

# Bulletin

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## Induction Ceremony 2018

*Class Speakers: Robert Gooding-Williams,  
Linda Elkins-Tanton, David Miliband,  
Huda Zoghbi, and Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar*



## Annual David M. Rubenstein Lecture A Conversation with Justice Sonia Sotomayor

*David M. Rubenstein and Justice Sonia Sotomayor*

**ALSO:** The 2020 Census: Unprecedented Challenges & Their Implications—  
Kenneth Prewitt

The Study of African American Women's Writing: Pasts & Futures—  
Dwight A. McBride, Michelle M. Wright, Frances Smith Foster,  
Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Pellom McDaniels III

Jazz at the Academy: An Evening of Music and Conversation with  
Kenny Barron

## Upcoming Events

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### MARCH

#### 6th

American Academy  
Cambridge, MA

*Building, Exploring, and Using the Tree of Life*  
Featuring: **Douglas E. Soltis** (University of Florida) and **Pamela S. Soltis** (University of Florida); introduction by **Scott Vernon Edwards** (Harvard University)

#### 11th

The Century Association  
New York, NY

*A Reception to Welcome David W. Oxtoby*  
Featuring: **David W. Oxtoby** (American Academy)

#### 19th

National Press Club  
Washington, D.C.

*Science During Crisis: Release of a New Report and Call to Action*  
Featuring: **Rita R. Colwell** (University of Maryland; formerly, National Science Foundation) and **Gary E. Machlis** (Clemson University)

### APRIL

#### 11th

American Academy  
Cambridge, MA

*Annual Awards Ceremony: Presentation of the 2018 Rumford Prize and 2018 Award for Excellence in Public Policy and Public Affairs*

### MAY

#### 11th

Politics and Prose Bookstore  
Washington, D.C.

*Access to Justice*  
Featuring: **Kenneth C. Frazier** (Merck & Co.), **Martha Minow** (Harvard University), **David M. Rubenstein** (The Carlyle Group), and **Rebecca L. Sandefur** (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; American Bar Foundation)

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*For updates and additions to the calendar, visit [www.amacad.org](http://www.amacad.org).*

## From the President



**David W. Oxtoby**

Since January when I began my tenure as President, I have viewed firsthand the Academy do what it does best: convene members and other experts from across disciplines and professions to address some of the most important challenges that face our nation and the world. In just my first month at the Academy, I participated in meetings about improving K-12 education, understanding the role of the arts in American life, and rethinking a humanitarian health approach to violent conflict.

I am excited about the important role that the Academy plays in advancing the best thinking available about policy challenges and scholarly questions facing us today. From articulating a new framework to keep the world safe from nuclear conflict to examining how the public builds trust in science and evidence, from studying how to improve access to quality legal services for low-income people to exploring how we prepare people in our diverse society to be active and engaged citizens – all of our projects, publications, and meetings draw on the breadth and depth of our membership to advance the welfare of the nation and the world.

Our organization was founded to help guide the young American republic through its exciting and trying infancy, and the challenges we face together today are no less urgent. From climate change to growing inequality to international instability, the Academy can call upon an unparalleled breadth of expertise across the humanities, sciences, business, and public life to grapple with issues and inform the choices we make. This issue of the *Bulletin* features some of the projects and publications underway at the Academy and highlights the expertise and interests of members.

I am honored to serve as President of the Academy, and I look forward to working with you to place this remarkable institution at the center of national and global conversations.

**David W. Oxtoby**

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## Jazz at the Academy: An Evening of Music and Conversation with Kenny Barron

After 238 years, there are not that many “firsts” left for the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to achieve. Yet on November 29, 2018, the Academy found one, hosting its first jazz performance at its headquarters in Cambridge. This remarkable evening of music and conversation, which served as the 2076th Stated Meeting, featured Academy Fellow and legendary pianist, composer, and arranger **Kenny Barron**, a ten-time Grammy nominee and an NEH Jazz Master. Kenny Barron alternated performing solo pieces with a discussion moderated by **Eric Jackson** (WGBH; Northeastern University), a legend on the Boston radio scene, with **Tony Earls** (Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health; Harvard Medical School) and **William Damon** (Stanford University) on his beginnings as a musician, the evolution of jazz over the course of his career, and the future prospects facing young jazz performers today.

The program opened with introductory remarks from Jonathan Fanton, William Damon, and Eric Jackson and included Barron performing pieces by Academy member Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, and Thelonious Monk. The evening concluded with a performance of a blues piece inspired by Jimmy, the man who delivered ice to Barron’s childhood home in Philadelphia.

This public program had its roots in an Academy-supported exploratory project on the future of jazz organized by Earls and Damon. The exploratory project began with a meeting of jazz scholars, jazz educators, media hosts, and music entrepreneurs held at the Academy in 2016. In traditional Academy fashion, the meeting inspired an issue of *Dædalus* on “Why Jazz Still Matters,” slated to appear later in 2019. In the wake of that meeting, Earls and Damon had multiple conversations with Academy staff about wanting the meeting to lead to an actual evening of jazz at the Academy in addition to a collection of essays about jazz. After a year of preparation, the evening with Kenny Barron proved to be more than worth the wait.

The background of the exploratory project on jazz was the mixed situation of this music in the world today. Although jazz has become a much-loved and highly respected art form, present-day economic conditions have not been kind to it. Consolidation among media companies, relentless commercialization pressures, and the rapid spread of computerized programming have led to a dramatic decrease of AM and FM radio stations that play jazz. Related to this decline has been a decrease of live performance venues. In past years, cities such as Kansas City, Chicago, Providence, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Miami had their own cultural centers of gravity that supported both rising and established musicians and offered high-quality performances to local audiences. As these centers have declined, and as opportunities to participate



**Kenny Barron performing at the Academy**

in jazz have become less available, the pipeline for the young musicians who are essential for the future of the music has narrowed.

As one point of contrast, Kenny Barron’s description of the musical environment of 1950s Philadelphia served as a jumping-off point for a wide-ranging conversation about the training of young musicians, the power of restraint, and the importance of playing in front of an audience. The Philadelphia of Kenny Barron’s youth had a 24-hour jazz radio station and a wealth of small bars and nightclubs where young musicians could hone their craft. Born into a family in which everybody learned to play the piano, Kenny Barron got his first professional gig through his older brother, playing at an Elks Lodge in south Philadelphia with the Mel Melvin Orchestra. The demands of playing music backing a singer or



**Kenny Barron (far right) in conversation with (left to right) Eric Jackson, Tony Earls, and William Damon.**

a comedian as well as playing for dancing – for a wide range of audiences – gave Barron a foundation of experience that young musicians today have difficulty building, given the smaller number of venues for live music. According to Barron, aspiring jazz musicians of today have far more opportunities to get trained on their instrument and gain technical proficiency – “they can sight-read a bunch of grapes” – but have fewer chances to practice actually connecting with an audience.

It can take decades for a musician to gain the experience to tell a story through music and have an emotional impact on an audience – years that most performers today do not have, since the opportunities no longer exist to make a living touring for forty weeks a year as Barron did playing with Dizzy Gillespie’s band early in his career.

The conversation also covered the global appeal of jazz, with Tony Earls noting that American jazz musicians often find a warmer reception in Europe and Asia today than they do in the United States. Kenny Barron confirmed this impression by describing an audience in Seoul that was so enthusiastic about his band’s set that the crowds outside kept the band from leaving the venue following

the show, which Barron described as a genuine “rock star” experience. The discussion moved on to cover topics ranging from the anxiety of playing solo to what is on Kenny Barron’s iPod (five thousand songs!), and concluded with the role that the Academy can play in promoting jazz: from increasing appreciation of jazz itself to building understanding of the centrality of improvisation to all music, from Bach and Haydn to Monk and Coltrane.

Perhaps the most important outcome of this evening at the Academy was the realization that this program should not be a one-time event but rather the first in an annual series of jazz concerts. The introduction of the Academy into the jazz world could result in a significant boost to the music in the current environment. In particular, the Academy’s presence could inspire educational institutions to look for their own opportunities to broaden access to the music among young people from all sectors of the nation. Academy Members who are interested in being part of this effort should watch the video of this program on the Academy’s website (<https://www.amacad.org/events/evening-kenny-barron>) to see how high the bar has been set. ■

# Introducing the National Inventory of Humanities Organizations



The Academy recently launched a new informational resource: the National Inventory of Humanities Organizations (NIHO).

Developed with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and with the assistance of a group advisors from both the academic and public humanities worlds, NIHO identifies and describes close to fifty thousand organizations engaged in a wide range of humanities activities. This information is freely available via an online database (<https://www.humanitiesindicators.org/content/niho.htm>), which is searchable by organization location, mission, disciplinary focus, and control (e.g., non-profit versus for-profit), among other parameters.

NIHO was developed as a project of the Academy's Humanities Indicators (HI). Modeled after the National Science Foundation's Science and Engineering Indicators, the HI's primary content consists of quantitative measures designed to gauge the health of the humanities enterprise. Among these measures are the number and revenues of not-for-profit organizations engaged in humanities activity. NIHO emerged out of that research, but expanded to include a host of governmental, tribal, and for-profit entities that also do significant humanities work.

NIHO defines a "humanities organization" as including not only institutions that generate humanities scholarship, but also those that translate such scholarship into accessible experiences for the general public (such as museums and historical societies), preserve the heritage of the humanities (such as libraries and archives), and teach key humanities competencies (for example, organizations whose missions include honing young people's reading and writing skills).

NIHO was developed with a number of different audiences in mind. For humanities practitioners, NIHO will create mutual awareness and foster collaboration. The pooling of expertise and resources will allow organizations to deepen and extend their impact. For policy-makers and the public, NIHO will convey that there is a wide variety of humanities organizations, thereby dispelling the widespread misperception that the humanities are only found at colleges and universities. For funders, NIHO provides a means of identifying and soliciting proposals from smaller, lesser-known groups making important contributions and will allow investigators to draw samples of organizations for closer study.

*(continued on page 6)*

## The Humanities in Our Lives


Building on the success of an earlier infographic under the rubric of The Humanities in Our Lives, the Academy's Humanities Indicators project released in late 2018 a new series (at <http://bit.ly/HiOLseries>) that couples data about the humanities with profiles of innovative programs in the field.

The new series on The Humanities in Our Lives, developed with funding support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, takes an expansive view of the humanities, with topics ranging from early childhood reading programs to later in life visits to historic sites. This extensive focus reflects the Indicators' holistic view of the humanities and demonstrates the wide range of subject areas across which Indicators data can be brought to bear.


Topics covered include:

- America's Native Languages
- Community Colleges
- Degrees in the Humanities
- Digital Humanities
- Elementary School Readers
- Historic Sites in the United States
- History in the Schools
- Humanities and Medicine
- Humanities Jobs
- Humanities Tourism
- Language Learning
- Learning a Second Language
- Libraries as a Community Anchor
- Multilingualism in Public Service
- Multilingualism in the Workforce
- Museum Attendance
- Poetry
- Public Libraries
- Reading for Pleasure
- Reading to Young Children
- The Value of Languages
- U.S. Higher Ed Ethics Bowls
- Writing Skills

The Indicators staff welcomes thoughts and suggestions for future topics and programs in the series; please contact Robert Townsend, Director of the Humanities Indicators, at [rtownsend@amacad.org](mailto:rtownsend@amacad.org).



**NIHO**  
National Inventory of Humanities Organizations

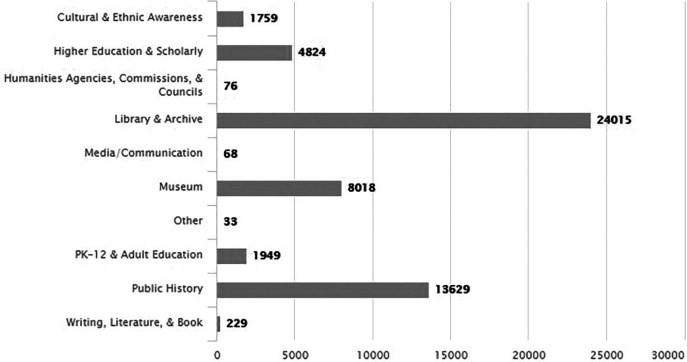


**HUMANITIES INDICATORS**  
a project of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

Overview
Organization Search

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## Welcome to NIHO: Humanities Organizations by the Numbers



Category	Number of Organizations
Cultural & Ethnic Awareness	1759
Higher Education & Scholarly	4824
Humanities Agencies, Commissions, & Councils	76
Library & Archive	24015
Media/Communication	68
Museum	8018
Other	33
PK-12 & Adult Education	1949
Public History	13629
Writing, Literature, & Book	229

A given organization may be identified in multiple categories.

# 45697

Humanities Organizations Identified

[Suggest a Correction or Addition to an Organization's Profile](#)

[Nominate an Organization for Inclusion in NIHO](#)

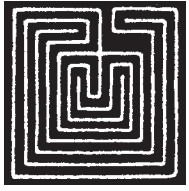
Made possible by:



The pilot phase of NIHO focused on developing the database architecture as well as a humanities organization classification system. With additional resources, the HI hopes to expand NIHO, incorporating additional organizations, particularly those serving PK–12 students.

NIHO will be the focus of an upcoming edition of the HI’s newly redesigned Data Forum, which will feature an essay from Hope Shannon, a former local history organization administrator and scholar, whose research focuses on the genesis and influence of these grassroots organizations, and commentary from Miranda Restovic and Sarah DeBacher of the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, whose public programming includes several Head Start centers that deliver a humanities-focused curriculum to preschoolers in traditionally underserved communities. For more details about the Forum, and to receive notification of other HI-related developments, please contact Robert Townsend at [rtownsend@amacad.org](mailto:rtownsend@amacad.org). ■





## *Dædalus* Explores Science & the Legal System

Courts have long called upon experts making scientific claims to inform legal proceedings. As the range of scientific knowledge has expanded, so too have questions and challenges about the role and basis of claims of scientific expertise. For instance, how should courts respond when scientific experts do not agree? Even in cases involving widely accepted scientific principles, experts can disagree on methods and interpretation, and in rapidly developing areas of scientific inquiry there can be fundamental differences. The fields of science and law have dissimilar cultures. Whereas scientists can withhold judgment until full information can be obtained, the law requires that decisions be made even if there is incomplete evidence. The law, in the common law tradition, makes determinations based on prior precedent, and it can be slow to adapt to changes in scientific methods or advances in scientific understanding. A recent *Dædalus* issue on “Science & the Legal System,” published in fall 2018, bridges the divide between science and law.

On October 29, 2018, guest editors Shari Diamond and Richard Lempert hosted a panel discussion at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to mark the public release of the *Dædalus* volume. They presented some of the results from a first ever survey probing the reasons why distinguished scientists choose to be involved or resist involvement in legal matters, including the experiences of those scientists who participate in legal actions and reforms that might make scientists more likely to participate when asked. The panelists included three contributors to the *Dædalus* issue: distinguished federal judges David Tatel and Jed Rakoff and former federal judge Nancy Gertner.

Professor Diamond described the results of a survey of American Academy members, which was undertaken to determine the level of trepidation scientists have about engaging with the legal process. The survey found that 54 percent of respondents had been asked for expert advice at least once. Among those who declined to offer advice, 66 percent said they declined due to time and other commitments, 49 percent deemed the request outside their area of expertise, and 23 percent reported doubts about the legal system. The survey also found that 60 percent of respondents viewed the legal system as somewhat or very successful in producing results that reflect sound scientific knowledge, but 40 percent saw it as somewhat or very unsuccessful.

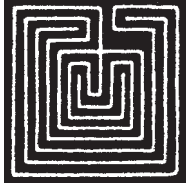
The increasing variety and complexity of scientific questions before the courts was highlighted in Judge Rakoff’s comments regarding the inadequacy judges often feel in managing the scientific questions that come before their courts. This is not a new problem, and indeed sometimes judges get the science wrong or are subsequently proved incorrect by new scientific understanding. Judge Rakoff noted the Supreme Court decision in *Buck v. Bell*, upholding the forced sterilization of low-income women based on then current ideas about eugenics. In an effort to ensure that only sound science enters into the courtroom, the federal courts and most states have adopted the *Daubert* standard, which lays out criteria for judges to make some assessment as to the validity of scientific evidence and testimony.

The implementation of the *Daubert* standard, however, has not been uniform. Judge Gertner spoke about the resistance to reevaluating forensic evidence despite calls for such a reevaluation from the National Academies and the President’s Council of Science Advisors. Judge Gertner mentioned bite mark evidence as an example. “There really is no there, there. There is no science there.” In criminal cases, she described how precedent and tradition do not readily allow more scientifically rigorous findings to dispute forms of trace evidence that have been admissible without objection for decades. Citing precedent, judges deem the evidence to be admissible and opposing counsel rarely objects. Judge Gertner called on courts of appeal to scrutinize more closely presented trace evidence to encourage lower courts to reform.

Judge Tatel spoke about the different type of relationship that appellate courts have with science because of their role in reviewing the fact-finding done by lower courts as well as in reviewing the actions taken by federal agencies, particularly agencies that make decisions based on science. With regard to agencies, the appellate courts perform a searching and careful inquiry, however the standard of review remains deferential. Judge Tatel gave the example of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit’s review of the EPA’s recent endangerment finding for CO<sub>2</sub> and how the court deferred to the expertise of and scientific evidence presented by the agency.

In response to an audience question about the seemingly trivial barriers survey respondents claim prevent their participation as expert witnesses, Richard Lempert pointed out the reasons most survey respondents give are responses that would be seen in an ideal system. Scientists are taking care to engage only in the cases for which they have time and appropriate expertise. This is evidence of a healthy system that can be built upon and improved.

The “Science & the Legal System” issue of *Dædalus* is part of the Academy’s Public Face of Science initiative. Video of the panel discussion at the National Press Club is available at: <https://www.amacad.org/events/science-legal-system>. ■



## New Issue of *Dædalus* Takes on the Justice Gap Facing Poor and Low-Income Americans

On January 7, 2019, the Academy published the first open-access issue of *Dædalus* in the journal's sixty-four-year history. "Access to Justice," the Winter 2019 issue, is a multidisciplinary examination of the national crisis in legal services, from the challenges of providing quality legal assistance to more people, to the social and economic costs of an often unresponsive legal system, to the opportunities for improvement offered by new technologies, professional innovations, and fresh ways of thinking about the crisis.

The scale of this crisis is overwhelming, and experts about the problem emphasize that they don't yet know how many people it affects. According to a recent report of the Legal Services Corporation, 71 percent of low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem in the previous year, yet they received inadequate or no legal help in 86 percent of the problems they reported.

The consequences were often devastating, since unrepresented litigants are at a distinct disadvantage in disputes over health care, housing conditions, veterans' benefits, domestic violence, and access for people with disabilities, among other problems.

Guest editors **Lincoln Caplan** (journalist and author; Yale Law School), **Lance Liebman** (Columbia Law School), and **Rebecca L. Sandefur** (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; American Bar Foundation; 2018 MacArthur Fellow) assembled a diverse group of authors, including scholars, lawyers, judges, and business and nonprofit leaders, among others, to discuss efforts needed to address the fundamental problems of restricted and unequal access to justice.

According to **Nathan Hecht**, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Texas, who contributed a coda to the volume, "If the justice system is to deliver on the faith America asks people to place in it and on the values it claims to preserve, greatly improved access to justice is an imperative."

Since the release of the issue in early January, the Academy has been engaged in an extensive distribution and outreach campaign. The volume has been received with great enthusiasm by the legal community as well as by a more general audience.

In anticipation of a higher-than-usual demand for print and digital copies, both the Academy and MIT Press, which publishes *Dædalus* on behalf of the Academy, ordered much larger print runs of this issue. Nevertheless, demand exceeded expectations and after only thirty-six hours of distribution, both organizations decided a second print run was necessary.

An ongoing social media campaign – coordinated by the Academy with the volume's authors, law schools around the country, legal service providers, courts, professional associations, and other partners – has resulted in the distribution of approximately ten thousand copies online and in print.

A multi-page article about the volume in *Law360*, "Famed Journal Lends Its Clout To Fighting Access Crisis," appeared on the day of publication, with more features to follow. In addition, economist **Robert Frank** published an op-ed in *The New York Times* in August 2018 based on his *Dædalus* essay.

Chief Justice Hecht distributed copies of the issue to every State Supreme Court Justice in the nation, as well as to the Congress of State Court Administrators. Academy staff are consulting with federal lawmakers about future collaborations. The Legal Services Corporation has handed out hundreds of copies at their winter conferences. And the Academy continues to handle dozens of individual requests generated on legal listservs and other outlets.

The volume is now recommended reading for participants at the forthcoming World Justice Forum at the Hague in April and for the members of the American Law Institute; it has been featured on the American Bar Association's website, association and law school websites, and in several blogs. A panel discussion about the volume with **Rebecca Sandefur**, **Martha Minow** (Harvard University), and **Kenneth Frazier** (Merck & Co.), moderated by **David M. Rubenstein** (The Carlyle Group), is scheduled for May 11 at the Politics and Prose bookstore in Washington, D.C., a leading venue for intellectual debate within the nation's capital.

