

Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH
IN CONVERSATION WITH
DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN

STRENGTHENING THE
COLLEGE LEARNING
EXPERIENCE

Featuring Sandy Baum &
Michael S. McPherson

Women & Equality

WINTER 2020

March

- 6** Cambridge, MA
The Resisters: A Novel
Featuring: **Gish Jen**

- 13** Cambridge, MA
Awarding of the Emerson-Thoreau Medal to Margaret Atwood

- 17** Philadelphia, PA
Awarding of the Talcott Parsons Prize to William Labov

April

- 2** Washington, D.C.
The Internet and Engaged Citizenship
Featuring: **David Karpf**

- 10** Providence, RI
Members Luncheon

- 16** Cambridge, MA
The Practice of Democratic Citizenship

Details about these and other upcoming events are available at amacad.org/events.

The Academy's Local Program Committees and Representatives across the United States convene members to connect and explore topics of interest. Learn more online at amacad.org/local.



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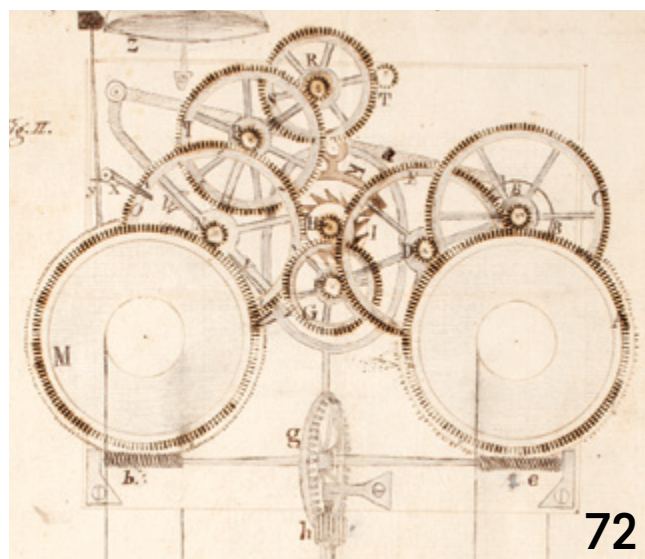
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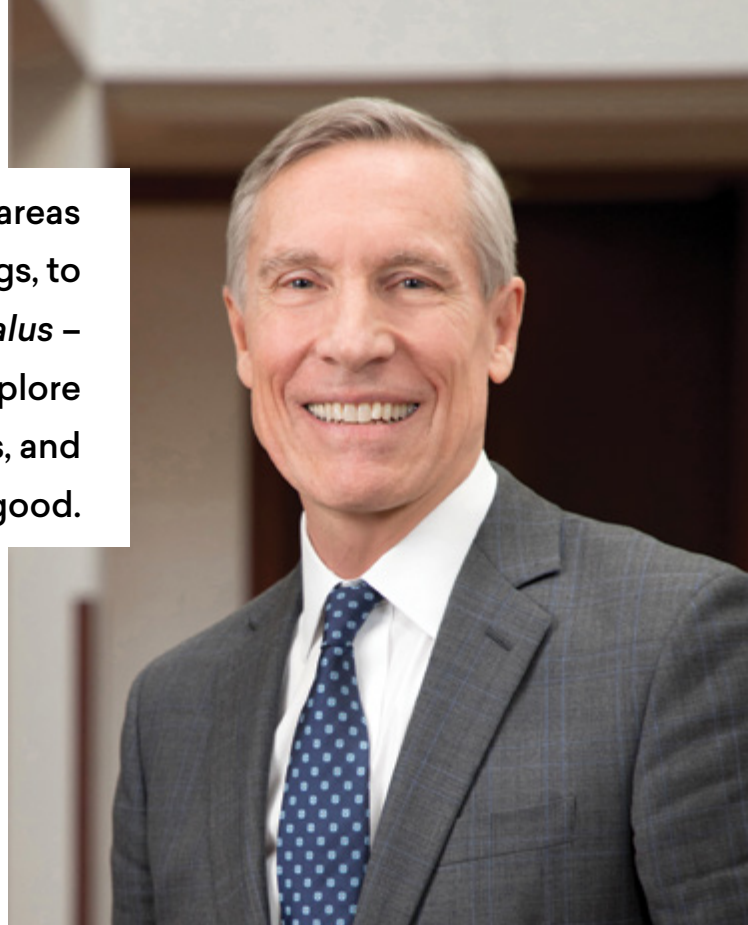
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ON THE COVER: Thousands gather on the grounds of the Iowa State Capitol for the “If You Can’t Hear Our Voices, Hear Our Vote” Women’s March on January 20, 2018. Photo by Phil Roeder.

