus is thinking about a lot as well as the administration. So I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about what you think AI holds for us as lawyers.

Well, I see one of our graduates Jesse just saw a brief by Michael Cohen that was filed that was citing opinions that didn't exist because they were generated by AI.

[LAUGHTER]

Jesse Furman. Jesse Furman.

Jesse Furman, yeah.

Yeah.

Exactly. So obviously, it's a tool. It can be used. It can be misused. My particular-- one of the things I've been thinking a lot about AI is, I'm a trustee of something called the Oversight Board for Meta, what used to be called Facebook.

So this is a body that is independent of Meta. And we exist to review Meta decisions up and down for posts for Instagram or for Facebook in terms of international human rights law. And so we apply the community standards of Meta and human rights. And we say, you got it wrong, and this is the way you should think about the problem. But of course, there are 3 billion posts a month or more for Meta. And we do 50 decisions.

[LAUGHTER]

You are the Supreme Court.

So-- yeah. What does it mean? It's plain to me that when you're dealing with communications at the scale of the internet and social media, you can't have law. Because law requires human judgment. And human judgment doesn't function at the scale of the internet.

So the internet is going to be governed by AI. And the issue will be how you politically legitimate the operation of an AI. And that seems to me the fundamental legal question/political question here. And so I have a lot of thoughts about that. And one of the interesting things about AI is that it's trained. So you can train it with relevant stakeholders in a political field to give it political legitimacy. And then you can run it against the AI, say, of a company that's being run for whatever commercial purposes. And where you have differences, that might be at the scale of the human.

So how you begin to use AI in those fields of communication, which are now dominating the planet, where humans can't do the work-- and we need to have the equivalence of governance. And right now, we don't.

So the puzzle about legitimacy-- Robert, I'm just curious if we can geek out for a minute-- [LAUGHS] --for AI is-- in some sense, it's very much like the common law. So it takes a set of data points. And it goes back and forth, checking its intuitions, finding patterns, and eventually sort of - it thinks like a human brain. And that part is very closely connected to law. But it also is invisible to us. So it can't-- I was in a conversation about AI. And one of the folks was asked, what's the most surprising thing you've found? They said, it turns out we get better results if we say "please." And they--If we say "please." They can't explain that. It is not a human being. And yet, there's this way in which it can't tell us how it went from here to there.

Right.

And in law, legitimacy depends on the ability to offer an explanation. So I wonder how you're thinking through that puzzle.

Because that's exactly the point. We don't get an explanation. What we get is a pattern of results. But the interesting thing about AI is that it's recursive. So it's always in training. It's always getting feedback. And it's adjusting what it's doing with the training. So the training process is the equivalent of the legitimation.

And so you train it. Then you see the results. And you train it again. And you train it again. And that to me is the process that we have to take advantage to in a politically legitimating way. We can't do it by reverse engineering. It's not a mechanical process, as you say, for the reasons that you say.

So we have to do it by outcomes. And we have to measure those outcomes and give input on the outcomes the way we would do in a political system. And then we have to bring in the political system to adjudicate how the training is going to work, et cetera. That to me is the avenue in.

One of the things I love about just this place that you helped build is that, even when you think about AI, when you think about the people who are working on these puzzles, they range from Scott Shapiro, an analytic philosopher; to Jack Balkin, who-- tech, and con law, and the First Amendment; to Bill Eskridge, who's teaching AI and civil procedure; and now-- and you. It's amazing the range of literacies that we're bringing into this conversation at this moment.

I'll give you an example. I am a co-reporter for the Restatement Third for Defamation and Privacy. So the big challenge of restating privacy and defamation law is, you do it for the age of the internet, which didn't exist in 1977, when the Second Restatement was written by Prosser. So I'm having to rethink how you imagine this in a virtual world.

So I'm drafting the defamation sections now, which are very complex. But I'm going to get to very soon the privacy sections. And this is mind-blowing.

So do you remember the metaverse? It didn't really flower. But what it was is a virtual world in which you would be interacting with others all around the globe in three dimensions. So you would build a house. You would bake a cake. You would do things together. You could have a meeting together.

I think in about 10-15 years, we'll have a world in which that's true. You can already buy glasses in which you can be-- so I was thinking, I have to determine what privacy is in the real world. But what in the hell does it mean in the virtual world? If you're building a virtual house, is that the equivalent of a privacy space?-- and these things

So AI and the creation of these virtual spaces for privacy-- my mind was blown, actually, watching how this happens and trying to think how you make this translation.

There's another place where you really influenced me. I mean, there's so many different examples, but one recently is that-- now, you were the great expert on the First Amendment. But you're also an academic and an expert in academic freedom. And I have been so influenced by your thoughts about the way we're framing campus speech questions. And you've often said and you have written that a lot of university leaders are making a mistake in the way they frame these questions. And we're not thinking about it properly. I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about that.