Since this issue of *Dædalus* is part of a larger, ongoing effort of the American Academy to address the crisis in legal access, the outreach campaign will continue through 2019, with more events and media coverage on the horizon.

The volume and the extended distribution and outreach campaign are generating new public discussion about an issue of great importance to American society, and addressing three key recommendations of the Academy's new strategic plan, adopted in October 2018: to advance the welfare of the nation and the world, to raise the Academy's visibility and reputation, and to ensure that the Academy's work reflects its ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusivity.

Future efforts to gather information about the national need for improved legal access, study innovations piloted around the country to fill this need, and advance a set of clear, national recommendations for closing the justice gap – between supply and demand

for services provided by lawyers and other problem-solvers – will provide even more opportunities for the Academy to pursue these strategic goals.

More information about the “Access to Justice” issue of *Dædalus* is available on the Academy’s website at <https://www.amacad.org/daedalus/access-to-justice>.

### “Access to Justice” Winter 2019 issue of *Dædalus*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Introduction</i> by <b>John G. Levi</b> (Legal Services Corporation; Sidley Austin) & <b>David M. Rubenstein</b> (The Carlyle Group)  | <i>Marketing Legal Assistance</i> by <b>Elizabeth Chambliss</b> (University of South Carolina School of Law)  |
| <i>How Rising Income Inequality Threatens Access to the Legal System</i> by <b>Robert H. Frank</b> (Cornell University)  | <i>Community Law Practice</i> by <b>Luz E. Herrera</b> (Texas A&M University School of Law)   |
| <i>The Invisible Justice Problem</i> by <b>Lincoln Caplan</b> (journalist and author; Yale Law School)   | <i>The Role of the Legal Services Corporation in Improving Access to Justice</i> by <b>James J. Sandman</b> (Legal Services Corporation)                                |
| <i>Reclaiming the Role of Lawyers as Community Connectors</i> by <b>David F. Levi</b> (Duke University School of Law), <b>Dana Remus</b> (legal scholar) & <b>Abigail Frisch</b> ( <i>Duke Law Journal</i> ) | <i>Participatory Design for Innovation in Access to Justice</i> by <b>Margaret Hagan</b> (Stanford Law School)  |
| <i>More Markets, More Justice</i> by <b>Gillian K. Hadfield</b> (University of Toronto; University of California, Berkeley; OpenAI)  | <i>Simplified Courts Can’t Solve Inequality</i> by <b>Colleen F. Shanahan</b> (Columbia Law School) & <b>Anna E. Carpenter</b> (The University of Tulsa College of Law) |
| <i>Access to What?</i> by <b>Rebecca L. Sandefur</b> (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; American Bar Foundation; MacArthur Fellow)   | <i>Corporate Support for Legal Services</i> by <b>Jo-Ann Wallace</b> (National Legal Aid and Defender Association)  |
| <i>The Right to Civil Counsel</i> by <b>Tonya L. Brito</b> (University of Wisconsin Law School)  | <i>Justice &amp; the Capability to Function in Society</i> by <b>Pascoe Pleasence</b> (University College London) & <b>Nigel J. Balmer</b> (University College London)  |
| <i>The New Legal Empiricism &amp; Its Application to Access-to-Justice Inquiries</i> by <b>D. James Greiner</b> (Harvard Law School)   | <i>Why Big Business Should Support Legal Aid</i> by <b>Kenneth C. Frazier</b> (Merck & Co.)   |
| <i>The Public’s Unmet Need for Legal Services &amp; What Law Schools Can Do about It</i> by <b>Andrew M. Perlman</b> (Suffolk University Law School)   | <i>Executive Branch Support for Civil Legal Aid</i> by <b>Karen A. Lash</b> (American University)   |
| <i>Access to Power</i> by <b>Sameer Ashar</b> (UCLA School of Law) & <b>Annie Lai</b> (University of California, Irvine School of Law)   | <i>Why Judges Support Civil Legal Aid</i> by <b>Fern A. Fisher</b> (Maurice A. Deanne School of Law at Hofstra University)  |
| <i>The Center on Children and Families</i> by <b>Shani M. King</b> (University of Florida Levin College of Law)  | <i>Lawyers, the Legal Profession &amp; Access to Justice in the United States: A Brief History</i> by <b>Robert W. Gordon</b> (Stanford Law School; Yale Law School)    |
| <i>Techno-Optimism &amp; Access to the Legal System</i> by <b>Tanina Rostain</b> (Georgetown University Law Center)  | <i>The Twilight Zone</i> by <b>Nathan L. Hecht</b> (Supreme Court of Texas)   |

*Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture*

# The Study of African American Women's Writing: Pasts & Futures

**O**n September 6, 2018, at Emory University, the American Academy hosted a Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture on “The Study of African American Women’s Writing: Pasts & Futures.” The program, which included a welcome from **Dwight A. McBride** (Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Asa Griggs Candler Professor of African American Studies at Emory University), served as the 2069th Stated Meeting of the American Academy. **Michelle M. Wright** (Augustus Baldwin Longstreet Professor of English at Emory University) introduced the evening’s speakers – **Frances Smith Foster** (Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and Women’s Studies, Emerita, at Emory University), **Beverly Guy-Sheftall** (Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women’s Studies at Spelman College), and **Pellom McDaniels III** (Curator of African American Collections at the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University) – and moderated the discussion. The following is an edited transcript of their conversation.



## Dwight A. McBride

*Dwight A. McBride is Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Asa Griggs Candler Professor of African American Studies, Distinguished Affiliated Professor of English, and Associated Faculty in Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Emory University.*

**I** am truly delighted to welcome all of you this evening to this program, which is co-sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and Emory University. Before turning the evening over to the

**The humanities provide the basis for the very conduct of civil and critical discourse that is so central to the functioning of a mature democracy. We must not doubt the importance of the work that we do as humanists and the paths that we chart.**

distinguished panel, I would like to pause briefly over what I might politely call the current perils to humanistic vision and inquiry. With fewer and fewer champions for the critical role played by the humanities in our democracy, and especially by our fiction writers, it is more important than ever that we as academic communities remember the meaning of our contributions to the nation, its cultures, and our collective understanding. Indeed, the humanities provide the basis for the very conduct of civil and critical discourse that is so central to the functioning of a mature democracy. We must not doubt the importance of the work that we do as humanists and the paths that we chart. Often when we are called upon as writers to explain how our work propels society forward, ready-made answers for the sound bite are difficult to marshal. When reduced to the equations of private enterprise and profiteering, considerations such as solace,

inspiration, and truth-telling seem to many like extravagances we can do without. The contributions of writers can seem uncertain when measured against other (seemingly) more pragmatic professions and businesses.

I am not going to bother you with overlong explanations or justifications for the humanities, and we certainly do not have the time to refute the rank folly of post-truth arguments or “alternative facts.” But I will submit to you that the very existence of these now commonplace phrases, designed to circumvent critical and civil discourse, are the reasons that we need to cling now more than ever to the humanities and to the lessons they have to teach us.

I would like to close by reflecting briefly on Emory’s campus symbols. Our crest contains a torch and a trumpet, invoking the light of truth and the call to spread the truth. Indeed, this invocation to seek and spread truth embodies our university’s motto: the

wise heart seeks knowledge. This motto is meant to remind us of the need for sustained inquiry and for the dogged pursuit of knowledge. Albert Einstein once warned that those who set themselves up as judge in the fields of truth and knowledge shall be shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods. Personally, I am not afraid of being laughed at, especially for standing up for the truth. I have been laughed at for far less. What's more, I would hazard that what we need right now, frankly, is more broken boats, for surely it is a risky time and our political waters are more than a bit choppy. And while a boat may be truly safest in a harbor, that is not what boats were made for.

In his 2015 book *Honoring Maya Angelou*, Tavis Smiley recalls Angelou's reminder that the surest road ahead is the one that you create. As she put it, "Baby, we find our path by walking it." Charting new paths and telling our courageous and sometimes inconvenient truths along those roads has long been the hallmark of African American women's fiction. I am reminded of the words of Audre Lorde, "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."



### Frances Smith Foster

*Frances Smith Foster is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of English and Women's Studies, Emerita, at Emory University.*

I like that the title of our program, The Study of African American Women's Writing: Pasts & Futures, is plural: "pasts and futures"; but there are some unsavory aspects of it too. I keep thinking about Sweet Honey in the Rock singing: "Cain't no one know at sunrise how this day is gonna end." If no one can tell what is going to happen that day, how in the world do you expect us to talk about the futures? But I'm thinking also about Nina Simone's introduction to "Mississippi Goddam" that says, "This is a show tune but the show hasn't been written for it yet." So, I have a problem with talking about the futures even though we understand that there are multiple futures. But I have an even worse time talking about the past. Even though the organizers of this panel tried to make it easy – "just talk about yourself, how you did it" – it is still a problem. This is in part because

**So to talk about the past for me is as nerve-wracking as to talk about the future, even when it is my past and my future because, quiet as it is kept, I can tell you fifty different narratives of how I came to be standing here and every one of them would have some truth in it.**

of what I have learned at Emory. As Robyn Fivush and Marshall Duke helped me understand, and as neuroscientists and political scientists alike will confirm, memory is a social construct. Every time we remember, we are making it up. Or, if we look into black women's writings, Toni Morrison teaches us about rememory, which, if you think about for long enough, is enough to get you all confused. Lucille Clifton, Sherley Anne Williams, Claudia Rankine, and Natasha Trethewey all give us examples of what can be done poetically with investigations of history – a history that people like Nell Irvin Painter and Leslie Harris spend so much time complicating and interrogating. So to talk about the past for me is as nerve-wracking as to talk about the future, even when it is my past and my future because, quiet as it is kept, I can tell you fifty different narratives of how I came to be standing here and every one of them would have some truth in it.

In her collaborative memoir with her husband, *With Ossie and Ruby*, Ruby Dee

wrote, “Looking back is tricky business. It is seeing through time, people, events; it’s remembering subtleties and attitudes. It’s getting the facts straight, even though the facts may have little to do with ‘telling the truth.’” And so when I think about how I could talk with you about the history and the status of African American women’s writings as a discipline or a point of interest, or even about my own place in it, my experiences as I pursue the elusive goal of understanding and knowing, I don’t hesitate to talk about me as a person. When I started out back in the day, we believed the personal was political. I still believe that, but I also believe what Barbara Christian wrote: “I can only speak for myself, but what I write and how I write is done in order to save my own life.”

## **I remembered the teachers at my all-black schools who taught us more than was in the curriculum handed down to us in those old tattered textbooks. I knew about Phillis Wheatley and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and I knew there had to have been others. They were out there, and so I began to pursue where.**

When I began teaching and researching in the 1970s, I was eager – overeager – and idealistic. I was a graduate student and a freeway flyer, which is what we called adjuncts. I taught a course here, taught a course there, ran up and down the freeway trying to make a living. For a wonderful while, one of my jobs was at UCSD’s Third College, a legacy of Angela Davis and others. At first I tried to do it their way. As a graduate student at the University of Southern California, I took independent studies courses from the only African American professor, Lloyd Brown, a Jamaican whose definition

of African American was, fortunate for me, international and, unfortunately for me, patriarchal to the extreme. However, the closest my comprehensive exam came to anything like my own focus was a question on Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. Two years and two children later, I was accepted into the Ph.D. program at the University of California, San Diego, and that was a little bit better. UCSD’s was a wonderful program that required three comparative foci, and so I did Milton, the novels of the Mexican Revolution, and the Harlem Renaissance. I persuaded Roy Harvey Pearce to chair a dissertation on autobiographical writings of enslaved African Americans, but all in all my graduate work was supervised and enabled by men who paid scant attention to women’s writings.

My first book, *Witnessing Slavery*, came from my dissertation and focused primarily on men, in part because I had defined the topic as first-person, independently published narratives of flight and escape, with narrators living happily ever after. And that was not the way women’s writings went. In the antebellum period, very few women published anything on their own, and very few women wrote memoirs. I inadvertently excluded most women. But I knew they were missing. I had grown up knowing African American women published books – even in the antebellum period. I

remembered the teachers at my all-black schools who taught us more than was in the curriculum handed down to us in those old tattered textbooks. I knew about Phillis Wheatley and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper and I knew there had to have been others. They were out there, and so I began to pursue where.

So that’s how I began my career in early African American women’s writings. I was discomfited by my work on the formerly enslaved and I kept reading. And what’s really interesting is that all along the way, my research was grounded not in what I learned in the academy but in what I learned from the teachers and librarians in my segregated school, from the people in my church and the leaders of my youth organizations, and from the books my mother gave me when I was a child. Years later, Dr. Me began deliberately to look for, work through, and try to write something about the history of early African American women. I eventually learned enough to teach an African American women writers’ class, whose syllabus was published in *But Some of Us Are Brave*.

I stopped being a freeway flyer and landed a tenure track position, I was so grateful to be teaching a four/four load and to this day I think the unsung heroes are those who teach more. If you’ve got something to say, then the more people that hear you, the better the world is. But I was also grateful that tenure track came with \$250 a year for professional growth. And so I could attend the Modern Language Association Annual Meeting. At the MLA, I met Lenore Hoffman, Deborah Rosenfelt, and Paul Lauter. When Deborah and Lenore got a grant to teach women’s literature from a regional perspective, combining research and teaching experimental courses, helping our students learn to uncover, investigate, analyze, and collate narratives by African American and other women, they included me.

At the same time, at Benedict College, Marianne W. Davis included me in a grant to explore the contributions of black women to America. I worked very hard to uncover the materials that would define the contributions in California, Hawaii, and Alaska, but the libraries were barren. Again I turned to my community and the women's clubs that privately published biographies and saved minutes of meetings, celebratory booklets, and other data; they had the material I needed to begin to understand what women's writing was about. And that marked me.

Attending conferences, hanging out with women's studies folk, starting black faculty groups, and leading black literature sessions at existing conferences led to collaborations, co-operations, and lifelong friendships with others who were similarly struggling in their roles. Often we were the only ones in our department, in our college, in our university, in our city, maybe, who had a serious interest in the literature of African American women. For context, this group included Nellie McKay, Barbara Christian, Claudia Tate, Mary Helen Washington, Debbie McDowell, Sue Houchins, Helen Houston, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, and Kenny J. Williams, among many others. And we always defined the literature not just as published materials, but as writings. And the rest was history.

What I hope you see in this is two patterns. First, I came to research because it helped me be a better teacher. Teaching was and always has been my first love because I really believe that education is power – and miseducation leads to misery – so you have to educate – inclusively and accurately – the whole person. The second is that I became a better researcher because my work was nurtured in collaboration, in community, and in commitment. Which is not the same as mentoring and networking, don't get me started on that. Looking back is tricky

business. Anticipating the future is foolish. I never thought I would become a college professor or that I would go from Milton and the Mexican Revolution to Harriet Jacobs, Elizabeth Keckly, and Sonia Sanchez.

I am a convert to the concept of *Sankofa*. *Sankofa* – from the Twi language of Ghana – is represented by a bird whose feet and body are facing forward, but whose head is turned over its back, holding an egg in its mouth. I have a little statue in my office. The idea is that in order to go forward, you must go back to the past and find out and carry back what is most important. That is the little egg. So if I want to talk about the future, I have to talk about the past. And I believe history, besides being a made-up thing that suits the purposes of those who make it up, is a wheel that moves in many directions. With my current work, I'm returning to where I started. I am thinking again about the literary implications of the kitchen table press and beauty shop talk and church chatter.

When we talk about the future, though, I prefer to talk about my former students, who have done fascinating work and of whom I'm so proud. They are doing public scholarship, working in Afrofuturism and in other genres like mysteries and romances and so-called children's literature that have been neglected or disparaged but form the bedrock of our ideas and ideals. There's nothing mundane at all about the domestic, about religion, about love and marriage, about family. As the future opens, these genres will get the credit they deserve. My students are part of a generation that thinks about how literature and health are connected, about the whole practice of medical narratives and narratives as therapy. They explore the diversity of African Americans' experiences, especially the diasporic nature of African American women. From New Haven, Connecticut, to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, Birmingham, Alabama,

Davis, California, Phoenix, Arizona, across this nation and in others, they are working on little-explored aspects of women's writings; if you really want to know about the futures, then you probably should just stop, look, and listen to them.

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## Beverly Guy-Sheftall

*Beverly Guy-Sheftall is the Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women's Studies at Spelman College. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2017.*

Let me begin with two really personal statements, and not just because I am here at Emory: Not very many graduate students of color can say this, but some of my best days were in the doctoral program in American studies at Emory University. When people talk about how horrendous their graduate school was, I just have to say that was not my experience. And the other thing that I want to say is that I taught for about a decade here in the women's studies Ph.D. program, and I had some of the most incredible graduate students that anybody could have anywhere. I see some in the audience, but I won't try to call names.

Now, my past: After two years at Alabama State University, I began what we could call my more permanent teaching career in the Department of English at Spelman College in 1971. I taught five courses each semester, and I did not have a Ph.D. I had a master's degree. I was not only untenured, but

**It is perhaps easy to take for granted our students' – like students everywhere at the time – unfamiliarity with black women's rich literary tradition, given the prominence today of such writers as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker.**

not even near the track! Eight years later, as an untenured professor who knew nothing at all about the publishing world, I worked with the late Roseann P. Bell and Bettye J. Parker to publish *Sturdy Black Bridges: Visions of Black Women in Literature*, the first anthology of its kind. In addition to the writing, it featured amazing photographs as well as original art by Rick Powell, who was an undergraduate student at Morehouse College and who has gone on to become the premier critic of African American art and a distinguished professor at Duke University. Roseann and I, then both in the English department, were motivated by what might seem unusual to most of you gathered in this room. It is perhaps easy to take for granted our students' – like students everywhere at the time – unfamiliarity with black women's rich literary tradition, given the prominence today of such writers as Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker, who was actually a sophomore at Spelman when I was a first-year student. In preparing for this evening, I reread our editors' note for the collection. I'm sure the people in the room who have written books, like me, don't remember what you said or how you said it; you just hope that it's not embarrassing. Well, we were really bold. Though we didn't have the language then, we were writing against a masculinist literary canon. Listen to us:

When we consider that it took Ralph Ellison a score of years to write *Invisible Man*, and Alex Haley twelve to write

*Roots*, the four years of labor poured into *Sturdy Black Bridges* seem almost insignificant. However, *Sturdy Black Bridges* is a different kind of experience from that of *Roots* or *Invisible Man*, not in quality or even concept, but in its eclectic commitment. That eclecticism, represented in works as diverse as Margaret Walker's classic poem "Lineage" and Mae Jackson's "Cleaning Out the Closet," has been at times frustrating; more often it has led to valuable exposures – encounters with people, places, and ideologies which have enhanced our own and others' lives.

The volume marked my first encounter with Toni Cade Bambara. I took myself over to her apartment on Simpson Road with a tape recorder that I did not even know how to operate, and I interviewed her with her daughter, Karma, running around. The interview that appeared in *Sturdy Black Bridges*, "Commitment: Toni Cade Bambara Speaks," is among the first, if not the first, published interview with Toni, whose pioneering text *The Black Woman* (1970), which had appeared three years earlier, is now iconic in black feminist studies.

As we wrote in *Bridges*:

The shape of this anthology is incomplete and fluid – all collections are which purport to be fundamental. But the work is generically incomplete, for such are the lives of people, and Black women, among others in the First



World, are people, creating and destroying with regular frequency ideas and even dogmas. Hence, the unfinished song of *Sturdy Black Bridges*.

Now almost forty years later, it is impossible for us to have imagined what *Sturdy Black Bridges* might have set in motion in terms of scholarly output establishing the richness of our black women's literary tradition that began in the United States in the nineteenth century. In my first published essay in *Sturdy Black Bridges*, "The Women of Brownsville," which I have no memory of writing, I analyzed Gwendolyn Brooks' poetry – I do remember her poetry – and deployed, without perhaps realizing it, a black feminist lens that is now pervasive and the results of which are now dazzling in their brilliance. This is what I wrote:

An obvious difference between Gwendolyn Brooks and male writers such as Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison who have used the urban environment as a setting for their works is the greater amount of attention she devotes to the experiences of females. While women are not absent from Wright's or Ellison's ghetto worlds, they remain background figures who are of secondary importance, at best, to the central actions of their novels. Like Ann Petry, Brooks focuses on the impact of the urban experience on females as well as males. Her sexual identity as well as her racial identity have molded her vision of the city.