“ Our focus on issues of inequality in many areas of the Academy’s work – from convenings, to commissions and projects, to issues of *Dædalus* – illustrates what the Academy does best: explore contemporary challenges, identify solutions, and offer ways forward to advance the public good.



From the President

Since the 1960s, issues of inequality have featured prominently in many areas of the Academy’s work. In 1966, under the leadership of Harvard professor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Academy convened a series of seminars on the various components of poverty. These interdisciplinary dialogues brought together scholars and government officials to discuss the cultural and economic roots of poverty – and the effects of education, racial discrimination, and segregation. Subsequent scholarship by the Academy has ranged from studies in the 1970s on ethnicity, urban school desegregation, and ethnic pluralism and immigration to the 2019 *Dædalus* volume on “Inequality as a Multidimensional Process.”

Inequality is a recurring theme in several of the Academy’s current projects: our Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship is exploring the factors that promote or discourage civic and political engagement; our project on Making Justice Accessible is addressing the challenge of providing legal services for low-income Americans; our Commission on the Arts is looking at the role the arts play in bridging the divides in our society; our Commission on the Future of Higher Education is examining equity and access in higher education; and our most recent issue of *Dædalus* on “Women & Equality” celebrates the accomplishments of women around the world toward equality, but is also a call to action, assessing the remaining

obstacles and pointing a way toward workable solutions. A summary of the *Dædalus* issue is included in this edition of the *Bulletin*.

Connected to the work of our higher education commission, Michael McPherson and Sandy Baum spoke at a gathering of Academy members, education scholars, and guests on the importance of improving college-level teaching. They discussed how students learn, how to develop and support effective teaching at the postsecondary level, and how to ensure that we are truly educating students, not just providing them with credentials. Their presentations are featured in this issue of the *Bulletin*. Also included in the pages that follow are many of the presentations from the Academy’s 2019 Induction program, which celebrated the expertise and excellence of our membership and highlighted the many ways in which the Academy and our members serve the nation and the world.

With this new issue of the *Bulletin*, we are unveiling a new look for the publication. We hope you like what you see. Our goal has been to develop and implement a design that is elegant, eye-catching, and engaging – and that illustrates what the Academy does best: explore contemporary challenges, identify solutions, and offer ways forward to advance the public good. We hope you enjoy the new look of the *Bulletin*.

David W. Oxtoby



Women & Equality


Remaining Obstacles & the Path Ahead

One hundred years ago, the United States ratified the Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote. The publication of the Winter 2020 issue of *Dædalus* “Women & Equality,” guest edited by Nannerl O. Keohane (Princeton University; Stanford University) and Frances McCall Rosenbluth (Yale University), at the centennial is a celebration of this victory for women’s rights.

Yet while the inclusion of women in the electorate was a momentous occasion, it notably left behind most Black women, and while all women have taken significant steps toward equality since then, there is still a long way to go. This collection of essays is therefore not only a celebration of the accomplishments of women around the world toward equality, it is also an invitation to further reflection and a call

to action, assessing remaining obstacles and pointing a way toward workable solutions.

In the second half of the twentieth century, few societal changes have been as profound in their implications as the changing role of women. The history of *Dædalus* offers evidence of the evolving conversations about feminism, the role of women in society, and the fight for equality. Prior to this volume, there



had only been two issues of *Dædalus* dedicated to the situation of women: “The Woman in America,” published in 1964, focused on the challenges and new opportunities of juggling career and marriage, and the 1987 issue “Learning about Women: Gender, Politics, and Power” centered not on “the woman” but *women*, recognizing that not all women are alike. In the former volume, the most prominent authors were male social scientists. The concepts of power and politics were effectively absent. In the latter collection, most of the authors were distinguished female social scientists and historians, and several essays were specifically about political themes.

The authors of the 2020 issue, the majority of whom are female academics, journalists, lawyers, and practitioners, present a kaleidoscopic picture of the complexities of the battle for equality today, addressing four themes: political participation, economic equality, changing social norms, and the path forward, while taking into account what has come to be known as “intersectionality,” the ways in which differences among human beings – including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identification – both divide and unite women in all societies today.

