

**Announcement of Professor Kenji Yoshino as
Inaugural Guido Calabresi Professor of Law
Yale Law School
Dean Harold Hongju Koh
October 14, 2006**

Before we proceed with our scheduled program, I hope you will give me a moment to make a brief, but important, announcement. To give you fair warning, you are about to witness a very special moment in the life of this school.

The story goes like this. More than 60 years ago, a brilliant young immigrant boy came to these shores. He was the child of academics, with a name that spoke of the old country. He was a brilliant student, a prodigy, and he won a Rhodes Scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he studied economics. He came back to Yale Law School, and was such a shining star that he was given an appointment as a law clerk to one of the most brilliant federal judges of his day. Following his clerkship, the faculty called him back at a remarkably young age to become a professor at Yale Law School. He was a brilliant scholar, and the students loved him from the start. His classes became legendary, and his scholarship was pathbreaking. His first book was called *The Costs of Accidents*, and it transformed the way that everyone understood the fault system. It introduced an entirely new way of thinking to law called law and economics.

Well, you all know the rest. That scholar was recognized with the highest honor that Yale can give: a chaired professorship—and in time a Sterling Professorship. It was inevitable that he would become the Dean, perhaps the greatest Dean this school has ever known. He became arguably the greatest scholar this school has ever produced, with pathbreaking accomplishments across the fields of private and public law. In 1994, he became a federal judge, where for the past 12 years he has ranked among the most imaginative and able to sit on the federal bench.

But to describe these accomplishments is to describe a tiny fraction of what this man has come to mean to our school. He is quite simply the soul of Yale Law School. He is the human embodiment of everything this school stands for. And he has become an icon, one of those rare individuals known universally only by his first name: like Ronaldo, Bono, and Madonna, he is known everywhere and beloved simply as “Guido.”

I refer, of course, to our own Guido Calabresi, the thirteenth Dean of Yale Law School, Judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and Sterling Professor Emeritus at Yale Law School. And every weekday morning at 8:30, his torts class is still the best game in town.

I know what you are thinking. A story this magical happens only once in a lifetime. But you would be wrong.

Because decades later, another brilliant young immigrant boy came to these shores. He too was the child of academics, and he too had a name that spoke of the old country. He, too, was a brilliant student, a prodigy, and he too won a Rhodes Scholarship to Magdalen College, Oxford, where he also studied economics. And when he came back to Yale Law School, he was such a shining star that he was given an appointment as a law clerk to one of the most brilliant federal judges of his day: a Judge named Guido Calabresi. Following his clerkship, the faculty called him back at a remarkably young age

to become a Yale Law School professor. He was a brilliant scholar, and the students loved him from the start, and always. His classes became legendary, and his first book was pathbreaking: it transformed the way that everyone understood discrimination against gays and lesbians. It introduced an entirely new way of thinking to antidiscrimination law called *Covering*.

What has this man come to mean to our school? In just a few short years, he is one of those rare individuals who is known universally only by his first name: like Guido, he is known everywhere and beloved simply as “Kenji,” and his lectures: whether they be about antidiscrimination law, constitutional law, law and literature, or the Japanese law and society are known everywhere as the best game in town.

Of course, I speak of the moderator of today’s panel: a scholar and teacher who is more unique than rare: Professor Kenji Yoshino. And you can imagine the rest. In the 1990s, following his transformative deanship, the devoted graduates of Yale Law School and students of Guido Calabresi decided that his name should live in these halls forever. And so a group of loyal Yale graduates--including members of the class of 1958 (Guido’s class) of whom at least two members are here today, the class of 1978 for their 20th reunion, and the unforgettable Ralph Elliot, Class Secretary of the class of 1961, who would have celebrated his 45th reunion with many of you here this weekend--began an initiative to create a Professorship in Guido’s name.

Happily, that initiative has succeeded. And just last week, the Yale Corporation voted to recognize Kenji Yoshino with the highest honor that Yale can give: a chaired professorship. Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my honor and joy to announce that your moderator, Professor Kenji Yoshino, has been named the inaugural Guido Calabresi Professor of Law.

It is only fitting that next Wednesday, October 14, 2006, is Guido Calabresi’s birthday. As his birthday present, we bring him this birthday cake, and the news that his name will live in these halls forever, carried by a remarkable scholar and teacher who was his law clerk.

As all of you know, Guido never forgets anyone’s birthday. And so I will ask the former Vice President of the Harvard Glee Club, the Guido Calabresi Professor of Law, Kenji Yoshino, to lead the singing of “Happy Birthday to You” in Guido’s honor.

Finally, this occasion would not be complete if I did not give first Guido, and then Kenji a chance to say a few words.

Let me close with this thought. Here at Yale Law School, the wheel never stops turning. At the start of this semester, when Yale College Dean’s office was looking for a professor to give an opening lecture to the entire 1800-student freshman class, it invited Professor Kenji Yoshino. And it is my sincere belief that somewhere in that group of Yale freshmen is a student who will one day enter this school, and become the inaugural Kenji Yoshino Professor of Law. And then the cycle will begin again.

That is why you’ve gotta love this place.

And with that, thank you all very much. It is time to let Professor Yoshino get started with his Alumni Weekend panel.