I want to end with another writer and literary critic, Professor Gloria Wade Gayles, who also teaches at Spelman in the English department and I think understood even better than we did what we were trying to do in *Sturdy Black Bridges*. I want to read from her preface to the anthology:

I rejoice. I celebrate. I dance with my soul. There is reason to celebrate the publication of this work, for our lives have been touched in various ways by black women who are real-life models for images in literature. As mothers, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, lovers, wives, children. As people who were and are major architects of the black experience. It is a special book, because it refuses to pay homage to the "system's" distortions of black women and to our refusal too long to correct those distortions. It is a bridge we have needed to cross over on into a deeper understanding of and more sensitive appreciation for *our* women as positive forces in our experience.

I have moved a long way from *Sturdy Black Bridges* in my more recent work. I have moved way away from literary studies and have spent most of my last twenty years, I would say, as an archeologist, trying to uncover and make the case that we also have a very rich black feminist intellectual and theoretical tradition. And I'm working on one of my favorite projects right now, which may never get published: a long essay about the radical feminist politics of Coretta Scott King. It will reposition her and take her out of the narrow roles of "mother of the civil rights movement" and widow. It will place her where she belongs as one of the most radical figures in the civil rights movement, particularly around LGBTQ issues, which many people don't know. I'm also working on a memoir. And third, I am working on a rewriting of the history of so-called second wave feminism and the women's liberation movement, putting African American women at the center of that history.

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## Pellom McDaniels III

*Pellom McDaniels III is the Curator of African American Collections at the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library at Emory University.*

As a curator of African American collections, it is both a wonderful opportunity and incredibly daunting to take on the enormity of African American history, diasporic history. How do we capture the essence of lives in the past? How do we anticipate what is coming on the horizon? What is inspiring is that it is ongoing. Each and every day is an opportunity to learn.

One of the aspects of my dissertation that I found important, that my mentor Rudolph Byrd and I really worked out – influenced by his and Beverly Guy-Sheftall’s book *Traps: African American Men on Gender and Sexuality* – was the silences. The silences of the mothers of the men I studied: the baseball player Jackie Robinson, the boxer Joe Louis, the Olympian Jesse Owens, and the jockey Isaac Murphy. We know about the success of these men as athletes, but how many of you know about their mothers? No one ever discusses Mallie Robinson, who taught

Through their own distinctive writing and the intersections found throughout the materials within the Rose Library collections, to quote from Dr. Sheftall’s *Words of Fire*, “these women share a collective history of oppression and a commitment to improving the lives of black women, especially, and the world in which we live.”

Jackie Robinson how to integrate society though her example of integrating the Pasadena neighborhood where she raised her children. No one knows about Isaac Murphy’s mother, America Murphy, who actually apprenticed him off to become a jockey when she discovered she was sick with tuberculosis. Or Jesse Owens’ mother, Mary Emma, who saved her son’s life when he was about five years old by using a kitchen knife to cut out a large tumor growing on the child’s chest, because the family could not afford a doctor. All these stories are important and necessary for us to recover. (One of the beautiful opportunities we have in the archives is to bring these women into the light, however it requires researchers to actually come use the archives.) What follows is my way to account for the women that have been silenced. The working title of presentation is “The Inheritance.”

Like many of you, I was first introduced to black women’s storytelling through the oral tradition. My great-grandmother, Rosa Marie Clay, was the first to convey the power of words to shape one’s understanding of the world and one’s purpose in it. She and her husband, my great-grandfather Monroe Earl Clay, left Texas in search of work and a life beyond the cotton fields and the racism embedded in the same land worked by their forebears. In fact, McClendon County, Texas, where Rosa’s grandparents had been enslaved, was also the location where her

father Junius McClendon was born in 1865. Eventually, Junius would marry and raise his family on the same land, on sharecropper’s wages, which most of you know was “just below nothing.”

Rosa and Monroe sought to create a life beyond the culture of abuse that forced African Americans to negotiate their existence on a daily basis. Leaving four of their five children in the care of relatives, they ventured into unknown territory, riding the wave of westward migration in search of opportunity. In Richmond, California, both found work in the Kaiser shipyards, before my great-grandfather was drafted into the Navy and shipped off to the Pacific theater.

In California, Rosa became one of 600,000 African American women who joined the wartime labor force. She was, in fact, a riveter: Rosa the riveter. There can be no doubt that she, like Camille Billops’ mother, Alma Dotson, worked alongside other African American, white, and Mexican women, many of whom shared similar backgrounds, fears, and dreams for the future. Being gainfully employed was an essential part of their plans for success and empowerment as women, and their desire for independence. After the war, Rosa and Monroe returned to Texas. Shortly thereafter, she decided she wanted more out of her life. She refused to allow herself or her children to be subjected to the ongoing abuses heaped on African Americans seeking to

better themselves, their families, and communities. Instead, she chose to return to California, where her children could gain access to a quality education, and live in more favorable social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances, which meant sacrificing her family ties to Texas. But Rosa was determined. She found work as a domestic in the homes of white people, many of whom employed her up until the time of her death in 1982.

Unfortunately, her experiences moving to California, working in the defense industry during the war, and as domestic labor are essentially unknown to a majority of my extended family members. And with the passing of four of her five children – my grandmother died this past January – most are in jeopardy of losing their inheritance. Now, what exactly is this inheritance that I speak of? I'll come back to that.

As the matriarch, Rosa was the head of the family. With the absence of my great-grandfather, who visited occasionally, everyone came to her for advice and guidance. As an aside, I recall those occasional visits by Monroe, which were sometime in the 1970s. I remember he was always reserved in his emotions and would often spend time alone with his thoughts. He said very little. He was the epitome of stoicism. Only recently was I made aware of some of his experiences in the military that haunted him, and other traumas that he endured and relived each and every day. Taking the pain, which eventually broke him.

Opposite of this tremendously stoic figure was Rosa, who would often tell stories about her experiences working for whites in Santa Clara, Campbell, and San Jose. For the most part, they were pleasant experiences. At least the ones she shared. I remember her constantly telling one of my uncles that Mr. and Mrs. "so and so" were good white people. She told him that "they were fair" and always gave her things to take home. When

she needed something, they went out of their way to help her. But my uncle wasn't buying it.

Reflecting on it now, his response reminds me of a passage from the introduction of Farrah Jasmine Griffin's *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends*, where she writes:

Given the historical and political contexts in which African American women have lived, and given their own desire to shape and influence these contexts for the benefit of all Americans, it is understandable that they often felt it is necessary to present highly censored "positive" images to an often hostile public. Thus many have kept the most personal aspects of their lives as well as the full range of their thoughts secret.

While Rosa remained for most part optimistic about her dealings with her employers, I also recall her saying that she couldn't bring herself to trust them. Them, being white people. No matter how nice they were; no matter how much they tried to ex-

**Like my memories of the resilience of my great grandmother Rosa, the archives of black women writers are important to our understanding of where we come from, but most importantly who we come from.**

tend themselves for her benefit. She too was mindful of the past, which for her was always present. Her personal and communal traumas would not allow her to give herself fully to people outside of her family, her community, or the Pentecostal Church. She was cautious of making herself vulnerable to the ways of white folks.

She understood how power worked: she had to. So she worked, and she worked hard to create a buffer to protect herself and

her children from danger the best way she could. But she also embraced the present and the future simultaneously by teaching her grandchildren and great-grandchildren how to take care of themselves: how to be independent, just, aspirational, and above all, resilient. These are the lessons that have shaped generations of African American children. This is the inheritance I believe is present in black women's writing and storytelling.

In the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library we have dozens of collections that account for the tremendous breadth and depth of black women's experiences as writers, activists, artists, and administrators. Through their own distinctive writing and the intersections found throughout the materials within the Rose Library collections, to quote from Dr. Sheftall's *Words of Fire*, "these women share a collective history of oppression and a commitment to improving the lives of black women, especially, and the world in which we live."

Indeed, beyond the scope of what most would expect the Stuart Rose Library to have in terms of the literary output of black women writers like Alice Walker, Pearl Cleage, and Natasha Trethewey; we have the personal and professional papers for numerous black women artists, educators, writers, and entrepreneurs, whose individual and collective lives reveal the nuances and challenges of living in, and negotiating space within a world resisting the assertion

of black womanhood. A number of the collections are in need of exploration and elevation. Included among these are the Rev. Dr. Ella Mitchell; artist and art historian Dr. Samella Lewis; poet, playwright, and teacher May Miller; composer, musician, and teacher Geneva Southall; activist and writer Louise Meriwether; journalist and novelist Almena Lomax; model and entrepreneur Ophelia Devore-Mitchell; and journalist and writer Viola Andrews, to name but a few.

By example, Viola Andrews, who many of you know as a writer and columnist here in Atlanta, was also the mother of visual artist and activist Benny Andrews, and the novelist Raymond Andrews. And she had a tremendous influence on their lives as artists and people. In 1930, Viola married George Andrews, who was a sharecropper in Madison County, Georgia. Between 1932 and 1953, the couple had nine children. After the birth of their last child, Gregory, Viola decided to move to Atlanta with her children to raise them in an environment where they would have a chance at life.

When she moved to Atlanta, she attended Beaumont's School of Vocational Nursing, and later worked as a nurse at McClen-don Hospital. In 1971, she enrolled at the Atlanta School of Biblical Studies, and in 1972, she integrated the white Lakewood Presbyterian Church when she began to teach evening Sunday school.

She was a writer of short stories and a newspaper column. Her short story "Go Down Moses" appeared in the literary magazine *Time Capsule* in January 1971. She served as Religious Editor at the *Metro Atlanta Community Bulletin* and wrote a weekly column on religion. In the collection we have copies of these materials and more, including her autobiography, several other short stories, and a book of poems entitled *Body, Spirit, and Soul*.

The collection consists of papers of the Andrews family, including writings, correspondence, photographs, religious material, scrapbooks, and other miscellaneous papers.

All of her children maintained a relationship with her, writing her frequently and sharing stories about their lives, and how they benefitted from her nurturing. In a two page letter dated January 24, 1989, the youngest, Gregory Andrews, writes:

Hi, Mama,

How's my sweet brown cupcake? Wonderful I hope. I received your inspiring letter. It was a joy to hear from you. I think about you everyday. I wish I could have sent you more money.

When I be working on my job, a lot of you is still in me. You always told me to work hard and do the best job possible. Don't worry about the best guy. I be thinking about all of the values you instilled in me. I'm proud of you Mama. I love you very much. I work like everyday is my last day. Tomorrow is not promised. Some people complemented me on this. I was blessed to have a mother like you.

Clearly, this mother and son relationship demonstrates the kind of influence she had on her son's development as an adult, and as a man. It also demonstrates a child's claiming his inheritance from his mother, who successfully guided her sons through adolescence into manhood. His voice of appreciation is not unique, but it is important to acknowledge in the scope of the role of black women raising children to become responsible and respectful adults. Like my memories of the resilience of my great-grandmother Rosa, the archives of black women writers are important to our understanding of where we come from, but most importantly who we come from. The

collections of stories of resilience, perseverance, and success represent our collective inheritance that we should not ignore, nor abuse for personal gain. We have an obligation to share these stories and learn from them.

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## Michelle M. Wright

Michelle M. Wright is the Augustus Baldwin Longstreet Professor of English at Emory University.

### Discussion

The first question I would like to ask the group is if a student came to you in an absolute panic, your favorite student, and he, she, or they needed help putting together a one-day seminar with the title “African American Women’s Writing: Past & Futures,” what sort of writers might you choose to recommend to that student?

### Frances Smith Foster

I would say Pauline Hopkins, Lucille Clifton, and Sherley Anne Williams. That’s the short answer.

Pauline Hopkins would be the turn of the century pick. She was a publisher of a newspaper, she was a journalist, she wrote novels, she investigated the questions of race, mixed race, mystery, miscegenation. All of the themes that are, I think, important today, Pauline Hopkins anticipated. She also wrote a number of biographies for newspapers. Lois Brown has written an incredible biography of her. Lucille Clifton

because she made her mark in two different ways, both of which were influential to me. She wrote so-called children’s literature, and one series centered on a boy named Everett Anderson. Her *Everett Anderson’s Goodbye*, in which Everett loses his father, was the only book I could find that helped children understand death. It actually followed Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s stages of grief, but it’s incredible. Really all of her books, including her memoirs and her poetry, are for grownup women. And Sherley Anne Williams because, again, she was a multigenre writer using history. If *Dessa Rose* hadn’t come out the same time as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, she would have been over-the-top big. As it is, the thirtieth anniversary edition of *Dessa Rose* was published this year and *Callaloo* is preparing a special edition on her work. Sexuality, history, slavery: Sherley said that when she was young, she wanted to be a historian; that is, until some smart young Negro told her there was no place she could go in the United States and not be a slave. But she realized that slavery not only was horrible, but provided opportunities for love and heroism, and that’s some of what her book is about.

### Beverly Guy-Sheftall

I’m going to show my biases. I would want them to read some of the most radical black women, mostly feminists, who have lived. I would have them read Claudia Jones. I want them to know that we’ve had black communist women who worked in a factory. I would want them to read June Jordan, especially her essays about being bisexual. We would now say queer. I would have them read Audre Lorde because she is not in the literary canon in many Afro-American literature classes. And I would have them read – my favorite right this minute – Lorraine Hansberry. I would have them watch the film *A Raisin in the Sun* and I would have

them read the anonymous letters that she wrote to *The Ladder*, the first nationally distributed lesbian magazine. She wrote some of the most important black queer writing that we have not read. So I would sprinkle some radical, communist, queer writings in there to stir it up.

### Pellom McDaniels III

I would also say Lorraine Hansberry and *Raisin*, to have them think about blockbusting and this idea of space, about the intergenerational conversations they were having in the tenement as well as this idea of aspirations, the dream deferred. I think a lot of young people could actually understand that. They could see that reality now. I would pick Gwendolyn Brooks’s anthology *The Blacks* because it is a way to understand her writing and, as with the “Kitchenette” vignettes in *Maud Martha*, to focus on urban domesticity. I’m leaning urban because these are the realities today of the majority of the populations I work with, at the Rose Library or in their communities. And third would be Nella Larsen’s *Passing* or Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, thinking about the politics and power dynamics of gender and sexuality.

### Michelle M. Wright

The next question is about literary genres. I was trained in the novel, where many African American women at different stages in history have really found their voice. I’m also very aware of the rise of playwriting over the past couple decades, as well as how poetry is coming to the fore once again. But I want to ask you how you tend to think about different literary genres and the way genres have shaped and been shaped by African American women writers.

### Frances Smith Foster

I have an essay being published next year called “Can a Cup Be a Book?” I am most

interested now in popular literature, as in the literature that was not written to be published and sold commercially, like scrapbooks. I'm really interested in the ways in which women used their art and their voices to leave records of themselves. So for me genre has to expand to include these forms; I don't want to define genre in a way that excludes such women, as I did when researching slave narratives.

### **Beverly Guy-Sheftall**

I would just say quickly that right now I'm obsessed with memoirs and journals and letters. A few years ago – Frances, you may remember this – we were told by some grownup black women that black women shouldn't write about their personal lives, because who cares? *Seriously*. And so I want to affirm the need for black women to write more revelatory, in-your-face memoirs so that we can know more about their intimate personal lives even, and particularly, as you said, stuff that was not intended to be published. I'm not interested in being a voyeur, but I think that we know very little about the intimate interior lives of African American women.

### **Pellom McDaniels III**

I would agree, especially thinking about the archives. Consider someone like Mari Evans's papers: they are deep and wide, her career spanning poetry, drama, nonfiction, children's books, her connections with artists like Langston Hughes and Nina Simone. The collections are tremendous, much of it never published. There are journals, there are notebooks; you will find unpublished novels or essays that have been in these boxes for fifty years, waiting for researchers, for people who are curious to come and mind the collections. And so what I try to do is find the right people and say, "Hey, you're interested in this subject, you should come look at this collection." And I invite

all of you to come up and browse. And you can do that also using the finding aid. So the archives, in terms of genre, can create new spaces to have conversations that are cross-pollinating: mixing ideas about the novel, about the memoir, about biography, but also in terms of space, through public scholarship. How do we talk about the materials in an open space? ■

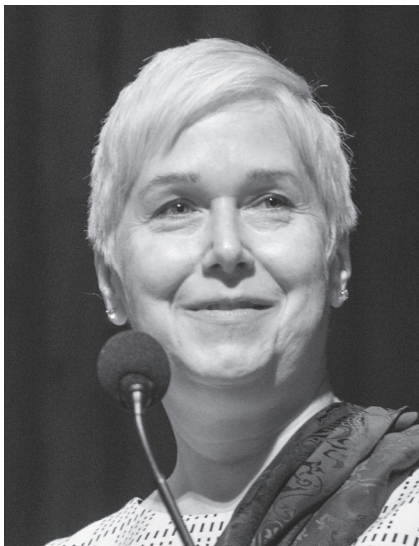
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To view or listen to the presentations, visit [www.amacad.org/events/study-african-american-womens-writing-pasts-futures](http://www.amacad.org/events/study-african-american-womens-writing-pasts-futures).

# Induction Ceremony 2018: Presentations by New Members

On October 6, 2018, the American Academy inducted its 238th class of Members at a ceremony held in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The ceremony featured readings from the letters of John and Abigail Adams by Katherine Farley (Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts) and Jerry Speyer (Tishman Speyer), a performance by André Watts (pianist; Indiana University Jacobs School of Music), and presentations by Linda T. Elkins-Tanton (NASA Psyche mission; Arizona State University), Huda Y. Zoghbi (Baylor College of Medicine), Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar (Supreme Court of California), Robert Gooding-Williams (Columbia University), and David Miliband (International Rescue Committee).



## Linda T. Elkins-Tanton

*Linda T. Elkins-Tanton is the Principal Investigator of the NASA Psyche mission, Director of the School of Earth and Space Exploration and of the Interplanetary Initiative at Arizona State University, and co-founder of Beagle Learning, a tech company training and measuring collaborative problem-solving and critical thinking. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2018.*

Two years ago, right around this time of year, I was giving a presentation much like this but under quite different circumstances. I was not addressing a group of old and new friends. In fact, I was speaking in front of a panel of thirty professional NASA reviewers whose job it was to decide

**We need to abandon the blind acceptance of content. We need to train a generation of problem solvers who are motivated by unsolved problems, who understand and have the courage to struggle forward in partial steps over time to find a solution.**

whether or not they would recommend the Psyche mission for flight. As you already have heard, the mission was approved, but that day was one of the most intense days of my life. It came at the culmination of a week of on-site preparation by the team of then 140 people. That day and that week and the six years that preceded it paid off because on January 4, 2017, the NASA administrator woke me in the morning with a phone call and the happy news that we had been selected for flight. By the way, the Psyche mission is named after Psyche the asteroid, and so indeed we are sending a robotic spacecraft to a metal world.

Now humankind has visited rocky worlds like Mars and the moon and Venus and Mercury, we have visited moons made of ice, and we have visited gas giants like Jupiter, but humankind has never before seen a metal world. We are pretty certain Psyche is made of metal because of its radar properties, but if there is one thing we have learned about exploration, whether it is exploration of the new world, exploration of the North Pole, or exploration of a new kind of solar system body, nature surprises

us. And though I am standing here asserting to you today that it is made of metal and we suspect that it is the core of a little planet, perhaps in a few years you will remember what I said and know that we were wrong. There are very few places where humankind has not been, and this is one of them. It is a huge honor to go there. And so indeed we will launch this robotic probe in August of 2022. I invite you all to come to Florida for the launch on August 6, 2022. Put it in your calendar and we will rendezvous with Psyche and begin orbiting in 2026.

NASA is very clear that this mission is about science, but for me, it has never been just about science. We explore because we can't help it. I think it is in our DNA. As humans we are compelled to explore, but I do truly believe that the reason that countries pay for this, and not just as a substitute for war or for posturing, is because it encourages everyone to take a bolder step in their own lives. And that is what we wish for everyone. Now, before I returned to science to get my Ph.D. – and incidentally let me say that my son who is here today went to kindergarten the week I went to graduate

school and we did our homework together for many years – I worked in business for almost a decade and that time in business gave me a very deep appreciation for high functioning teams. The criticality of being able to work in high functioning interdisciplinary teams is often not something that we are trained to do as academics. During that time I really learned how to work as part of a team, and I also frankly developed a deep skepticism about the value of many of the ways that we spend our time as people.

I think we have choices. So I became very motivated to think about what is the biggest question that I could ask. How could I make a team that really had an effect? And that began several decades of conversation in our family about what is a virtuous career? What are the things we could do that would truly make a difference? Psyche is now deep into formulation: we have

### **As you tune your ability to ask your natural next question you become better and better at problem solving.**

about three hundred people and we will grow to five or six hundred people on this team. We are located all across the country. I have about 15 hours of regular telecons every week and I have a really increased appreciation for the criticality of working in large interdisciplinary teams. On these teams the systems engineer has a great reverence for the knowledge of the scheduler, and the marketer has a great reverence for the knowledge of the graphic designer. And these kinds of things are not taught in school. They are not taught in college; they are not taught in high school. And so that is really the point of what I am trying to say today. These things are not taught in college.