Yet feminists have long wrestled with how best to dismantle patriarchal oppression and build new structures. Audre Lorde famously warned us that “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.” In the same spirit, many radical feminists have argued that certain instruments of social change, such as political reform, coalition-building, and revolution, are part of the patriarchy’s toolkit and thus spoiled for the purpose of advancing the equality of women. The authors in this issue of *Dædalus*,

“Women & Equality” Winter 2020 Issue of *Dædalus*

Introduction

Nannerl O. Keohane & Frances McCall Rosenbluth

Women & the Vote

Dawn Langan Teele

Women’s Underrepresentation in the U.S. Congress

Kira Sanbonmatsu

Another Progressive’s Dilemma:

Immigration, the Radical Right & Threats to Gender Equality

Rafaela Dancygier

Donald Trump’s Gift to Feminism: The Resistance

Susan Chira

The Dilemma of Gender Equality:

How Labor Market Regulation Divides Women by Class

Torben Iversen, Frances McCall Rosenbluth & Øyvind Skorge

What’s Policy Got to Do with It?

Race, Gender & Economic Inequality in the United States

Jamila Michener & Margaret Teresa Brower

Kinship Structure & Women: Evidence from Economics

Sara Lowes

Gender Lens to the Future of Work

Anita I. Jivani

Fighting Violence Against Women: Laws, Norms & Challenges Ahead

Mala Htun & Francesca R. Jensenius

The New Competition in Multilateral Norm-Setting:

Transnational Feminists & the Illiberal Backlash

Anne Marie Goetz

Sexual Harassment of Women Leaders

Olle Folke, Johanna Rickne, Seiki Tanaka & Yasuka Tateishi

Cooperation & Conflict in the Patriarchal Labyrinth

Nancy Folbre

Equality

Catharine A. MacKinnon

Good Fellows: Men’s Role & Reason in the Fight for Gender Equality

Debora L. Spar

Women, Power & Leadership

Nannerl O. Keohane

however, proceed from the assumption that the goal should not be to “dismantle the master’s house,” but rather to renovate and open up that structure to create new pathways for women.

How can this be accomplished? The authors consider three factors that must come together to make such a venture possible. First, we need a clearer understanding of what “equality” means in this context to get a better sense of what is

worth striving for. Second, having defined what we mean by equality, we must determine the best way to approach the goal, including alliances with sympathetic men. And finally, we must consider female leadership and the deliberate use of power to attain our goals.

One of the great feminist theorists and activists, Simone de Beauvoir, reminded us that it is very hard to anticipate clearly things we have not seen: we should be wary “lest

our lack of imagination impoverish the future.” Beauvoir was convinced that we can be optimistic about the prospects for “the free woman” who is “just being born.” Although “women’s possibilities” have in the past too often “been stifled and lost to humanity,” it is in the interest of all of us that each woman should be “left to take her own chances” and forge her own path. This ringing peroration might serve as a watchword for this volume.

This collection of essays is not only a celebration of the accomplishments of women around the world toward equality, it is also an invitation to further reflection and a call to action, assessing remaining obstacles and pointing a way toward workable solutions.



“Women & Equality” is published open access with generous support from Mathea Falco. All essays are freely available online at www.amacad.org/daedalus. For questions and more information, please contact daedalus@amacad.org.





Humanities Indicators Project

Explores the Public Humanities

While much of the discussion about the state of the humanities tends to focus on the declining number of students majoring in the humanities at four-year colleges and universities, the health of the field relies on a much wider array of practices, such as reading habits and visits to libraries, historic sites, and museums. Over the past several months, the American Academy's Humanities Indicators project has been exploring this wider frame of humanities activity by compiling data from federal sources and conducting the first national survey about the health of the field.

To the extent that the humanities are still closely tied to reading,

recent trends in Americans' reading habits provide troubling evidence for the future state of the field. In August 2019, the Humanities Indicators reported that the percentage of U.S. adults who read at least one book for pleasure in the previous year fell below 53 percent in 2017 – the lowest level since the National Endowment for the Arts started asking the question in 1992. The greatest decreases occurred among adults under the age of fifty-five.