Well, we're having this conversation at a time when three university presidents just had, let's say, a rough time in their testimony before Congress. And it was-- the ironies in that exchange are extremely deep. So you may know that there has been a drumbeat for the application of the First Amendment on campus-- you should never censor speech, it should be just like the First Amendment on campus. And this was being said again, and again, and again in critique of various campuses that were making judgments. And so when Stefanik questioned these three presidents and she said, would you allow speech that advocated the genocide of Jews, they gave an answer that said, it depends. And that is the answer that one would give if one were answering according to First Amendment law. Because the governing First Amendment precedent is Brandenburg. And Brandenburg says, of course you can advocate illegal conduct like genocide so long as you don't intend it to happen imminently and it's not likely to happen imminently.

So they gave a First Amendment answer. And they got creamed for giving a First Amendment answer. Why did they get creamed? Because in point of fact, everyone knows you can't apply the First Amendment in terms to an academic space, where a community that's dedicated to a mission, education, and research-- and we apply the forms of freedom that are appropriate for that mission. Whereas, First Amendment freedoms are appropriate for the creation of a political community, a democracy. And we're not a democracy. We're a school.

And these presidents, by not having a sharp line of their own-- not understanding and having the courage of saying, we're not First Amendment, we're academic freedom that has these properties, and of course we wouldn't tolerate something which would be so destructive of a community that it would no longer exist, insofar as the speech met that criterion-- they were-- they got subject to intense backlash. And so I think what we need to have is a very clear line about what we do and don't do. And we have to be proud of it.

One of the things I really also learned from you is just-- and it's so embedded in this place, is what it means to be a learning environment. So I often say to students, we expect you to do a lot more than have conversations across divides. We expect you to have friendships across divides. And we have to create a world where people can make mistakes. Because that's how you learn. And if you don't change your mind at some point, then we have failed you as pedagogues. And I-- that is very much about things I've learned from you but also just things that are in the warp and woof of this place because of its community.

It's so true. And when you give that message-- and I'm so proud that you did that message to the students. When I was dean, I tried to model failure. Because one of the things I noticed about our students at that time is that they were so good they had never failed. And they were terrified of failing. And so they would take an easier route because they know that they wouldn't fail if they took it. And to me, this-- you're not going to succeed, really, unless you do risks. And so I would say, I went to graduate school. And I failed. And I went and did this. And I failed. And I would try to model them as like, you fail, and then you get back on your feet, and you're OK in the end. You could do OK with your life. And it's a really important thing for these students, who are vulnerable, I think, in ways that we were not vulnerable when we were young. And I think that has a lot to do with the economic circumstances in which they live. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that we're admitting students now-- thanks to you, with your great programs about the financial aid-- which we couldn't admit in numbers before. This-- and that means they have different kind of needs. And we have to be here to meet those needs to recognize them, et cetera.

So we're having this interview on the occasion of our 200th anniversary. So it's quite spectacular to have 200 years behind you. I wondered, as you look forward, and especially thinking about the things that you built that-- I mean, you said "flowers." But many of them are now sturdy trees.

[LAUGHS]

As you think about the things that you built and extend forward, what do you see in the next 100 years for this place?

Oh, 100 years.

What do you see in the next 10? [LAUGHS]

I-- yeah. You're asking a historian to think in 100 years.

I know.

It's, like, impossible. [LAUGHS] In the next 10, I think the torch will pass from your generation to the next generation. It's almost inconceivable, but it will. It's kind of hard to imagine. It's going to be a school which I think will be even more diverse than it is now and in all kinds of dimensions-- class; I think probably internationally, too.

It will be a school that maintains a proud history of being omnicompetent, competent in-- if you want to be an artist, you'll be an artist. If you want to be a policy-maker in the government, you'll be that. If you want to be a firm partner, you'll be that. If you-- I mean, just the sense of, you can do anything coming out of this school.

Guido used to say we are like a-- we're like an École normale in France. Once you get the certificate, you're good for your life. I think our students don't actually believe that until after they graduate. But then they get a sense of how true it is-- but before graduation, they don't. I'd love it if they had the sense of that when they were here so that they could take advantage of the resources. That I would love.

Well, thank you for making so much of it possible. And it's-- I'm always-- when I sit down in my office, as you know, the shadows of the deans, whose names are carved in the window, run across my desk. And it can be intimidating on occasion, but it's also a source of joy. Because sitting in that seat, I realize there are a lot of very different people who held it before me. And yet, the institution continues. So—

Broad shoulders for you to ride on. [LAUGHTER]

But thank you for all that you did to steward and protect the school at some of the hardest moments that we've had.

And thank you, Heather, for keeping it on in such a glorious way.

Thank you.

[SOFT MUSIC PLAYING]