The traditional mode of education is one of content delivery. I, the instructor, bring

my knowledge and I deliver it to you, the learner. And I would guess that most of us in this room excelled at that model of education and in fact that is why we are here now. By the end of high school most of us who are going on to college have become experts in the blind acceptance of content and the regurgitation of it onto an exam. That is almost exactly antithetical to what I think we actually need in this world. It is almost exactly antithetical to truly understanding content and taking action. So what I posit is that we need to abandon the blind acceptance of content. We need to train a generation of problem solvers who are motivated by unsolved problems, who understand and have the courage to struggle forward in partial steps over time to find a solution.

We are living in interesting times. Imagine if our society was fully trained to ask the question, how does that reporter know that?

Why should I believe that information? Content is ubiquitous. Content is no longer the differentiator. We are drowning in content. What we lack is critical problem solvers. So what am I proposing? How can we do this? Let me introduce you to one thing that we have developed, which we have been working on for some time, and not just within my academic group or with my colleagues at ASU or across the country, but also in our tech startup, Beagle Learning. We are trying to find effortless ways to introduce critical thinking and problem solving into the classroom. One really powerful idea I want to share today is the concept of a natural next question. I think this is actually the key not to just problem solving and critical thinking but to leadership. And it goes like this.

Imagine that you have some big goal, some big problem that is on your mind. Say your question is, how could visiting a metal asteroid teach me about the inside of the earth or how planets are formed? Or what if your question is, how can I get an education when girls are not allowed to go to school in my town? These are the kinds of problems I would like everyone in the world to have the grit and the resilience to address. You might go on the Internet or visit your library; you might ask your friend or interview someone. You would start with a little seed of content. And then comes the natural next question. Rather than asking a question about what you already know, which is what we are mainly trained to do, we would ask our natural next question, the question that takes us one step away from what we know and toward our big goal, which is too far to be reached in one question, but you can do it in many little questions. And as you tune your ability to ask your natural next question you become better and better at problem solving.

We are doing that in the classroom right now and in the lab, and it is transformational. I had a sophomore working on his natural next questions every week for four weeks and at the end of the fourth week he said, “Now when I listen to the news or I read the media I ask myself how do they know that and I want to ask more questions about that.” And he said that had never been the case for him before. I think this is a beautiful and simple step on the way to problem solving. And so whether it is a mission, a big science question, or a big problem, the wish is that everyone in the world would feel empowered and enabled to take a bolder step in their own lives. It is up to all of us here today to make sure that that opportunity is available.

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## Huda Y. Zoghbi

*Huda Y. Zoghbi is a Professor in the Departments of Pediatrics, Molecular and Human Genetics, Neurology, and Neuroscience at Baylor College of Medicine. She is also an Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the Director of the Jan and Dan Duncan Neurological Research Institute at Texas Children's Hospital. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2018.*

I am honored to be here today and to be part of this inspiring community of artists and scholars. In the next few minutes I want to share a bit of my background as a prelude to a theme that has emerged from my own work that I think has relevance to the Academy's mission.

I grew up in Lebanon and started medical school at the prestigious American University of Beirut. Everything was idyllic: I loved my studies, I had wonderful friends, and I met William, the man who would later become my husband. But then the Lebanese Civil War broke out. Grenades, bombs, and bullets made it dangerous to go above ground, so we lived and held classes in the basement of the medical school buildings

**As scientists, we need to do better at explaining how seemingly small effects add up over time to dramatic, large-scale changes. Even in genetics, it is important to emphasize that genes are not the whole story. There is ample evidence that education, diet, social support, and our environment all have an enormous effect on our ability to be healthy.**

for the next several months. At the end of that first year, my parents thought it would be safest for me to stay for the summer with my older sister in the United States. We all expected the war to end quickly. The war did not end that summer, however, and when I tried to return to Lebanon, the borders had closed. Thankfully, U.S. immigration policy at the time allowed me to convert my tourist visa to a student visa, and then to permanent residency.

Unfortunately, the fall semester for medical schools in the United States had already started, and no school I reached out to would even give me the time of day. Then a remarkable thing happened: the dean at Meharry Medical College, a historically black medical school in Nashville, Tennessee, took the time to talk with me. He made the decision to allow me to transfer to Meharry even though it was already two months into the semester. I am forever grateful to him. After graduating, I went to Baylor College of Medicine for training in pediatrics and neurology.

During my residency, I had a fateful meeting with a young patient named Ashley. She had been a healthy, lively little girl until she turned two. Then, over a period of just a few weeks, she stopped speaking and seemed to lose all the milestones she had achieved so far. She withdrew from her parents and

spent hours wringing her hands. My clinical professors and I recognized the disease as Rett syndrome, which had just been reported by a European group the previous week. I soon found other girls like her. All had been born healthy, only to lose all their learned skills around age two. They developed seizures and many other heart-breaking symptoms as well as experienced fits of inconsolable crying. What puzzled me was that the disease was neither congenital nor neurodegenerative: Rett was one of a kind.

I was frustrated because I had nothing to offer these patients or their families. So I turned to science for answers. I was convinced the disease had to be genetic, but I had no training in genetic research. In fact, I had no research experience whatsoever. But I had met the renowned geneticist Art Beaudet in clinic, and he agreed to take me on as a postdoctoral fellow. With Art's guidance, I soon became adept in the lab. By the time I was ready to look for faculty positions, Art persuaded me to stay at Baylor.

It was difficult to study Rett syndrome because the disease is sporadic – only one case occurs in a family, and we didn't have the technological tools then that we do now. Nonetheless, sixteen years from the day I met Ashley, we discovered that Rett girls have mutations in a gene called *MECP2*. The MeCP2 protein acts like the conductor of a

## We cannot control genetics or life's circumstances, but we can – and should – do our utmost to create the conditions that foster a more healthy population and sustainable planet.

very large and complex orchestra: it guides the expression of thousands of other genes in the brain. The mutations that cause Rett either lowered the levels of the MeCP2 protein or inactivated it. Wondering whether having too much MeCP2 would also be problematic, we created mice that have an extra copy of the gene and found that they, too, develop a progressive neurological disorder. We now know that *MECP2*-duplication syndrome is a common cause of developmental regression in male children. In fact, it is now clear that even modest changes in MeCP2 levels of 10 percent or 20 percent can affect brain function. I started thinking of MeCP2 as the “Goldilocks protein” – you shouldn’t have too much or too little, but just the right amount.

During this time, my lab was also studying a protein called ataxin-1, which is involved in a late-onset neurodegenerative disease. It turns out that the brain is sensitive to small changes in the levels of ataxin-1, too. In fact, this is the case for several other proteins we study, and probably for many more.

From a genetic point of view, we have become accustomed to thinking about how mutations change a protein’s function. Now we are seeing that too much or too little of a completely *normal* protein can also lead to disease. Smaller changes in protein levels may take a long time to manifest, though. For instance, we found that a slight deficiency in one protein involved in inner-ear development did not affect juvenile mice at all, but made *adult* mice lose their hearing. Many late-onset human diseases may have their roots in subtle changes that begin early in life.

If we take this beyond biology, the same principle holds. For example, a seemingly small change in global temperature is enough to spell disaster in the long term. As scientists, we need to do better at explaining how seemingly small effects add up over time to dramatic, large-scale changes.

Even in genetics, it is important to emphasize that genes are not the whole story. There is ample evidence that education, diet, social support, and our environment all have an enormous effect on our ability to be healthy. For example, we know that elevated levels of the alpha-synuclein protein in the brain are associated with developing Parkinson’s disease. But the levels that cause symptoms in one person in their seventies might cause symptoms in another person who is only forty if that person has been exposed to agricultural pesticides.

The fact that both the micro- and macroenvironment are important gives us more opportunities to intervene. As we work toward therapies for individuals with a given disease, we also need to work on providing healthier environments that promote resilience. As my own history demonstrates, I would not be here today if it had not been for a favorable immigration policy. But I also would not be here without a medical school dean who chose to bend the rules for me. Or a geneticist who was willing to take a chance on someone without research training. We cannot control genetics or life’s circumstances, but we can – and should – do our utmost to create the conditions that foster a more healthy population and sustainable planet.

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## Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar

*Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar is a Justice of the Supreme Court of California. Previously he served as the Stanley Morrison Professor of Law, Professor (by courtesy) of Political Science, and Director of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2018.*

I am enormously humbled to join this Academy and privileged to speak on behalf of my class members. I feel like my kids would if they were told they could join a group that included Beyoncé, Steph Curry, Lin-Manuel Miranda, Yoda, Constance Wu, and Katniss Everdeen.

Speaking of heroes: in 1945, a young German American immigrant was working for the U.S. Army conducting interpretations in the war crimes trials that followed the Allied victory in Europe. He would become one of my favorite social scientists—he is the economist Albert Hirschman. I recently heard a story about him that nicely sets the stage for the brief thoughts I want to share this afternoon. In his older years, Hirschman had decamped to the

**Making knowledge count means understanding the value of freedom to exercise voice, and having the wisdom to do so with prudence. It means seeing the risks posed by some countries that limit meaningful voice in their own societies and seek to do so even in constitutional democracies.**

Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and one day he received a visit from a friend of mine who was also an admirer of Hirschman's work. My friend asked this elder statesman of economic history what was he working on then. Hirschman indicated he was working on a collection entitled "Final Essays." My friend was eager to hear more, but expressed concern that Dr. Hirschman seemed to have decided this would be his last contribution, whereupon Dr. Hirschman leaned closer to my friend and slowly said: "Final Essays, Volume 1." We are never entirely done understanding our world or its people, even when it is time for another generation to take the laboring oar and have its (also inevitably numbered) days in the sun.

It was a sunny day a bit more than a quarter century ago when I arrived here in Cambridge as a college student from the U.S.-Mexico border. I was far from home but hoping that raw enthusiasm would make up for some serious naïveté. Slowly I learned to discern the subtle melodies connecting psychology and economics, biology and politics, and my own experiences and those of classmates with whom I had once thought I had almost nothing in common. I was thrilled by political theorist Judith Shklar's lectures on civic obligation. Sitting in that lecture hall listening to her distinctive European-Canadian-American voice I understood better why it was that the American citizenship to which I aspired

felt much more like a giant leap than a small step. I was eager to write one or a half-dozen papers under her guidance as soon as the class was over.

But of all the works I read in those years, I found Hirschman's slim little tome on *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* to be among the most compelling. He wrote like a dream, but there was something else: his reflections on how people dealt with distress and opportunity in social life paid attention to the particular nuances of place and time while cautiously generalizing. His examples and diagrams explained not only fraying treaty organizations and coups in Latin America, but family arguments and even how partners were chosen in folk dancing groups (and yes, I was in one—but I hope there aren't any tapes left). His ideas made sense of dynamics affecting the whole world, because everyone from scientists to criminals to hip hop artists to international security professionals work in the shadow of institutions.

From the way he wrote and reasoned about institutions one could glean something else: that Hirschman understood how focusing on people's choices to leave a group, or their courage to dissent, or their definition of loyalty was about far more than delivering a conveniently boxed set of school supplies useful in discerning occasional quirks of our institutional world. His insights were pieces of an extraordinary puzzle: one depicting how learning happens in churches, courts, colleges, and countries.

And as he implied and I have come to believe, certain ideals must be taken seriously for that process to work – for us to be able to live in a world where the search for knowledge does more than serve as a shared calling for scholars and instead gives society itself the means to learn from our collective mistakes. It takes certain preconditions to make it feasible for society to deploy shared wisdom in protecting the weak, or in cleaning up polluted rivers like the one flowing from Southern California into Mexico five blocks from my childhood home. To share knowledge across generations just as we hand a burning candle – carefully – to an eager child so she can sense not only the flame’s beauty, but its power to enlighten or sear.

## **The very same gift of our humanity that makes us strive for a better life across borders and protect our own also sometimes makes it difficult to achieve the ideals necessary for society to learn at a complicated time.**

Among the ideals and preconditions that make all this possible are candor and intellectual honesty – or at least a measure of it – from those with the power of public office. I still have Professor Shklar’s old course reader in my garage, and a few nights ago I found myself leafing through it. I recalled a passage written by Hannah Arendt, who provocatively observed: “[I]f everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer.” Making knowledge count also means understanding the value of freedom to exercise voice, and having the wisdom to do so with prudence. It means seeing the risks revealed in a vast array of numbers about changing climate and also the risks posed by some

countries that limit meaningful voice in their own societies and seek to do so even in constitutional democracies. It means a civil society robust enough to make exit a meaningful option for a whistleblower. It means realizing the cost to all of us when a domestic violence victim fears coming to one of our state courts – where we adjudicate more than 90 percent of all cases in America – because she is undocumented and federal authorities are showing up at state court proceedings to detain people like her. That these ideals raise their share of dilemmas and line-drawing problems is no reason to shirk from defending them, time and again, without hesitation or compromise.

The very same gift of our humanity that makes us strive for a better life across bor-

ders and protect our own also sometimes makes it difficult to achieve the ideals necessary for society to learn at a complicated time. Our world today features less hunger but rising oceans, longer lives but rising interest in authoritarian politics. We have been entrusted with a planet that delivers a succulent bounty but also serves up bitter problems often made worse by our acts and omissions. Harnessing the gifts will take commitment to integrity, creative expression and empathy, and persistent attention to the transmission of knowledge across not only geography and social class, but across generations.

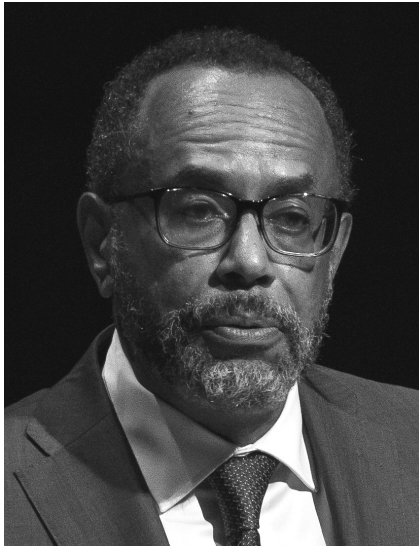
Professor Shklar sadly died shortly after I finished my first course with her. But I think of her when I have a tough decision

to make at work. Or when I am lucky to be in the proverbial “room where it happens,” where wisdom is shared across generations, affirming commitments to understanding our planet that run deeper, and last longer, than what anyone can achieve in a single lifetime. I remember a seminar some years ago with a Noah’s Ark of disciplines around the table, from historians to nuclear physicists. A bright and articulate young scholar was presenting on the challenges posed by homegrown violent extremism. At one point an experienced older scholar sitting around the table gently raised an objection. I recall the presenter suggesting that the problem could be resolved by applying the work of a scholar with whom the questioner might not be familiar – someone named Charles Perrow. The older scholar then patiently explained: “I am Perrow.”

As we make our way through this fragile and beautiful world we have inherited, with supercomputers tucked in our pockets, true wisdom may often seem as elusive as it is precious. But sometimes we find it sitting right next to us, waiting for a quiet moment to raise its voice. Listening has its rewards. Done right, it helps make the story we write together an invigorating Volume 1, replete with never-entirely finished histories and equations that will someday let our descendants answer questions we are only beginning to ask.

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## Robert Gooding-Williams

*Robert Gooding-Williams is the M. Moran Weston/Black Alumni Council Professor of African-American Studies, Professor of Philosophy, and Director of the Center for Race, Philosophy, and Social Justice at Columbia University. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2018.*

It is a great honor to be here and to be invited to speak this afternoon. I come before you as a political philosopher, and with the time I have here I want to trace the evolution of my thinking about the role of deliberative democracy in promoting racial justice.

Deliberative democrats believe that our political culture should be geared less to the distinction between allies and enemies and more to the idea that, the diversity of our communities notwithstanding, ordinary, democratically energized Americans can debate and mobilize their way toward shared understandings of the public good. On one, representative account, deliberative democrats encourage citizens “with conflicting perspectives to understand each other’s point of view, to minimize their

**It has become increasingly clear to me that the American political culture we inhabit too often relies on democratic deliberation either to equivocate about commitments to ending racial inequality or to promote the illusion that citizens share a common moral perspective on racial inequality when they do not.**

moral disagreements, and to search for common ground.”<sup>1</sup>

For about twenty-five years or so, we political philosophers have argued about the value of the deliberative democratic ideal. Our arguments took on a practical relevance when President Obama, during his first presidential campaign, expressly aspired to transform our political culture, aiming to replace the allies versus enemies model with the ideal of establishing common ground. I initially expressed my own sympathies with the deliberative ideal in a paper I published a decade earlier, in 1998. There, I defended the idea of race-conscious, multicultural public education. Specifically, I proposed that public education that is multicultural and race conscious can advance the cause of racial justice because it can help diverse, fellow citizens forge a shared vocabulary for understanding themselves and for coming to a common moral perspective through democratic deliberations. Consider, for example, the view held by many African Americans that the relative poverty of black Americans, because it is due to the cumulative effects of racial slavery and anti-black racism, is an injustice. White Americans often dismiss this view, denying that racial inequalities are,

in part, effects of the unjust and brutal legacies of slavery and Jim Crow. But if whites learned more about these legacies and their impact on black lives, then, I argued, they might come to appreciate the moral soundness of public policies intended to redress racial inequalities.

Since writing that paper, my confidence in its argument has waned, for it has become increasingly clear to me that the American political culture we inhabit too often relies on democratic deliberation either to equivocate about commitments to ending racial inequality or to promote the illusion that citizens share a common moral perspective on racial inequality when they do not. More than seventy-five years ago, W.E.B. Du Bois presciently explored both these tendencies.

Du Bois was the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard. A prolific writer and activist, he was the director of publications and research for the NAACP and co-founder of the American Negro Academy, a learned society not unlike the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 1940, after a long career advocating for racial justice, Du Bois analyzed the tendencies of white citizens to equivocate and to presume a common moral perspective when none exists with a published, fictional sketch of a conversation with an archetypal, educated, white friend. To simplify, the question about which Du Bois and his white friend deliberate is whether his friend

1. Amy Gutmann, “The Challenge of Multiculturalism in Political Ethics,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 22 (Summer 1993): 199.

should endorse the ideology of the “Christian Gentleman,” which promotes the values of good will, justice, peace, and the golden rule, or the ideology of the “American White Man,” which promotes white supremacy, the closely related fear that colored folk, through “sheer weight of numbers,” will soon overthrow white folk, and careful surveillance to see just who is sitting down and why when the “Star-Spanned Banner” is played – all in the name of the values of caste, exploitation, empire, and power.

## The ideology of white supremacy is always to be contended with in American political culture; it is not something that we should expect ever to eclipse by appeals to a common ground of shared moral judgments and principles.

Du Bois and his friend eventually agree that, the contradictions between the two ideologies notwithstanding, most whites prove impervious to reason. Tending to equivocate, they qualify their endorsement of the Christian Gentleman’s principles to accommodate the American White Man’s moral outlook. They say that they “are filled with Good Will for all men, provided these men are in their places”; or that they “aim to treat others as they want to be treated themselves, so far as this is consistent with their necessarily exclusive position.”<sup>2</sup> But Du Bois’s friend is logical and, recognizing the contradictions between the two ideologies, resolves his dilemma by embracing the ideology of the American White Man. In contrast to other white citizens, Du Bois’s friend sees through the illusion

that there is a moral perspective – a normative common ground – that he and Du Bois share, acknowledging that his devotion to the code of American White Manhood ultimately trumps his devotion to the code of the Christian Gentleman.

With his dialogue sketch, Du Bois suggests two reasons to be skeptical of a deliberative democratic politics that seeks racial reconciliation through appeals to the common ground of shared moral values and judgments. The first is that whites typically qualify their allegiance to judgments and

principles that they *seem* to share with non-whites to a point that effectively eviscerates that allegiance. This is the problem of equivocation that is evident today, when, for example, our fellow citizens’ categorical rejection of direct measures for reducing racial inequality *practically* compromises their professed judgment that justice requires reducing it – or, more generally, when they qualify their professed commitment to racial equality to accommodate policies that reinforce racial inequality. The second reason is that it would be bad politics to predicate hope for racial justice on the possibility of racial reconciliation through the discovery of common ground if, as Du Bois proposes, any assumption of a normative common ground may well be an illusion.

To my mind, much of the tone of our contemporary politics resonates with the perspective of Du Bois’s white friend, who refuses to equivocate, abandons the appeal to a common ground, and embraces the

ideology of White American Manhood. Indeed, it is appalling that the code of White American Manhood has again acquired prominence in the public square: that athletes are castigated for kneeling during the national anthem to protest practices of policing that criminalize blacks; that non-white Hispanic immigrants are targeted for persecution meant to promote a racialized conception of American citizenship; that anxieties about the browning of America infect public debate; and that the perceived threat of a white supremacist political rally compelled the city of Charlottesville, Virginia, to declare a state of emergency.