A separate survey, which tracks how people spend their leisure time, highlights a similar trend. According to the American Time Use Survey, in 2018, the public spent an average of less than sixteen minutes per day reading for personal interest – a

decline of six minutes per day since 2003 (the first year with comparable data). In comparison, Americans spent an average of almost three hours per day watching television in 2018 (which was largely unchanged over the prior decade), and twenty-eight minutes playing games and using computers for leisure (which has risen as reading has declined). Perhaps more alarming, the trend among younger Americans (ages fifteen to forty-four) was even more stark, with an average of less than ten minutes per day spent reading for personal interest.

While the trends are troubling for anyone who cares about Americans' reading habits, the survey shows a substantial share of American

adults who reported reading at least one type of humanistic text in the previous year. As of 2017, approximately 40 percent of U.S. adults had read at least one work of literature, history, biography, or religion and spirituality in the previous year. (Only 12 percent reported reading poetry, though that was a modest increase from the 2013 survey.)

For most types of reading material (excluding religious and spiritual texts), Americans with more formal education had higher reading rates. More than 55 percent of Americans with at least a bachelor's degree had read a novel or short story in the past year, and approximately half had read a work of history. In comparison, fewer than 35 percent of Americans with only a high school education had read either of those types of work, though 43 percent had read a work on religion or spirituality (which was essentially

the same percentage as among those with college degrees).

While these findings do not provide a deeper understanding about how many of these works Americans have read, much less the quality of the texts or the depth of their reading, they do offer a baseline for understanding the public's interest in particular subjects.

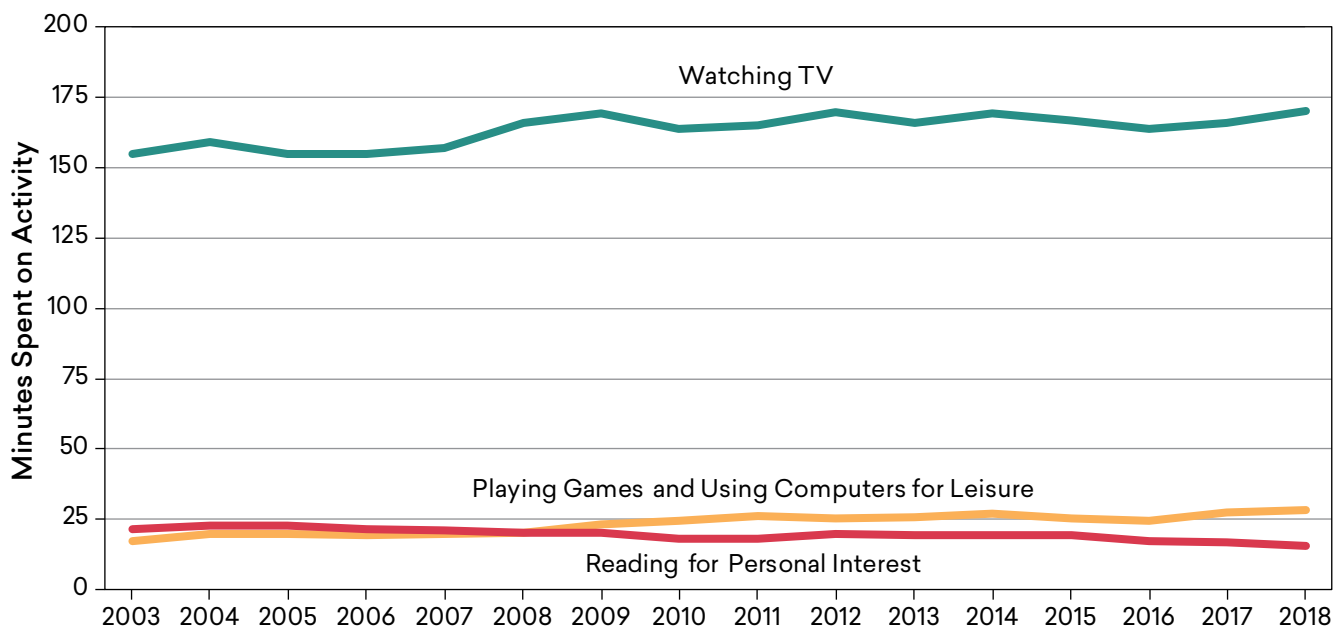
Because reading is only one way to engage with humanities content (though it does serve as a lynchpin for academic study in the field), the Indicators also tracks engagement with other institutions that provide connections to the field, such as visits to historic sites, museums, and libraries.