Du Bois’s deep insight, I believe, is that the ideology of the American White Man is not at all an anomaly; that it is a recurrent, constitutive motif of American history. By Du Bois’s lights, the motif was operative when President Andrew Johnson, after the Civil War, sacrificed his democratic opposition to aristocracy to his deeply rooted antipathy to racial equality; it was likewise operative in 1899, when Du Bois, having just begun his first term as president of the American Negro Academy, learned that the knuckles of lynching victim Sam Hose were on display at a grocery store down the street from where he was walking; and when Rudyard Kipling, having recently published “The White Man’s Burden,” accepted his election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The motif has remained operative through the early years of the twenty-first century, persistently available for political exploitation. The ideology of white supremacy is always to be contended with in American political culture; it is not something that we should expect ever to eclipse by appeals to a common ground of shared moral judgments and principles.

I conclude by recalling my trip this summer to the National Memorial of Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, a work of art that brilliantly contends with the

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2. W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward An Autobiography of A Race Concept* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1984), 164.

ideology of white supremacy by demanding that we acknowledge our difficulty in reconciling ourselves to its brutal effects. The centerpiece of the memorial is a structure comprising 800 steel monuments, each representing a county where lynchings occurred. In these 800 counties, more than 4,400 black men, women, and children were murdered between 1877 and 1950. Each monument, the size and shape of a coffin, bears the names of the lynching victims who died in the county the monument represents, as well as the dates they died. Signs posted around the memorial stress that it is a sacred site.

Walking through the first of the site's three passageways is like walking through a well-tended burial ground. Moving from pillar to pillar, visitors can effortlessly read the inscribed names of states, counties, and lynching victims, as well as the dates on which the lynchings occurred. Traversing a path through the steel structures is initially a matter of following the contours of a three-dimensional map that legibly chronicles decades of white supremacist violence, state by state, county by county.

Turning into the second and third passageways, however, the floor begins a slow descent, and the monuments gradually rise above the visitors. As the pillars ascend, the inscribed names of states, counties, and victims, looming higher and higher overhead, become increasingly *illegible*. Treading beneath a densely packed expanse of weighty steel caskets, bereft of the ability to read the inscriptions that mark them, I suddenly found myself feeling overwhelmed and disoriented at this point, for I was no longer able to identify the names, places, and times that the pillars bearing down on me memorialized.

If the lynching memorial evokes a sense of the sacred, that is partly because our descent through it is finally a movement beyond what is legible, chartable, and

comprehensible to a viscerally devastating confrontation with a history that, hovering beyond our reach, inhibits and paralyzes our powers of understanding and imagination. What the memorial ultimately warns us against is the temptation to make peace with the past it commemorates; the temptation, that is, to reconcile ourselves to that past by finding comfort in the knowledge of where, when, or even why white supremacists lynched black bodies, as if through a sort of cognitive achievement, important as that might be, we could deflect and appease the horror of the history all American citizens inherit. The memorial contends with the deadly violence belonging to the history of white supremacy by alerting us to the difficulty, perhaps the impossibility, of coming to terms and feeling at home with the massive, impenetrable, horror of that violence.

Leaving the memorial site, we encounter Hank Willis Thomas's *Raise Up*, a sculpture that protests the contemporary, anti-black police brutality that *Black Lives Matters* campaigns against. Works of art like the lynching memorial and Thomas's sculpture help us to steel our opposition to the resurgence of white supremacy. For where democratic deliberation fails to establish common ground, Du Bois suggests, the struggle for racial justice requires a "long siege" against white supremacist political forces entrenched within an American polity still divided in its commitment to end racial inequality.

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## David Miliband

*David Miliband is President and Chief Executive Officer of the International Rescue Committee. He previously served as the 74th Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom. He was elected an International Honorary Member of the American Academy in 2018.*

I am honored to be inducted into the Academy today and feel even more privileged to address you. When I studied at Bigelow Junior High School six miles from here in the 1970s, and when I was a graduate student at MIT in the 1980s, I could never have imagined that I would be joining the same club as Hamilton and Madison or John Stuart Mill and Stephen Hawking. And while I could not have imagined it, I'm sure my teachers would never have believed it.

This feels like an especially important time for liberal democratic societies in the West, and for academic institutions whose freedom of thought and commitment to the advancement of knowledge have been important features of these countries.

Speaking for myself, I find it chilling that in the Brexit campaign the answer from a

leading Cabinet minister to concerns about the economic impact of Brexit was the argument “people in this country have had enough of experts.”

We know that this demagoguery is not confined to the United Kingdom. In the United States there are now facts, and if you don't like them, there are alternative facts. I flinch at this rhetoric in part because of my own history.

I look and sound like a product of the long period of peace and prosperity that Europe has ever known. I am indeed that product. University life was part and parcel of my childhood. My dad was a professor of political science in the UK. When I was at primary school I remember well my mother sitting at her desk working on her Ph.D. about women munition workers in World War I. And when I was nine I remember that our home was shared with a Chilean student who was a refugee from the Pinochet regime.

In the Miliband household I was always encouraged to have my own opinions. But as the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it, I was never entitled to my own facts. I was brought up to know that at least in the eyes of my parents there was no higher accolade than to be described as a serious person.

**At a time when governments are in retreat, it seems to me that NGOs, universities, and the private sector need to step forward together.**

Obviously, my pursuit of a career in politics suggests that I was truly a rebel against this dictum.

My parents were not only the product of academe. Both were refugees to the United Kingdom from war in Europe: my dad as a sixteen-year-old from occupied Belgium; my mum as a twelve-year-old from

a twice-conquered and many times demolished Poland.

They knew from their own life stories that history and memory, the collective and the personal, were intertwined. And it is in that spirit that I hope that my membership in the Academy can draw attention to three aspects of this institution's character that seem especially important today.

First, the most obvious fact about me is that I am not an American. I am grateful that the Academy does not see this as a defect.

Our connected world needs more institutions that reach across national divides. A member of this Academy – President John F. Kennedy – reminded his audience in a landmark speech on July 4, 1962, that while Alexander Hamilton had urged Americans to think continentally, Kennedy's generation needed to think intercontinentally.

That is even truer today, whatever the winds of nationalism and nativism.

Second, I am not an academic, yet I have been welcomed into the Academy.

As some of you may know, I run an NGO. At a time when governments are in retreat, it seems to me that NGOs, universities, and the private sector need to step forward together. My NGO is funded to deliver life-saving services, not write policy papers, but I hope that our experience can be of val-

ue to the Academy. We can certainly benefit from your rigor and insight.

Third, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is not just any old NGO. We were founded by another member of this Academy, Albert Einstein, who was a refugee. In fact, there is a double honor for the IRC today because our cochair, Katherine Farley,



## Our connected world needs more institutions that reach across national divides. . . . That is even truer today, whatever the winds of nationalism and nativism.

is also being inducted into the Academy this afternoon in recognition of her success in business.

IRC's mission today is to help those whose have been shattered by conflict or disaster to survive, recover, and take control of their lives. We are a growth business because there are more displaced people today than at any time since World War II.

However, I am sad to report that the spirit of openness which welcomed Einstein in the 1930s is not present today. In the United States, which until recently had the world's largest and most successful refugee resettlement program, the existence of that program is under threat.

It would not be right for the Academy to fight this battle for us, but the prominence in the Academy's alumni of refugees is a reminder that amidst the rubble of Aleppo or Sana'a there are people with an extraordinary amount to give, and it is gratifying that in the work on humanitarian operations in warfare led by Professor Paul Wise there is recognition of that.

The American sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote an extraordinary book in 1959 entitled *The Sociological Imagination*. In it he warned us all of two dangers: the bureaucratic ethos that treads on originality and independence, and the "moral scatter" that renders liberalism illiberal. He called on students to make a difference in the world by seeing the link between the homeless man on the street and the society in which he lives, between the troubled teenager and the wider social order. He called this the linking of public issues to personal troubles.

This is an especially important call today. When refugees are dehumanized by politicians or by statistics, remember they are people. When countries far away are dismissed as being of no interest, remember no man (or woman) is an island. When you are told that globalization means that power has been ceded by democracies to market forces, remember that the resources for organization and engagement have never been greater.

The Academy represents so much that is good in the American story: open, rigorous, international, humble efforts that bring people together to advance the frontiers of knowledge. I am very grateful indeed to acknowledge that tradition and to join it. ■

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To view or listen to the presentations, visit [www.amacad.org/events/2018-induction-weekend-induction-ceremony](http://www.amacad.org/events/2018-induction-weekend-induction-ceremony).

*Annual David M. Rubenstein Lecture*

# A Conversation with Justice Sonia Sotomayor

On October 7, 2018, as part of the Academy's 2018 Induction weekend, Sonia Sotomayor (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States) participated in a conversation with David M. Rubenstein (Co-Founder and Co-Executive Chairman of The Carlyle Group). The program, which served as the Academy's 2072nd Stated Meeting, was the second Annual David M. Rubenstein Lecture. The following is an edited transcript of their conversation.



## David M. Rubenstein

*David M. Rubenstein is Co-Founder and Co-Executive Chairman of The Carlyle Group. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2013.*

For those who might have been buried under a rock for the last twenty years, let me give you a brief summary of Justice Sotomayor's background. She was born and raised in the Bronx to immigrant parents from Puerto Rico. She went to Cardinal Spellman High School, where she did quite well, getting into Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. How many of us here today got into Harvard, Yale, and Princeton?

She chose Princeton, graduated summa cum laude, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and was the co-winner of the Pyne Prize, which is given to the most outstanding undergraduate student. She then went to Yale

Law School, edited the *Yale Law Journal*, and chose not to clerk but to become a prosecutor. She served with Robert Morgenthau in the New York County prosecutor's office. After five years, she went into private practice in New York.

At the age of thirty-six, she filled out an application to serve on the U.S. District Court, was subsequently appointed in 1992 by President George Herbert Walker Bush, and served in that position for seven years. President Clinton then appointed her to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, where she served for eleven years. On August 6, 2009, the U.S. Senate approved her confirmation to the Supreme Court of the United States, making her the third woman, the first Hispanic, the first Latina, and the 111th justice to serve on the Court.

As if that were not enough, she also had time to write books. I highly recommend *My Beloved World*, which is her autobiography. (For those who might have kids, there are middle and elementary school versions too.)

Despite all of these enormous accomplishments, for much of your life you were not someone people gave restaurant reservations to, and you were not getting everything you wanted so easily. What is it like to be a public persona now?





## Sonia Sotomayor

*Sonia Sotomayor is Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2018.*

**I**t is very strange. Last night after dinner I went to the Yankees/Red Sox game at Fenway. Next to the Yankees suite where I was sitting was a Red Sox suite. I sat down, and everybody in the Red Sox suite was taking pictures of me. One of them reached over and wanted to shake my hand, and I spent a period of time shaking their hands and talking to them and saying hello. I finally said, “I’ve got to get back to the game.” Those moments are no longer unusual, and it is a bit strange.

I had a child once ask me, “What is it like to be a part of history?” It took me a back because, as I explained to her, that is not what I spend my time thinking about. I know it, I see it, I experience it, but if I chose to integrate it into myself I would stop living my life. I might be too scared, and I would be overtaken by that as opposed to trying to continue to live a meaningful life. If you don’t choose to focus your life on what you

**The Court is a family in a way that few judicial groupings are. We are nine justices who sit together on every single case . . . but we meet not only to hear arguments, to conference, and to cast votes; we also attend all sorts of functions together because of tradition. . . . You become a family, and, like with all families, you agree on some things and you disagree on a lot of other things.**

think is important, you lose sight of the fact that other stuff isn’t.

I am grateful when people are kind to me. I am grateful when they recognize me with happiness, although I suspect in some audiences there might be a different reaction. But I don’t pay as much attention to that as others might.

## David Rubenstein

So, is anything new going on at the Court these days? Anything you can talk about?

## Sonia Sotomayor

Well, I say this because I have a new family member. I was just in the Garden Room here at the Academy with one of my dear former law clerks, Niko Bowie, who is now a professor at Harvard Law School. He has a one-week-old daughter. As we were talking, Cora Sophia was crying. I asked him how much sleep he gets, and he said, “Not much.”

I think most parents forget that when there is a new child in the family it disrupts everything, doesn’t it? It changes your world.

The Court is a family in a way that few judicial groupings are. We are nine justices who sit together on every single case. We meet together all the time. I probably see more of them than I might have chosen to if given a choice.

I joke about that, but we meet not only to hear arguments, to conference, and to cast votes; we also attend all sorts of functions together because of tradition, starting with the State of the Union, Historical Society dinners, and other traditions in which we meet and socialize. You become a family, and, like with all families, you agree on some things and you disagree on a lot of other things.

And when there is a new member, that family conversation changes. The axis changes dramatically. There are those who will ask us, or ask me, to predict what that change will be. That is not a useful enterprise, for me at least. I have to watch this development and participate in it with as open a mind as I can have.

## David Rubenstein

Do you think the image of the Court will change because of what has gone on?

## Sonia Sotomayor

I think many fear that. And I think our image is the thing we have to guard most jealously, which requires us to work together in a way that upholds the sense of integrity of the Court. I believe every member who comes to the Court quickly becomes indoctrinated in understanding how important

**I think our image is the thing we have to guard most jealously, which requires us to work together in a way that upholds the sense of integrity of the Court. I believe every member who comes to the Court quickly becomes indoctrinated in understanding how important our role is. We learn very quickly that what is not important is us as individuals.**

our role is. We learn very quickly that what is not important is us as individuals.

This institution has been around for over 230 years, and people have respected it for what it has done for our country, so we quickly learn that we have to put aside our individual interests and work on behalf of our nation and this Court that we all revere.

I disagree with many of my colleagues on a lot of issues, but the one thing we are united around is our passion for the Constitution, our laws, and our Court. So, it is my hope that we will find a way not to tarnish that institution.

### **David Rubenstein**

Let us talk about your life story, which is quite compelling. I said earlier that your parents “immigrated” from Puerto Rico. That probably isn’t the correct way to say it because Puerto Rico is part of the United States. They migrated from Puerto Rico and came to the Bronx. You were the first-born in your family, and you have a younger brother. You were living in a housing project. What was your life like as you were growing up?

### **Sonia Sotomayor**

I never perceived myself as poor, because I was rich in the important things. I was rich in family and love. And so, for me, my life was normal. It was my world. Cardinal Spellman was my first exposure to understanding that the world was different than the world I lived in, and it got to be more starkly different when I went to Princeton.

Then I knew what wealth was. And I found out that I didn’t have it.

It was not an easy life by any means. Both my parents worked. I developed diabetes when I was seven years old. My dad had an addiction, alcohol, and it caused a great deal of unhappiness in my home.

### **David Rubenstein**

You were coming home from school and saw people crying near your house, which is how you found out your father had died. You were nine years old. Your mother raised you and your younger brother. She didn’t have a very big income. How did she manage?

### **Sonia Sotomayor**

I wish I were as brave as my mother. She brought herself from Puerto Rico to the United States by joining the WACs during World War II. Her own mother had died when she was nine years old, and her father had abandoned the family well before that. After her mother died, her sister took her in. It was not a happy life for her – much more unhappy than mine.

Alone, without knowing anyone on the mainland, she joined the WACs and came over. My mom always understood that the only way to succeed in life was through education. There was a college near her home in Puerto Rico, and she would watch the girls coming from the college, walking to the post office, which is where they socialized, and she would follow, listening to their conversations.

Some of the conversations were frivolous, like most college students might have, and a lot of them involved things she did not understand. And she wanted to understand. She was driven by this thought that if she got educated, and certainly if she educated her children, then she would move up in the world in a way that she could not otherwise.

She became a practical nurse after she left the Army. That was a huge step, first, for a woman of her generation and, second, for someone with her background. After she became a practical nurse, she held onto a dream of being a registered nurse someday, which she fulfilled when she was in her forties. After my dad died, she worked six, sometimes seven days a week. She had two jobs most of the time.

She did everything possible to further our education, including sending my brother and me to a Catholic school, which shocked our family because it was expensive, but the school gave her a twofer. They charged only one tuition for my brother and me. That is how we made it: through hard work and dedication to education.

### **David Rubenstein**

When did you realize you were a good student? Did you struggle in the beginning, or were you always really good?

### **Sonia Sotomayor**

I was a marginal student during my first four years in school, and in retrospect I figured out why. I learned Spanish before I learned

English. My father spoke only Spanish, so at home we only spoke Spanish. My grandmother, who I adored, only spoke Spanish, as did most of my aunts and uncles. My mainstay language was Spanish.

When I started school, I was just beginning to learn English. My mother now tells the story that in first and second grade the sisters came to her and said, “You have to stop speaking Spanish at home.” My mother said okay and then came home and continued speaking Spanish. Those days you didn’t fight with authority; you just ignored it.

She said there was no choice because Spanish was my dad’s language; it was their language. After my father died, my mother entered a period of what I, using amateur psychology, always thought was depression. Later she corrected me: “No, I was just in grief.” But that grief was a pall over our home, and my only escape was books. I found the local library, and I started to learn how to read. Once I did that, it started me on the path to academic success.

### David Rubenstein

You did well at Cardinal Spellman, but you didn’t have the money for Advanced Placement courses, college prep courses, SAT prep courses, and the like. Still, you must have done pretty well, because you got into Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. Why did you turn down Harvard and Yale and go to Princeton?

### Sonia Sotomayor

First of all, I didn’t know what an Ivy League school was. In retrospect, I have no idea how I wrote a college essay without having anybody review it, but I did. I didn’t know better.

My high school debate coach, who was a year ahead of me on the boys’ side of Cardinal Spellman, went to Princeton and called me up in September and said, “Sonia, you have to go to an Ivy League school.”

“What’s that?” “Best colleges in the United States.” “I can’t afford that.” “Sonia, they give you financial aid.” “So how much does it cost to apply? I can’t afford that either.” “They’ll waive it; just ask for a waiver.” “So which schools are they?”

He mentioned Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and a couple of others, and I said, “OK, so where do I get the applications?” “Go to the guidance counselor.” So I applied, and I got into all three, not fully understanding what I was getting myself into. I went to visit each of them, starting with Radcliffe. I took a train from New York up to Boston and thought to myself, this train is not very different than the subway in New York.

**I never perceived myself as poor, because I was rich in the important things. I was rich in family and love. And so, for me, my life was normal. It was my world.**

My interviewer was a senior woman with white coiffured hair, a beautiful black dress, and what I knew were genuine pearls because I had never seen them, but I knew what fake ones looked like. Her office had a white couch and a red wingback chair. Two poodles – I guess they were French poodles, black and white – were yapping at her feet.

She sat on the sofa, and I noted that it didn’t have any plastic on it (where I grew up, nobody had furniture that didn’t have plastic on it). The poodles sat next to her, and I sat on the wingback chair.

I was speechless. This was an environment I had never, ever been in. I didn’t know what to do or say. It was the only time in my life I have run away. It was the shortest interview I have ever engaged in. I could not have been with this woman more than ten or fifteen minutes. I couldn’t get myself to ask her a question.

I literally ran out of the room, went to the assistant at the front desk, and told her, “There are some students who are intending to meet me and show me the campus. Please tell them I had an emergency arise.” Then I left and went straight home. When I got to my house, my mom looked at me and said, “You were supposed to stay overnight. What are you doing here?” “Mom, I don’t belong there.” And I didn’t go there.

### David Rubenstein

Have you ever thought how successful your life could be if you had gone to Harvard?

### Sonia Sotomayor

I have considered it. Anyway, the next visit was to Yale, and, since it was at the tail end of the Vietnam War, a lot of protest was going on, and the Yale Latinos were very radicalized. I went and spent a couple of hours with a group of Latino students who were trying to recruit me to attend Yale.

They were talking about doing away with the “whities.” I, a Catholic girl from an institution that supported the war, who was dating a man I knew I was going to marry (and whom I did marry), who is not Latino but white – I sat listening to talk about Che Guevara and the Cuban revolution and knew I didn’t belong there either.

Next, I went to Princeton, and I am there with my friend from high school, and he has very long hair and friends who are just like him, and I think, I am a little more comfortable here.

**David Rubenstein**

When you got to Princeton, how did you feel? Did you feel at home with the wealthy, prep-school types there, or did you think of transferring? What was it like?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

No, I didn't think of transferring, because frankly I don't know that I knew it was an option. Our choices were to stay or to drop out, go back home, or go to a local college. There wasn't a sense that there might be something comparable to this education in a better environment. It was a different world.

I was an alien in that world and so very different from my classmates. I don't know, frankly, that that's ever changed in any of the environments I joined afterward, including the Court. It sounds like a small thing, but virtually all of my colleagues are opera lovers. I like jazz.

prosecutor, former partner at a law firm, district and circuit court judge. People look at me and say, "You belong more than anyone else."

**David Rubenstein**

You were elected to Phi Beta Kappa, but you didn't know what it was and threw the invitation in the wastepaper basket. Tell us about that.

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I was going to dinner with a friend. She came to pick me up, and while I was putting my shoes on she sat in the chair next to my wastepaper basket. She said, "Sonia, I don't usually look in people's wastepaper baskets, but it's a little hard to miss that there's an envelope that says Phi Beta Kappa on it." I looked at her and said, "Yes, Felice, that's a scam. They told me they're the most prestigious organiza-

**David Rubenstein**

Did you know you wanted to go to law school when you entered Princeton? When did you decide, and what law schools did you apply to?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I don't remember exactly how many I applied to, but it wasn't a lot. I did apply to Harvard and, I think, to Columbia and Stanford. I knew my grades were good and my LSAT scores were good, so I had a sense that I was competitive.

I was accepted to both Harvard and Yale, and what made up my mind to choose Yale was that I spoke to a number of alumni from both schools. To a person, every Harvard alumni I spoke to said, "They were the toughest years of my life, hardest schooling I ever received, but I loved it." And every Yale I talked to said, "They were the best years of my life." That difference led me to Yale.

**We are different in terms of the worlds we travel in and the things we do and enjoy. Not that we don't have some overlap, but once you are a person like me from a world that's so different from the world I ended up in, you never quite belong in either. But you figure out how to live in both.**

We are different in terms of the worlds we travel in and the things we do and enjoy. Not that we don't have some overlap, but once you are a person like me from a world that's so different from the world I ended up in, you never quite belong in either. But you figure out how to live in both.

So that is what I do. I inhabit two worlds that I have learned intimately: the one I came from, because I lived it and still carry it with me; and the world I am in now. I am a Princeton/Yale graduate, former

tion in the United States and that to join the club I have to pay them money. Why would I pay them?"

She looked at me and she said, "Sonia." Then she explained what Phi Beta Kappa was and said, "If you don't want to pay, I'll pay for you." I was so embarrassed that a friend would offer to pay for me that I said, "No, if you think it's that important, I will pay." I still thought it was a scam, but I took the envelope out of the wastepaper basket, and I paid.

**David Rubenstein**

So, you turned down Harvard twice. If they offer you an honorary degree, would you turn that down?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I probably wouldn't turn that down. But Yale beat them to that too.

**David Rubenstein**

How did you find Yale Law School?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I felt totally overwhelmed. It was the first time since fourth grade that I actually felt inferior to most of my classmates. I am there in class with people like Martha Minnow, Stephen Carter, and Bill Eskridge. There were people there whose brilliance far exceeded anything I had ever dealt with, even at Princeton.

My sense of inadequacy was very great. However, it is my wont that when I feel

inadequate I just work harder. So, I jumped into Yale and tried then, as I have most of my life, to figure out how to succeed there.

### David Rubenstein

Usually people who win the Pyne Prize and graduate summa from Princeton, attend Yale Law School, and get on the *Yale Law Journal* go to clerk on a court of appeals or at the Supreme Court. Why did you not choose to do something like that?

### Sonia Sotomayor

I had been highly academic for seven years. At Yale I was on two law journals. In addition to the *Yale Law Journal*, I was managing editor of the *International Law Journal*, which was then called the *Journal of World Public Order*. I thought clerking was going to be another academic exercise, that I would be in the library for a year, writing bench memos for judges. I wanted to go out and work.

I also didn't think I could afford to be a clerk because the pay was so much less than the pay for going into practice. Law clerks were earning even less money than I made at the DA's office. So, the idea of forgoing a paying job made no sense to me.

I tell people it is hard to be on the Supreme Court of the United States and say you have a professional regret. But this was my one mistake because clerking is so important to the development of your career. By clerking you advance your knowledge of the legal system by about five years. It's a jump-start to becoming a lawyer, and so it is worth the initial diminution of salary.

Now, there is a financial inducement to clerking in the federal system. You get a sizable bonus at the end of your year with a judge. On the district court it's \$75,000 or \$100,000. On the court of appeals, it's at least \$150,000, and it's now \$400,000 for Supreme Court clerks. The day a law clerk leaves my office, he or she earns more than I do.

**I tell people it is hard to be on the Supreme Court of the United States and say you have a professional regret. But this was my one mistake because clerking is so important to the development of your career. By clerking you advance your knowledge of the legal system by about five years. It's a jump-start to becoming a lawyer.**

### David Rubenstein

An associate justice of the Supreme Court earns about \$200,000?

### Sonia Sotomayor

\$250,000.

### David Rubenstein

So, when your clerk goes to practice law after clerking for a year, he or she gets a salary of maybe \$200,000 plus a \$400,000 bonus?

### Sonia Sotomayor

That's right.

### David Rubenstein

Oh, that's not bad at all. At Yale you had a chance encounter with Robert Morgenthau, a distinguished prosecutor and district attorney in New York, and he convinced you to join him. Were you happy you did that?

### Sonia Sotomayor

Best decision I made in my life. José Cabranes, who is now a judge on the Second Circuit Court of Appeals and is probably the most prominent Puerto Rican lawyer in New York City, was general counsel at Yale when I was in law school. He took me under his wing.

One day he was introducing me at a function and said, "She's the most unusual of mentees. Every single decision she makes she comes and discusses it at length with

me. I give her my advice, it's clear she's thinking very thoughtfully about what I say, and then she leaves me, and she does the exact opposite thing."

He told me to clerk, and I didn't listen. He told me to go to a law firm, and I didn't listen. Most Yalies did not go to a DA's office. Most went to clerk or to one of the big law firms or into a government position, but I liked being in the courtroom, and I had a sense that I wanted to do courtroom work.

I had done a barrister's union, or mock trial, at Yale. One of the professors later said he remembered me from that episode because I did something he had never seen a student do before. I said, "It just seemed the right thing to do." I have learned subsequently that intuition is fed by human knowledge when you are in the courtroom, or at least that the knowledge you gain leads you to understand how you should perform in a courtroom and what you should do.

### David Rubenstein

Your role in that job was to put people in jail. Was that difficult, especially since the people you were putting in jail had underprivileged circumstances in many cases?

### Sonia Sotomayor

People assume that because I had a not privileged background, that will make me soft on crime. Or they equate the two in a way that is a misjudgment.

**One of the wonderful things about being on a court with people who are this smart and this engaged in legal questions is you make each other's opinions better. You draft an opinion, and the dissents that come out force you to tighten up what you are saying, to take approaches that are better and stronger.**

When people do serious crimes, they are hurting people, and if you hurt people you pay for that. It is both your moral and legal obligation. That doesn't mean you don't use judgment as a judge in figuring out what the right punishment is for a particular person under individual circumstances, but you do understand that there is injury from crime.

It is not all economic crime, and even when it is an economic crime, there are people who suffer and suffer deeply. And so those choices are not the hard ones. The hard ones, when you are poor, involve understanding the lack of access to justice, the lack of a system that is responsive to the due process rights of people who don't have the resources to access justice in the way others do.

Those weaknesses in the system trouble people like me even when we are prosecutors or judges, because we are concerned about fairness and justice. That is what the justice system is about: treating people fairly. We cannot control the outcomes. If you do something, you have to face judgment, and my hope is that you will face it in a fair system.

#### **David Rubenstein**

After five years of doing this, you joined a small law firm and eventually became a partner. Then at the age of thirty-six or thirty-seven somebody said, "You should apply to be a federal district judge."

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

That was the managing partner of my law firm. He said, "Sonia, you should apply. They are looking for people like you, and I think you will be selected." I looked at him and said, "I'm thirty-six years old. Are you crazy? You don't become a judge until you are in your late forties or early fifties at least." I ignored him.

#### **David Rubenstein**

When people told me I should get out of the practice of law, I took it that they didn't want me to stay in the firm. But you didn't take it that way. They wanted you to be a judge.

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

When I was offered partnership a few years before that moment, the then head partner said, "We know you are going back to public service. We know that is where your heart is. So, we are not going to have you forever. The only commitment we ask you to make is that, whenever you are in private practice, practice with us." That seemed like a fair offer. They all knew that my heart was in public service.

#### **David Rubenstein**

So, you filled out the application, and you ultimately got an interview with Patrick Moynihan.

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

I did.

#### **David Rubenstein**

And he said, "If you wait awhile, I'll get this done." Is that more or less right?

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

That's exactly what he said to me.

#### **David Rubenstein**

So, you became a federal district judge and held that position for about seven years, and then a president of a different party, Bill Clinton, decided to nominate you for the Second Circuit. Were you surprised that after just seven years you were going to be a Second Circuit Court of Appeals judge?

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

Well, I said no the first time he called.

#### **David Rubenstein**

Really?

#### **Sonia Sotomayor**

Yes. The White House counsel's office asked me if I would consider being a circuit court judge, and I said, "I have only been here five years. I love it too much. I don't want to leave. Thank you but think about me later." And I hung up.

I told a friend who is a judge and a very discreet man. He said, "I clerked for a district court judge who loved being a trial judge, and he was asked to go on the court of appeals multiple times, and when he finally got to the age where he wanted to be on the court of appeals, politics had changed and nobody wanted him anymore."

He said, "Sonia, you may want to be a trial judge now, but if you think that someday, and it doesn't matter when, you might want to be on the court of appeals, you may want to reconsider your decision." I thought about what he said and realized he was right. When I got the second call, I said yes.



**David Rubenstein**

You were nominated, confirmed, and served on the Second Circuit for about eleven years before you got a call from Barack Obama. Is that correct?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

No. The first call was from Greg Craig, the White House counsel, and his assistant, Cassandra Butts. They said they had reason to believe there would be a vacancy on the Supreme Court and would I consider giving permission for them to do a background check on me.

I received this call at about 8:00 in the morning. I was going to the gym before going into the office, so I had a gym bag and an umbrella because it was raining. I'm struggling to get the phone to my ear. The clerk of the court tells me the White House counsel's office wants to talk to me. I take the call. I say yes, and then I have to sit down for a while.

When I finally got to the office and play the call back in my head, I started thinking, "What did I get myself into now?"

**David Rubenstein**

Ultimately, you had an interview with President Obama. Did he ask tough questions?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

My meeting with him was supposed to last half an hour. We went over an hour. When I came out, I said to his staff, "It's hard to grade yourself in an interview, so I don't know how I did. I do know that I understand one of his strengths as an executive."

He got the best out of me. He asked tough questions but not in a way that attacked me. All the questions that everybody else was asking in a negative way, he asked in a neutral way, he put me at ease, and let me answer honestly. Since I got the job, I think I did all right.

**David Rubenstein**

When you found out you got the job, did you call your mother first?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

The first thing I did was finish packing clothes to go to Washington. A friend drove me there, and we got lost. It was raining, and his TomTom went out, and we ended up somewhere in Virginia. By the time I ended up in Washington, about 2:30 in the morning, my mother was already soundly asleep. They had brought her to Washington ahead of me.

**David Rubenstein**

It's hard to miss Washington on the map. I wonder how . . .

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I was busy working on my nomination speech and not watching where we were going . . .

**David Rubenstein**

When you are sworn in, your mother is holding a Bible. Was it a family Bible?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

It was. I will tell you about that Bible. I had to sentence a Mormon defendant, and in the sentencing process I learned more about the Mormon religion than I had known previously. His family, including his mom, was there, and I mentioned to the audience how impressed I was with many of the tenets and values of the Mormon religion.

Sometime later I received a package in my office: a large box wrapped in tattered brown paper and the defendant's mother's name is in the corner. I have been told not to open unsolicited packages, so I got the marshals. They brought a dog, and the dog didn't smell anything. They decided to put the box through an x-ray machine and discovered there were multiple boxes. They

said, "We don't see anything on the machine, but we are a little suspicious."

So, they get the dog into his bomb-proof cape and get themselves in their gear, and they open the box and find a second box. In that they find a third. And in the third box there's a Mormon Bible.

The mom sent it with a note explaining that I had spoken about their religion and she thought I should learn more about it. So, she sent me a Bible. Now, as judges in the room will know, I cannot accept gifts and certainly not from a defendant's mother. I thought long and hard about what I could do, because sending it back seemed like the wrong thing to do.

I had my assistant call the Library of Congress to find out the value of the Bible, and then I sent the mom a note thanking her and telling her I couldn't accept the book as a gift but that I could pay for it. I included a money order and said, "Please cash it, and I will happily keep the book." And that is the book I used for my swearing in.

**David Rubenstein**

When you joined the Supreme Court and met the eight other justices, were you in awe of them initially, or did you say, "Well, they're just like anybody else"?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I was in awe of them, and I still am. My colleagues are incredibly smart. They challenge you at every step. In fact, we challenge each other. One of the wonderful things about being on a court with people who are this smart and this engaged in legal questions is you make each other's opinions better. You draft an opinion, and the dissents that come out force you to tighten up what you are saying, to take approaches that are better and stronger. This is a group that engages.

### David Rubenstein

A couple of questions about the Court that people always ask: Are we going to see television cameras in the Supreme Court anytime soon?

### Sonia Sotomayor

David Souter said, “over his dead body.” I don’t know that the rest of us feel that strongly. At my hearing I said, and I meant it, that I was open to considering cameras in the courtroom, but the experience of the nomination process and my experience on the Court has led me to change my mind.

**It has been the wont of the Supreme Court in more recent times to rule more broadly than the facts of individual cases. I think when it is four-to-four, there is an automatic inducement to go back to that narrowing. It is my hope that the Court might rethink things and go back to a slower, more incremental approach to decision-making.**

When I was going through my nomination process, every single senator who spoke with me did so in his or her office while a debate on some issue or another was happening on the Senate floor. No one was watching the TV and listening to the debate. Every one of them was talking to me. And I knew that when I left their office they would immediately get on the phone, or their staff would talk to them about something, or someone else would come in to meet with them.

Those speeches we see on television: they are to empty air. The senators never hear each other talk. I have asked some of them, “What do you think has led to the partisanship in our government?” And many of the more senior senators have said to me that it was when cameras went into the chamber. Because then they didn’t have to be there

anymore. And once they stopped being there, they stopped listening to each other, and they stopped talking to each other.

Many of them have told me that in earlier times they would have joint lunches in the Senate. They have stopped having those joint lunches. Each party has its own party lunches, its own committee meetings. They rarely meet and talk like normal people.

The other thing I saw was that during my confirmation hearing many of the senators from the party that did not support me would ask horribly tough questions, and once the cameras were shut off they were

very nice to me. There was nothing wrong with that. I am not criticizing it. I am just saying that the cameras change people’s public persona in a way that they feel is necessary. I fear that may happen for the Court if we allow cameras in.

### David Rubenstein

Sometimes I don’t read everything I am supposed to read before I go to a meeting, but the justices really do read the briefs, right?

### Sonia Sotomayor

Absolutely.

### David Rubenstein

So, when they ask questions of the advocates, are they asking for rhetorical reasons

(because they know the answer but are trying to influence another justice), or are they really trying to get information from the advocate?

### Sonia Sotomayor

It depends on the question, and it depends on the situation. Often questions are informational. As much as people think I am trying to make a point, a lot of my questions are based on the record or the lack of it, but sometimes you hear someone asking something and the attorney fails to raise what you think is the important point the Court needs to decide. Then you will get a question that is not quite rhetorical but more informative to the conversation.

### David Rubenstein

After oral arguments you have conferences where each justice says I will vote this way or that way. Do you try to persuade or lobby each other, or does it not work that way?

### Sonia Sotomayor

Remember that a large percentage of our cases – certainly not much less than 50 percent, and we have been as high as 70 percent in some years – are unanimous. On those cases there is very little talk after the conference. If you are unanimous or nearly unanimous, there is little need to convince someone to change his or her mind.

On the closer questions, occasionally you will have conversations. I say “occasionally” because there are some situations in which people’s views are clearly fixed. We have all read the materials, we have all heard the argument, we have decisions from courts of appeals that have been grappling with this issue over a number of years, so you have a sense of those cases in which further conversation is not going to promote any change.

**David Rubenstein**

Do you ever walk down the hall and say to another justice, “I will vote your way on this case if you vote my way on that case”? That never happens?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

Well, you don’t barter that way, but you can say to someone, “You know, we have compromised in so many other places . . .” – and you list the places where you have compromised – “now it is your turn.” You can say something like that, but it is not a barter.

**David Rubenstein**

How was it when you had only eight justices for almost a year? Did you try to avoid four-to-four decisions?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

Very narrowly. But there is also a value to narrow rulings. I come from a common law background, and in the common law, cases are made step by step. You look at the facts of the individual case, and you rule just on those facts, and then you let the next case come along and decide whether the direction you are going makes sense.

It has been the wont of the Supreme Court in more recent times to rule more broadly than the facts of individual cases. I think when it is four-to-four, there is an automatic inducement to go back to that narrowing. It is my hope that, as partisanship in the country increases, the Court might rethink things and go back to a slower, more incremental approach to decision-making.

**David Rubenstein**

Do the justices write their opinions, or do the clerks write them and the justices edit them?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

It happens both ways. Justice Stevens always wrote his opinions. His clerks basically just

checked citations. Other Justices – I am one of them – have their clerks draft, and then we edit.

**David Rubenstein**

In Washington everything leaks. How come you don’t leak your decisions? Nobody seems to know in advance. Why is that?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

It is wonderful that there is an ethos against that. It is a very strong ethos, and we take pride in that.

**David Rubenstein**

When you are the new justice on the Court you have two responsibilities. You are supposed to answer the door in the conference, and you are also in charge of the cafeteria committee. Are those important responsibilities, and did you do anything to make the food better?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

Opening the door: it doesn’t happen often, so there is not a whole lot of work there. The cafeteria committee: at the end of my first, and only, year as head of the committee, a *Washington Post* article graded the government cafeterias, and the Supreme Court cafeteria received an F. The Chief Justice sent me a note in the middle of Elena Kagan’s hearings and said, “Sonia, an F? You’re fired.” I wrote back to him, “All according to plan, Chief.”

**David Rubenstein**

You have been on the Court since 2009. You obviously enjoy it, and everybody is very pleased that you are doing the job you are doing. How much longer would you like to do this? Ten years, twenty years, thirty years?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

I am like Justice Ginsburg. For as long as I can.

**David Rubenstein**

And your health is okay? You mentioned you have had diabetes since you were seven. You have it under control, and your health is good, and you are exercising a lot?

**Sonia Sotomayor**

Yes.

**David Rubenstein**

That will make a lot of people happy. I appreciate you taking the time to be with us today and giving us a very interesting conversation about your remarkable life and life at the Court. Congratulations on what you have achieved.

**Sonia Sotomayor**

Thank you, David. ■

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2018 Distinguished Morton L. Mandel Annual Public Lecture

## The 2020 Census: Unprecedented Challenges & Their Implications

**O**n October 30, 2018, Kenneth Prewitt (Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs and Special Advisor to the President at Columbia University) spoke about the 2020 Census at a gathering of Academy members and guests at the House of the Academy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The program, which served as the 2018 Distinguished Morton L. Mandel Annual Public Lecture and 2073rd Stated Meeting, was live streamed to groups of Academy members and other participants gathered at the American Philosophical Society, Georgetown University, and Ohio State University. The following is an edited transcript of Dr. Prewitt's presentation.



### Kenneth Prewitt

*Kenneth Prewitt is the Carnegie Professor of Public Affairs and Special Advisor to the President at Columbia University. He was serving as Director of the United States Census Bureau in 2000. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 1979.*

**T**he task of the census is simple to state yet difficult to execute: count everyone once (no undercount), only once (no overcount), and in the right place (no location errors). Keeping this in mind, I would like to outline three major challenges for the 2020 Census: operational issues, partisan interference, and deliberate disruption. They have the potential, especially the latter two, of creating conditions in 2020 that jeopardize an accurate census.

**The task of the census is simple to state yet difficult to execute: count everyone once (no undercount), only once (no overcount), and in the right place (no location errors).**

There have always been operational challenges, starting when federal Marshalls mounted their horses and set forth to find every household in the new thirteen states. George Washington was certain that they had missed some, claiming that not every federal Marshall was up to the task. There have been frequent efforts to secure partisan advantage, again starting early: after the first census, conflicting apportionment formulas were proposed by Hamilton, a New York Federalist, and Jefferson, a Virginia Republican. Washington, also a Virginian, chose Jefferson's version; Virginia benefited for decades. The third challenge, deliberate disruption, is of more recent vintage, at least in the form it may take in 2020, possibly arriving from foreign sources. Every decade the census is challenged; every decade, it has innovated to overcome the challenges.

Before turning to each of these impending challenges, let me set the stage by describing a late-twentieth-century challenge and a 2000 innovation that dealt with it. Non-response was the challenge; paid advertising and a mobilization campaign were the innovation. In previous decades, the Census Bureau essentially relied on the willing cooperation of Americans to respond,

perhaps with a nudge from public-service-minded broadcasters like PBS urging late night listeners to return their census forms. In the latter decades of the twentieth century it became obvious that something more was needed because the non-response rate was steadily growing and the 1990 experience, with 25 percent of America's households not responding, was an alarm signal. Estimates for the next census indicated that the non-response rate could reach 35 percent. With the full support of Congress, the Census launched an extensive paid advertising campaign, kicked off with a Super Bowl ad. An unprecedented partnership program – basically unpaid advocacy by civic organizations, such as churches, chambers of commerce, and schools, along with mayors and governors, and much more – joined the campaign. It worked. The 2000 Census arrested what had been a decade-by-decade worsening of the non-response. Building on the 2000 experience, a yet more ambitious engagement campaign was mounted in 2010. It was even more effective.

The success of this initiative notwithstanding, every census has to prepare for millions of households not immediately responding. Enumerators following up with

these households, often multiple times, is very costly. The 1990 Census budget was about \$3.5 billion; the 2000 Census cost nearly twice that sum. Another major budget increase was required for 2010, and yet another was expected for 2020. Faced with what appeared to be runaway costs, Congress put the brakes on, instructing the Census Bureau to design the 2020 Census at a cost no greater than the previous one, despite population growth and all that it implies. This takes us to the operational challenges for 2020.

### Operational Challenges and Technical Innovations

When the budget is held constant while the challenges mount, the only way to produce a strong census is to innovate. For example, the address file needs to be updated for every census. Historically that involved a very costly year of fieldwork, involving census workers walking eleven million census blocks. The 2020 address file update did not repeat that traditional procedure. Instead it made extensive use of satellite imagery, third-party data providers, and geographic information systems. This operation succeeded, with significant cost savings.

This is one of several innovations. In 2020, every household likely to have an internet connection will receive mailed instructions on how to respond easily online. If, as expected, between 50 and 60 percent of households respond electronically this will be another major reduction in costs. Households without connectivity, or that hesitate to use the internet, can fill out a form and respond by mail. Because advertising and mobilization initiatives will have reached the majority of these households, we can assume that a significant number will be persuaded to return their form. The remaining non-responding households will require an in-person follow-up, but costly

return visits will be limited by bringing administrative records into the census process. This has been an area of substantial advance in the last decade, opening a new chapter in census history. When administrative records can substitute for census forms, census-takers don't have to knock on doors, find someone at home, and convince them to answer questions. Many of their answers are already on file – in tax-records or housing starts or vital statistics. There are quality control challenges in data linkage, but these are being worked on and there are reasons to be confident about what the Bureau is projecting for 2020. Less easily managed is public suspicion of anything resembling a national registration system – which, in fact, is not that distant from extensive data linkage across multiple administrative records. Not surprising, public concerns about privacy and the ability to re-identify individual data from aggregate data made publicly available have created additional uneasiness. In this arena, the Census Bureau is planning new and more secure ways to protect privacy.

The Census Bureau gets high marks for these and other technical and operational advances, though – largely because of budgetary constraints – thorough testing

up with a Plan B when a Plan A doesn't fully perform.

Overall, I think the 2020 Census will have a difficult time reaching the performance level of its two predecessors. As noted above, in 2000 and 2010, the big innovation was not technical but instead a large, well-funded public outreach initiative. This initiative fit naturally with the basic mail-out/mail-back census that was being conducted. The 2020 Census budget limits require it to introduce a number of high-tech innovations, using tools less familiar to the public and unlikely to work flawlessly on their first large-scale application. This reservation notwithstanding, from the perspective of 2020 operations there is no reason to doubt a successful census overall. However, the census could be seriously compromised or, in the worst case, undone by one or both of the issues I will discuss next.

### Partisan Interference

Before the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment (1868), every census utilized the constitutional three-fifths clause that was designed to give a significant advantage to the Southern states – providing them with about one-third more House seats and

## Every decade the census is challenged; every decade, it has innovated to overcome the challenges.

has been less than optimal. For example, the Bureau initially planned three dress rehearsal sites, which duplicate the varied conditions that are encountered across the country. Funds were available for only one site. Untested or inadequately tested operations, especially if they rely on new technologies, are cause for concern, but the Census Bureau has a remarkable record of coming

Electoral College votes than warranted by the size of their free population. The 1920 Census reported population totals indicating that the country had become more urban than rural; these counts should have shifted eleven congressional seats from Southern and Midwestern states to the urban Northeast. Partisan interests, however, blocked reapportionment altogether, and distribution

of the seats remained unchanged until the 1930 Census. A partisan dispute stretched across three decades of census-taking (1980–2000) over dual system estimation and sampling for non-response follow-up designed statistically to adjust the differential undercount (racial minorities missed in

## Overall, I think the 2020 Census will have a difficult time reaching the performance level of its two predecessors.

the census at higher rates than whites). Partisan pressures are not new.

The most recent example is the Trump administration's directive that the Census Bureau, against its professional judgment, add a citizenship question to the 2020 Census form. To explain the possible consequences of this directive I first distinguish between the *use* of census statistics and their *production*. The political *use* of government statistics enhances a democracy, and is even mandated at times – for example, the decadal reapportionment without which political representation proportionate to population size could not work. More generally, we expect statistical evidence to be used when policy options are debated and then, after X rather than Y option is chosen, we want evidence used in a post-hoc evaluation of whether X worked as intended. Put simply, official statistics are used politically because governing is a political act.

The mischief occurs when explicitly partisan interests intrude in the production phase, indicated by the examples above. Differential overcounts (the three-fifths clause) and differential undercounts (missing the hard-to-count) damage our statistics, thereby weakening our democracy, our economy, and our society. In early 2019, as I write this, there is vigorous partisan debate about the merits of the late addition of

a citizenship question to the 2020 Census form. The Census Bureau has warned the administration that this question will increase census costs and produce a sharp increase in the undercount of immigrant and non-citizen households (5 percent, and perhaps much higher in homes where undoc-

umented immigrants are present). The administration claims that citizenship data will help the Department of Justice apply the Voting Rights Act. A federal judge found that claim to be spurious and ruled against the administration; the case is now being appealed and will likely be resolved by the time readers encounter this essay.

I will not describe the statistical and legal details (although they are certainly interesting) but instead will use the citizenship case to pose more fundamental questions: What, exactly, is partisan interference in census-taking? What is at risk when it occurs?

### Defining Partisan Interference

For reasons noted, especially because of the positive benefit to democracy when federal statistics are used in the political act of governing, partisan interference is not easily defined. Start with Article 1 of the Constitution, which states that

*The actual [Census] Enumeration shall be made within three Years after the first Meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within every subsequent Term of ten Years, in such Manner as they shall by Law direct.*

“They,” of course, refers to congressional members – ever eager to stay in power. Might then their exercise of direction

over the decennial census be partisan interference? It depends. The best I can offer is that interference is the attempt to gain partisan or regional advantage by shaping the *production* of statistics against the judgment of a nonpartisan and apolitical statistical agency, which overrules a statistical agency's responsibility to offer its best expert judgment, which prevents it from using state-of-the-art science, or which insists on preclearance of a statistical product.

On the face of it, these principles seem reasonable, but they come under pressure when partisan interests are threatened. The 2010 Census counted forty million immigrants, citizens and noncitizens, which redistributed eighteen congressional seats. Sixteen of those seats went to states that voted for Barack Obama in 2012. In a period as politically polarized as the present, it is unsurprising that the party disadvantaged would try to minimize the harm it sees as coming from the census. For example,

Because illegal aliens should not even be in the country, and other nonimmigrants such as foreign students and guest workers are here only temporarily, it makes no sense to distribute congressional seats as if these foreign nationals deserve representation the same as American citizens. . . . The U.S. population that logically should be enumerated includes U.S. citizens and legal permanent residents (immigrants). As only the former may vote in federal elections, the apportionment of seats in Congress should be done on the basis of the number of U.S. citizens in each state.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Federation for American Immigration Reform, “Illegal Immigrants Distort Congressional Representation and Federal Programs,” March 2007, <http://www.fairus.org/issue/societal-impact/illegal-immigrants-distort-congressional-representation-and-federal-programs>.

Many lawyers, and to date the courts, have rejected this line of reasoning as unconstitutional. Many other lawyers argue to the contrary, as in the quote above. Whatever the eventual outcome of the legal debate, much more than reapportionment depends on a complete count of *the entire resident population*. Consider Houston, Texas, where the mayor recently convened leaders from business, education, religious organizations, and other sectors to address a “\$6 Billion Census Problem: Frightened Immigrants.” A Houston citizen who lives with undocumented residents made it clear to the mayor that she has no intention of cooperating with the census “for fear it will lead to deportations.” There are millions like her, and that is why “Frightened Immigrants” frightened the mayor. Every uncounted person in the census represents a loss of federal funds – among other things, for roads, disaster relief, schools, and health programs, the latter at more than \$1,000 lost per person. Multiply this in a region where 37 percent of immigrants are undocumented (the largest percentage in the country) and you quickly get to \$6 billion lost to Houston over ten years.

The point is simple. If you are a mayor, reapportionment is not the issue. Your worry is a \$6 billion hole in your budget, and not knowing how many new students to prepare for or how many elderly live in neighborhoods vulnerable to flooding. What can the Houston mayor do? Ask churches and schools to help, get buy-in from the Chamber of Commerce, count on free media coverage – anything to ensure that the census count matches the true size of Houston’s population because it is that entire population that is the mayor’s responsibility. A version of Houston’s dilemma is beginning to play out in thousands of cities and towns across the country. Mayors and city councils need accurate statistics to know whether businesses are investing in or departing

from their cities, whether recent immigrants are assimilating into their communities or hiding in fear, among a host of other things.

The Houston problem is real and consequential, and I don’t mean to dismiss it as I now emphasize why there is a longer-term harm in the making. This involves a shift in the public’s view of the census – from the very model of American democracy pictured in the iconic *Saturday Evening Post* image, to a fear that the census is being used as an instrument for government surveillance. For more than a half-century the Census Bureau has produced a statistically sound and widely used measure of citizenship from sample surveys and government records. If we already have the data, the public can reasonably ask, why does the Department of Commerce and the Department of Justice suddenly want a new, more

## In early 2019, as I write this, there is vigorous partisan debate about the merits of the late addition of a citizenship question to the 2020 Census form.

intrusive, and almost certainly less accurate measure? Might surveillance be the purpose? Even posing that question puts census cooperation at risk, and not just for non-citizens and recent immigrants. Many are asking if their census answers could be used against them – when seeking a job, borrowing money, taking out insurance. The Census Bureau will, correctly, insist that answers are protected, but they are fighting against the privacy concerns resulting from social media practices.

Perhaps if media coverage and public anxieties stopped there, the harm to the 2020 Census could be managed. I don’t think it will stop there. The citizenship

question is being pulled into the intense political polarization that afflicts the country. The public takes note that a census question is being vigorously attacked by one party and equally vigorously defended by the other. Might the public come to believe that there can be a census tilted toward the Republican Party when it is in power, and then a census favoring the Democratic Party when it is in power? And treat census cooperation as if it is a vote to be cast differently depending on which party is in power? I do not predict this development, but neither do I believe it impossible. Already some large commercial players, which in the past have urged census cooperation, are hesitant to appear to be partnering with the Trump administration.

Part of my concern springs from the fact that the 2020 Census will be in the field simultaneously with a very contested presi-

dential primary season. If “partisan interference in the census” is bandied about, the effort by the Census Bureau and its defenders insisting that census-taking is politically neutral will get lost in the noise, and the noise is nasty. I fear that we are watching the stage being set for an intense partisan debate when the census results are presented to the president in December 2020, with the losing side claiming that the counts are illegitimate and the winning side, as has now become common, shouting “poor loser.”

What is at stake, then, is whether the Census Bureau’s operations and innovations in 2020 will be sufficiently robust to prevent the polarization from damaging its

long-standing reputation for providing an indispensable contribution to the nation. The next challenge, I regret, is not cause for optimism on this question.

### Census Disinformation and Disruption

Although there is no baseline from which to predict attacks on the 2020 Census, it is prudent to assume that the threat is greater than zero. Hacking, of course, has been a threat for decades. The Census Bureau is experienced and, to date, has been successful in designing firewalls against hacking individual data records. I will skip over that issue, and only address efforts to destabilize the census with disinformation or other forms of disruption by adversarial actors – domestic, foreign, or both.

What we expect from the Census Bureau and supportive third-party actors is vigilance against efforts to seed discord, intimidate, or shape media coverage. While the Census did very little digital advertising in 2010 or turn to social media to get the census message out, we can expect to see concerted effort from the Bureau and its partners to counter misinformation through a drumbeat of messages in 2020. We can expect accurate, precise – and perhaps even witty – content shared online, but the likelihood that this effort will tamp down partisan or polarizing narratives is low. Furthermore, journalists, civil society groups, and technology companies may be put in an impossible position if their efforts to amplify messages about the census are flipped, and used to undermine the count.

Assigning a probability to malicious attacks on the census should be guided by two considerations. First, we need to recognize that the census is a target. The Census Bureau and its thousands of volunteer partners will pull out all the stops to announce “the census is here,” an effort that

will start exactly one year from when I write this sentence (January 21, 2019), well ahead of the official April 1 “census day.” Twenty years ago, I (and the media) went to Alaska, where, on a dogsled, I went forth to count the first household in the 2000 Census – it made front-page news across the country, as it did ten years later when then Director Robert Groves took his turn on the dogsled. It is likely to be repeated in 2020. The advertising campaign will quickly follow. From that day, well into April, the census will be highly visible.

Second, probability should be guided by an understanding of the scope of the possible damage. Readers know that the census (which includes the American Community Survey) is the benchmark against which critical economic, social, demographic, and housing information for every community in the United States is calibrated. The ripple effects of distorting its count are not only substantial, they are compounding, and last until the next census. To take one example: The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ price and cost-of-living programs – including the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Producer Price Index, the Consumer Expenditure Survey, and related data – have an estimated budget authority of \$250 million annually (much of which is paid to the Census Bureau for data collection). The CPI component of the program is used for annual cost-of-living adjustments for retiree payments and other beneficiaries under Social Security (\$941 billion in 2017). A one percentage point difference in the CPI estimate moves approximately \$10 billion, in an increase or decrease in SSA payments in the subsequent year. Annual changes in the CPI also affect commercial and residential rents, public- and private-sector wages, and components of the federal income tax code. A very long list of examples could be provided, all indicating that in tampering

with the Census Bureau’s statistics, you tamper with the American economy.

### Conclusion

In its entire history the continuous challenges facing the census, by and large, have been met by census-taking with the full support of the then current government and with general good will from the public. Neither is assured for 2020. This is the most disturbing challenge imaginable. If the administration flirts with the idea that a full count is not to its advantage but selective undercounting is, and if the public, for a variety of reasons, is suspicious of the census to the point that trust erodes, an accurate 2020 Census falls out of reach.

*Author’s Note:* Following the presentation of this talk, I was asked by the Academy if I would prepare my remarks for publication. I was already scheduled to speak several weeks later at the American Philosophical Society on similar issues, with the understanding that I would publish that presentation in the APS’s *Proceedings*. Readers will appreciate that I was caught in a difficult situation. I am pleased to report that the APS quickly and graciously agreed that dual publication was fine. For the benefit of readers, I note that the versions differ (they are separated in time, and the census is a moving target), but not to the extent that reading both would be rewarding. ■

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To view or listen to the presentation, visit [www.amacad.org/events/census-2020-unprecedented-challenges-their-implications](http://www.amacad.org/events/census-2020-unprecedented-challenges-their-implications).



*Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture***An Evening with Nicholas Kristof**

**O**n November 26, 2018, Nicholas Kristof (a columnist for *The New York Times*) spoke at a gathering of Academy Members and guests in New York City about journalists in the age of Trump. He also shared a preview of his forthcoming book on dysfunction in America after fifty years of wrong policy turns. The program, which served as the Morton L. Mandel Public Lecture and 2075th Stated Meeting, featured welcoming remarks from Jonathan F. Fanton (President of the Academy). The following is an edited transcript of Mr. Kristof's presentation.

**Nicholas Kristof**

*Nicholas Kristof is a columnist for The New York Times. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2017.*

**T**he *New York Times* is a venerable institution but compared to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, it is a newborn baby, still in swaddling clothes. I appreciate everybody turning out on a dismal evening. I want to thank Jonathan Fanton for his forbearance and patience. We had scheduled this program ages ago and sent out the invitations. And then there is a place that I have been trying to get to for years that is extremely difficult for journalists to visit. I finally found a way to get there, but it involved leaving today. I thought I would have to cancel speaking this evening. But I will be flying out tonight, immediately after

**The view traditionally held by the media has been that we advance fairness and we also advance truth. . . . But it seemed to me that, as the 2016 campaign evolved, this really wasn't working terribly well. There was a tension between advancing fairness, the way we customarily pursued it, and advancing truth.**

the program, to this place that I can't disclose to you for security reasons. This is the mysterious world of journalism, but I'm excited about the trip – and delighted I could still be here. So please stay tuned. [The destination was rebel-held parts of Yemen.]

I would like to share some provocations with you, some of the topics that many of us in the journalism world are having conversations about. The first one concerns how we cover someone like President Trump. We started asking this question during the 2016 presidential race. The view traditionally held by the media has been that we advance fairness and we also advance truth. If we quote someone who is more or less on one side of an issue, then we quote someone on the other side. And we largely leave it to the public to figure out who wins in this marketplace of ideas. But it seemed to me that, as the 2016 campaign evolved, this really wasn't working terribly well. There was a tension between advancing fairness, the way we customarily pursued it, and advancing truth. I was struck that in opinion polls in 2016, voters seemed to think that Donald

Trump and Hillary Clinton were both dissembling at similar rates. And, in fact, anybody who was covering the campaign could see that Hillary Clinton was about average in dissembling and spin, while Donald Trump was simply off the charts. And I thought that we were not conveying what we know. We perhaps were fair, but we weren't conveying the truth.

The next topic tended to revolve around the question, do we use the word "lie"? To lie suggests intention, that you know that what you are saying is false. There was some debate about whether Donald Trump knew he was lying or simply was indifferent to truth in policy. In any case, it seemed to me that we – meaning the media – dropped the ball in 2016. To me one of the lessons is that our paramount responsibility, even more than fairness, is to convey truth.

I think cable television in particular really blew it, and one of the reasons is that our business model in journalism is in pretty rough shape. We have been searching for an emerging business model. It is a little clearer in some parts of the news world, where

**I was deeply troubled in the fall of 2018 by the coverage of the caravan. The White House engaged in deceptive fear-mongering. And I thought that we, the media, allowed ourselves to be a channel for that misleading fear-mongering that demonized immigrants. . . . We let the president use us to manipulate the voters. We knew we were being manipulated. And we let it happen.**

a lot revolves around eyeballs and audience. Cable television in particular discovered that as long as the camera was on Donald Trump, whether as candidate or as president, then eyeballs followed. He was very good for the business model. In contrast, fact-checking was costly and did not attract eyeballs at the same rate.

After fumbling badly in 2016, then we had a really good 2017 and 2018, for the most part. But I was deeply troubled in the fall of 2018 by the coverage of the caravan. The White House engaged in deceptive fear-mongering. And I thought that we, the media, allowed ourselves to be a channel for that misleading fear-mongering that demonized immigrants. It was clear to just about everybody covering the story that the caravan was not a meaningful threat to the United States, but we, by giving credence to that coverage, let some viewers and people in our audience think that it was. We let the president use us to manipulate the voters. We knew we were being manipulated. And we let it happen.

The solutions are often more complicated than we acknowledge. People say, just don't cover the president's statements. I don't think that is a realistic option. When a president says something, even something bigoted, that is news and it should be covered. At this point, there are so many gatekeepers

out there that I don't think the media still function as a true gatekeeper. Maybe twenty years ago it was effective if the media didn't cover something. It is not anymore.

There is also some troubling research in social psychology that suggests that when you cover an argument, even if you are trying to disprove something, the cognitive effect on people is actually the same as saying that it happened. Nate Persily, a professor at Stanford, notes that the statements that "six million illegal votes were cast in 2016" and that "President Trump falsely claims that six million illegal votes were cast in 2016" are quite different. The latter one is true and the former false. But the cognitive effect of those two statements is the same, he says. Likewise, Facebook found that when it flagged certain content as "untrustworthy" it increased the traffic to those postings. That is really troubling for those of us who believe in an objective reality and in trying to hold politicians accountable for it.

It does seem that fact-checking is more effective if it comes from somebody who shares your own ideology. For instance, it is much more effective when Republicans fact-check President Trump than when a liberal *New York Times* columnist does so.

Still, if there's a tussle between fairness and truth in journalism today, this isn't a new problem and we can find help in how

our predecessors handled similar challenges. For example, McCarthyism is a classic case in which being fair, so to speak, in the traditional way, of quoting each side, didn't work. It conveyed to our audiences that the State Department was full of communists, which we all knew was untrue.

Edward R. Murrow famously challenged that claim, as did other journalists, and we essentially put truth over fairness. Something similar happened with the civil rights struggle. It didn't work to quote Bull Connor or George Wallace on one side, and Martin Luther King on the other and not come out and say what was actually happening on the streets of Birmingham and elsewhere. And so, over time, journalism migrated toward the truth, perhaps at the expense of fairness. Vietnam, I think, is a third example, in which we did the same thing. We had reporters based in Saigon, and it became increasingly clear that just covering the five o'clock follies and the press conferences was not conveying the truth. People began to put the accent on truth rather than on fairness. I think that should be a prism through which we look at challenges today. If we could do it with McCarthyism, with the civil rights struggle, and with Vietnam, then we can do it again. But it is going to take more work and more effort when we quote an official, whether that person is President Trump or somebody else, to resist letting him set the agenda. The fact-checking has to be an essential thread of the reporting, not just a postscript.

There is another related but somewhat different challenge that we in the media face. And that is that President Trump sucks the oxygen out of every issue we face. I'm about to make this trip to a place that cannot be named. When I finally get there, after having spent a lot of the *Times'* money and encountering some risk, my readership will plunge. Now I'm okay with that because I'm at a stage in my career where if my mom is

the only person who reads my column, then that's fine. But if I were a younger reporter, it would make no sense to cover some of these global humanitarian crises. Television in particular has found that you can send a camera crew out to Congo to cover what may be the most lethal conflict since World War II. Or to South Sudan, where four hundred thousand people have died in civil war over the last few years. And if you send a camera crew out to cover these stories, your audience will drop compared to a rival network that puts a Democrat and a Republican in a studio together and they yell at each other. That is the larger challenge that we face.

There was a debate in the international development community a few years ago. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave ABC News a grant to cover global poverty issues. This was very controversial within the development community because why should the Gates Foundation use money that could develop vaccines and instead give it to TV executives to do their jobs? But, in fact, ABC did some really fine reporting about maternal mortality, micronutrients, and malnutrition. It was excellent journalism that brought more attention to these issues, so the Gates Foundation went back to ABC News after a year and said that it wanted to renew the grant. But ABC declined to take the money. It had found that when it aired these important pieces of great journalism, viewers switched the channel. That is really dispiriting. If you care about these issues, it is really challenging to figure out how we can cover them. I think part of the answer may be philanthropy. As the news business becomes more difficult, everyone is paying more attention to audience and it is hard to make the argument internally that news organizations should cover these issues that will lose audience. The *Times*, fortunately, is somewhat different. Our business model allows us to

cover global issues. Unfortunately, I don't think that's true of cable television's business model.

The final provocation I want to toss out relates to this issue of undercovered stories, right here in America. It grows out of a book that my wife and I have been working on this year, which will come out within the next 30 or 40 years! I took a book leave from the *Times*, and the book leave unfortunately ended before the book did. The book looks at the struggles of working-class Americans. It is essentially about the disintegration of working-class communities in the United States, which is a classic undercovered news issue. The story is told partly through the prism of my hometown in rural Oregon, a town called Yamhill, where

### **If there's a tussle between fairness and truth in journalism today, this isn't a new problem and we can find help in how our predecessors handled similar challenges.**

originally the economy was dependent on a combination of agriculture, timber, and light manufacturing. The biggest local employer was a glove factory. In common with many such places, the economy improved over the span of about fifty years from the 1920s to the 1970s. There were a lot of people whose lives improved dramatically, partly because of government investments: the Homestead Act, Rural Electrification, and the G.I. Bill of Rights.

Yet in the 1980s, the jobs went away, and this community that I deeply love just took a body blow. I figured out that about a quarter of the kids who rode the school bus with me are now dead: from suicide, alcohol, drugs, reckless car accidents, hepatitis. One family we write about lived near us: five kids on the bus with me, and four of them are now

dead. I look at these kids and it just seems to me they didn't have a chance.

I think there is perhaps an analogy to be made with the Soviet Union in the 1980s, when the view from the Kremlin was that there was a real problem with alcoholism. They thought if we close the alcohol shops, we can solve this and it isn't going to affect the greatness of the Soviet Union. And in fact, alcoholism in the Soviet Union was a symptom of a much deeper malaise. I think that what is unfolding in the United States now is likewise a symptom of a much bigger problem, of an unraveling of the social fabric. One lesson to me is the significance not just of redistribution and of social programs, but also the paramount significance of jobs – and as I say that, I realize that we

hear plenty of warnings that tens of millions of jobs may be destroyed in the coming decades because of artificial intelligence and automation. The policy lessons are complicated and uncertain, but on balance I think we haven't paid enough attention to early childhood, to jobs, and to family. Lots more to say – so stay tuned for the book in 2019! Thanks so much for joining me on this dismal evening, and memories of this conversation will warm me up on my journey to the place that cannot be named! ■

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## Select Prizes and Awards to Members

**Anant Agarwal** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology; edX) was awarded the Yidan Prize for Education Development.

**C. David Allis** (The Rockefeller University) received the 2018 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award. He shares the prize with **Michael Grunstein** (University of California, Los Angeles).

**James P. Allison** (University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center) was awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He shares the prize with Tasuku Honjo (Kyoto University).

**Angelika Amon** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was awarded a 2019 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences.

**Frances Arnold** (California Institute of Technology) was awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize in Chemistry. She shares the prize with George P. Smith (University of Missouri) and Gregory P. Winter (MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology).

**James Arthur** (University of Toronto) was named a Companion of the Order of Canada.

**Jacqueline Barton** (California Institute of Technology) received the 2019 National Academy of Sciences Award in Chemical Sciences.

**Adriaan Bax** (National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases) is the recipient of the 2018 Robert A. Welch Award in Chemistry.

**Mary Beard** (University of Cambridge) was awarded a 2019 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Charles Bernstein** (University of Pennsylvania) was awarded the 2019 Bollingen Prize for American Poetry.

**Emery N. Brown** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Harvard Medical School; Massachusetts General Hospital) was awarded the 2018 Dickson Prize in Science, given by Carnegie Mellon University.

**Lonnie G. Bunch III** (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture) is the recipient of the Phi Beta Kappa Society's Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities.

**Jocelyn Bell Burnell** (University of Oxford; The Royal Society of Edinburgh) was awarded the 2018 Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics.

**Federico Capasso** (Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences) was awarded the 2018 Enrico Fermi Prize of the Italian Physical Society. He was also elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

**John Carlson** (Yale University) received the Arthur Kornberg and Paul Berg Lifetime Achievement Award in Biomedical Sciences.

**Jeff Cheeger** (New York University) was awarded the 2019 Leroy P. Steele Prize for Lifetime Achievement by the American Mathematical Society.

**Kenneth Chenault** (General Catalyst) is the recipient of a W.E.B. Du Bois Medal given by the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University.

**Ta-Nehisi Coates** (New York University) was awarded the 2018 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for nonfiction for *We Were Eight Years in Power*.

**J.M. Coetzee** (University of Adelaide, Australia) received the Mahindra Award for Global Distinction in the Humanities from Harvard University.

**Kenneth A. Dill** (Stony Brook University) was awarded the 2019 Max Delbrück Prize in Biological Physics by the American Physical Society.

**Rita Dove** (University of Virginia) received the 2018 Kenyon Review Award for Literary Achievement.

**Carol Dweck** (Stanford University) is the recipient of the 2018 SAGE-CASBS Award, given by Sage Publishing and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

**Felton Earls** (Harvard University) received the 2018 Leon Eisenberg Award from Boston Children's Hospital and the Frances Bonner Award from Massachusetts General Hospital.

**Deborah Estrin** (Cornell Tech) was awarded a 2018 MacArthur fellowship, by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

**Amy Finkelstein** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was awarded a 2018 MacArthur fellowship, by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

**David D. Ginty** (Harvard Medical School) was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

**Philip Glass** (New York, NY) was named a 2018 Kennedy Center honoree.

**Thelma Golden** (The Studio Museum in Harlem) was awarded a 2018 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Jeffrey I. Gordon** (Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis) received a 2018 Luminary Award from the Precision Medicine World Conference.

**Annette Gordon-Reed** (Harvard University) received the 2018 Ruth Ratner Miller Award for Excellence in American History.

**Jorie Graham** (Harvard University) was awarded the 2018 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry.

**Michael Grunstein** (University of California, Los Angeles) received the 2018 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award. He shares the prize with **C. David Allis** (The Rockefeller University).

**Agnes Gund** (Museum of Modern Art) was awarded a 2018 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Naomi Halas** (Rice University) was awarded the 2019 ACS Award in Colloid Chemistry by the American Chemical Society.

**Stephen C. Harrison** (Harvard Medical School) received the 48th Rosenstiel Award for Distinguished Work in Basic Medical Research.

**Timothy Heckman** (Johns Hopkins University) was awarded the 2018 Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.

**Larry V. Hedges** (Northwestern University) was awarded the Yidan Prize for Education Research.

**Stephen Heintz** (Rockefeller Brothers Fund) received the 2018 Distinguished Service Award from the Council on Foundations.

**Geoffrey Hinton** (University of Toronto) was named a Companion of the Order of Canada.

**Shirley Ann Jackson** (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) is the recipient of a W.E.B. Du Bois Medal given by the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University.

**Paula A. Johnson** (Wellesley College) received the 2018 Social Justice Award, given by Eastern Bank.

**Carl June** (University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine) is the recipient of the 2018 Albany Medical Center Prize in Medicine and Biomedical Research.

**Thomas Kailath** (Stanford University) received the Simon Ramo Founders Award, given by the National Academy of Engineering.

**Robert Kraft** (The Kraft Group) was awarded the 2019 Genesis Prize.

**Adrian R. Krainer** (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory) was awarded a 2019 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences.

**Kurt Lambeck** (Australian National University) was awarded the 2018 Australian Prime Minister's Prize for Science.

**Gregory Lawler** (University of Chicago) was awarded the 2019 Wolf Prize in Mathematics. He shares the prize with Jean-François Le Gall (Université Paris-Sud).

**Lewis Lockwood** (Harvard University) was elected an Honorary Member of the Verein Beethoven-Haus in Bonn.

**Trudy Mackay** (Clemson University) was awarded the 2018 Dawson Prize in Genetics.

**M. Cristina Marchetti** (University of California, Santa Barbara) was awarded the inaugural Leo P. Kadanoff Prize by the American Physical Society.

**Eve Marder** (Brandeis University) is the recipient of the 2019 National Academy of Sciences Award in the Neurosciences.

**N. Scott Momaday** (University of Arizona) is the recipient of the 2019 Ken Burns American Heritage Prize.

**Toshiko Mori** (Toshiko Mori Architect) was awarded the 2019 AIA/ACSA Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education.

**Toni Morrison** (Princeton University) received a Lifetime of Excellence in Fiction honor from the Center for Fiction.

**Venkatesh Narayanamurti** (Harvard University) received the Arthur M. Bueche Award, given by the National Academy of Engineering.

**William D. Nordhaus** (Yale University) was awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. He shares the prize with **Paul M. Romer** (New York University Leonard N. Stern School of Business).

**Sigrid Nunez** (New York, NY) received the 2018 National Book Award for the novel *The Friend*.

**Martha C. Nussbaum** (University of Chicago) was awarded the 2018 Berggruen Prize for Philosophy & Culture.

**Eugene Parker** (University of Chicago) was honored by NASA. The Parker Solar Probe is named after Dr. Parker and is the first NASA spacecraft that is named for a living person.

**James Peacock** (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) is among the recipients of the 2018 William Richardson Davie Award, given by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Board of Trustees.

**Nicholas A. Peppas** (University of Texas at Austin) is the recipient of the 2018 Distinguished Pharmaceutical Scientist Award, given by the American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists.

**Robert D. Putnam** (Harvard University) has been chosen as one of the 2018–2019 Faculty Fellows of the Hagler Institute for Advanced Study at Texas A&M University.

**Rebecca Richards-Kortum** (Rice University) was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

**Gene Robinson** (Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, University of Illinois) was elected to the National Academy of Medicine.

**Paul M. Romer** (New York University Leonard N. Stern School of Business) was awarded the 2018 Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. He shares the prize with **William D. Nordhaus** (Yale University).

**Ed Ruscha** (Los Angeles, CA) was awarded a 2019 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Helmut Schwarz** (Technische Universität Berlin) was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays by the Government of Japan.

**Richard Serra** (New York, NY) was awarded a 2018 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Thomas Shenk** (Princeton University) was elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

**Wayne Shorter** (University of California, Los Angeles) was named a 2018 Kennedy Center honoree.

**Lorna Simpson** (Lorna Simpson Studio) was awarded a 2019 J. Paul Getty Medal.

**Jorge Soberón** (University of Kansas) received the Distinguished Mexicans Award, presented by the Consulate of Mexico in Kansas City, Missouri.

**Joan Steitz** (Yale School of Medicine) is the recipient of the 2018 Lasker-Koshland Award for Special Achievement in Medical Science.

**Bryan Stevenson** (Equal Justice Initiative) is the recipient of a W.E.B. Du Bois Medal given by the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research at Harvard University.

**Natasha Trethewey** (Northwestern University) was named a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

**Darren Walker** (The Ford Foundation) received the 2018 Director's Award of the National Design Awards.

**David Walt** (Harvard Medical School; Brigham and Women's Hospital; Wyss Institute at Harvard) was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame.

**Isiah Warner** (Louisiana State University) received the Nature Award for Mentoring in Science from *Nature*.

**Warren M. Washington** (National Center for Atmospheric Research) was awarded the 2019 Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement. He shares the award with Michael E. Mann (Penn State University).

**Michael Waterman** (University of Southern California) was elected a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

**Xiaowei Zhuang** (Harvard University) was awarded a 2019 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences.

## New Appointments

**Nadine Aubry** (Northeastern University) has been named Provost and Senior Vice President at Tufts University.

**Bonnie Bassler** (Princeton University) has been appointed to the Board of Director of Kaleido Biosciences.

**James Berger** (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine) has been named Director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Basic Biomedical Sciences.

**Steven Berry** (Yale University) was named Director of the Tobin Center for Economic Policy at Yale.

**Martin Blaser** (New York University School of Medicine) was appointed to the Scientific Advisory Board of uBiome.

**Lawrence D. Bobo** (Harvard University) has been named Dean of Social Science at Harvard University.

**Thomas P. Campbell** (formerly, Metropolitan Museum of Art) was named Director of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco.

**Marvin H. Caruthers** (University of Colorado) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of ArcherDX, Inc.

**Fred Cohen** (Vida Ventures) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Intellia Therapeutics, Inc.

**Juan de Pablo** (University of Chicago) has been appointed Vice President for National Laboratories at the University of Chicago.

**Joseph DeRisi** (University of California, San Francisco) was appointed to the Board of Directors of uBiome.

**Michael J. Donoghue** (Yale University) has been named Director of the Yale Institute for Biospheric Studies.

**Gita Gopinath** (Harvard University) has been appointed Chief Economist at the International Monetary Fund.

**Glenn Hutchins** (North Island; Silver Lake) was elected Cochair of the Brookings Institution's Board of Trustees.

**Paul E. Jacobs** (XCOM) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Heal.

**Philip S. Khoury** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was elected to the Underwriters Laboratories' Board of Trustees.

**Elizabeth Magill** (Stanford Law School) was appointed Executive Vice President and Provost for the University of Virginia.

**Andrew Read** (Pennsylvania State University) has been named Director of the Huck Institutes of the Life Sciences at Pennsylvania State University.

**John W. Rogers, Jr.** (Ariel Investments) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of Nike, Inc.

**Esa-Pekka Salonen** (Philharmonia Orchestra) was named Music Director of the San Francisco Symphony.

**Richard Scheller** (23andMe) was appointed to the Board of Directors of Alector.

**Stuart Schreiber** (Broad Institute) was appointed to the Board of Directors of Jnana Therapeutics.

**David J. Skorton** (Smithsonian Institution) has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

**Katepalli R. Sreenivasan** (New York University) has been appointed an external scientific member of the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research.

**David Walt** (Harvard Medical School; Brigham and Women's Hospital; Wyss Institute at Harvard) joined the Scientific Advisory Board of NuProbe Global.

## Select Publications

### Poetry

**Charles Bernstein** (University of Pennsylvania). *Near/Miss*. University of Chicago Press, October 2018

**Terrance Hayes** (University of Pittsburgh). *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*. Penguin Books, June 2018

**A. E. Stallings** (Athens, Greece). *Like: Poems*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, September 2018

**Natasha Trethewey** (Northwestern University). *Monument: Poems New and Selected*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, November 2018

### Nonfiction

**Amnon Aharony** (Ben Gurion University of the Negev; Tel Aviv University) and **Ora Entin-Wohlman** (Ben Gurion University of the Negev; Tel Aviv University). *Introduction to Solid State Physics*. World Scientific Publishing, October 2018

**Kathryn A. Bard** (Boston University) and **Rodolfo Fattovich**† (University of Naples "L'Orientale"). *Seafaring Expeditions to Punt in the Middle Kingdom: Excavations at Mersa/Wadi Gawasis, Egypt*. Brill, October 2018

**David W. Blight** (Yale University). *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*. Simon & Schuster, October 2018

**Alan P. Boss** (Carnegie Institution for Science). *Universal Life: An Inside Look Behind the Race to Discover Life Beyond Earth*. Oxford University Press, January 2019

**David Cannadine** (The British Academy), ed. *Churchill: The Statesman as Artist*. Continuum, November 2018

**Andrew Delbanco** (Columbia University). *The War Before the War: Fugitive Slaves and the Struggle for America's Soul from the Revolution to the Civil War*. Penguin Press, November 2018

**Ora Entin-Wohlman** (Ben Gurion University of the Negev; Tel Aviv University) and **Amnon Aharony** (Ben Gurion University of the Negev; Tel Aviv University). *Introduction to Solid State Physics*. World Scientific Publishing, October 2018

**Sally Field** (Beverly Hill, CA). *In Pieces*. Grand Central Publishing, September 2018

**Paula Fredriksen** (Hebrew University). *When Christians Were Jews: The First Generation*. Yale University Press, October 2018

**John L. Hennessy** (Stanford University). *Leading Matters: Lessons from My Journey*. Stanford Business Books, September 2018

**Ha Jin** (Boston University). *The Banished Immortal: A Life of Li Bai*. Pantheon, January 2019

**Jill Lepore** (Harvard University; *The New Yorker*). *These Truths: A History of the United States*. W.W. Norton, September 2018

**Wendy Lesser** (*The Threepenny Review*). *Jerome Robbins: A Life in Dance*. Yale University Press, October 2018

**Lawrence Lessig** (Harvard Law School). *America, Compromised*. University of Chicago Press, November 2018

**David Levering Lewis** (New York University). *The Improbable Wendell Willkie: The Businessman Who Saved the Republican Party and His Country, and Conceived a New World Order*. Liveright, September 2018

**Toni Morrison** (Princeton University). *The Source of Self-Regard: Selected Essays, Speeches, and Meditations*. Knopf, February 2019

**Elaine Pagels** (Princeton University). *Why Religion? A Personal Story*. Ecco, November 2018

**Robert B. Pippin** (University of Chicago). *Hegel's Realm of Shadows: Logic as Metaphysics in "The Science of Logic"*. University of Chicago Press, November 2018

**Martin Rees** (University of Cambridge). *On the Future: Prospects for Humanity*. Princeton University Press, October 2018

**Dana L. Robert** (Boston University), ed. *African Christian Biography: Stories, Lives, and Challenges*. Cluster Publications, October 2018

**Jeffrey D. Sachs** (Columbia University). *A New Foreign Policy: Beyond American Exceptionalism*. Columbia University Press, October 2018

**Joan Wallach Scott** (Institute for Advanced Study). *Knowledge, Power, and Academic Freedom*. Columbia University Press, January 2019

**Sonia Sotomayor** (Supreme Court of the United States). *The Beloved World of Sonia Sotomayor*. Delacorte Books, September 2018

**Sonia Sotomayor** (Supreme Court of the United States). *Turning Page: My Life Story*. Philomel Books, September 2018

**Cass R. Sunstein** (Harvard Law School). *On Freedom*. Princeton University Press, February 2019

**Stephen Joel Trachtenberg** (George Washington University), **Gerald B. Kauvar** (George Washington University), and **E. Gordon Gee** (West Virginia University), eds. *Leading Colleges and Universities: Lessons from Higher Education Leaders*. Johns Hopkins University Press, April 2018

**Stephen M. Walt** (Harvard Kennedy School). *The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, October 2018

**Richard Wrangham** (Harvard University). *The Goodness Paradox: The Strange Relationship Between Virtue and Violence in Human Evolution*. Pantheon, January 2019

We invite all Fellows and International Honorary Members to send notices about their recent and forthcoming publications, scientific findings, exhibitions and performances, films and documentaries, and honors and prizes to [bulletin@amacad.org](mailto:bulletin@amacad.org). ■

† Deceased

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Wendy Barrows Photography page 47

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