For example, the Indicators recently reported that as of 2017, 28 percent of American adults reported visiting a historic site in the previous year – an increase of 4.4 percentage points from the 2012 survey.

This marked the first increase after a decades-long downward trend (extending back to 1982), though visitation rates remain below the level observed in 2002. Unlike the trend in reading, visitation rates to historic sites have been declining in most age cohorts, but visits from older Americans (ages sixty-five and older) have been rising in recent years – a trend some credit to the accommodations implemented following the Americans with Disabilities Act. The convergence of these two trends (declining rates among younger Americans, rising rates among those aged sixty-five and older) led to a flattening out of the differences between the various age cohorts by 2017.

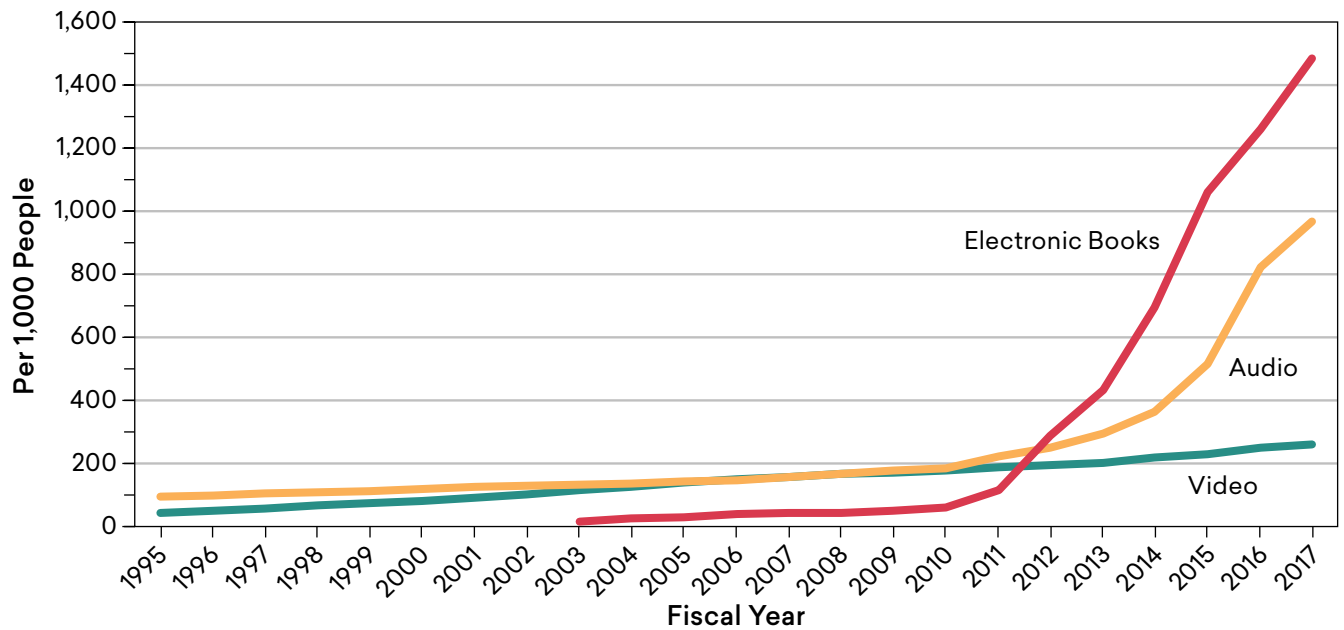
The trend in visitation rates for museums and art galleries followed a similar trajectory, with approximately 24 percent of the U.S. adult population reporting they had gone

Average Minutes per Day Americans Fifteen Years and Older Engaged in Selected Leisure Activities, 2003–2018



Source: American Time Use Survey. Tabulations by the Humanities Indicators.

Nonprint Public Library Holdings per One Thousand People, by Type, Fiscal Years 1995–2017



Source: Public Libraries Survey (1995–2005) and Public Libraries in the United States Survey (2006–2017).
Tabulations by the Humanities Indicators.

at least once to a museum or art gallery in the year prior to 2017. These data represent an increase of almost three percentage points from the nadir in 2012, and reversed a trend going back to 1992. Similar to the trend in historic sites, visitation rates to museums and art galleries are converging among Americans of various ages.

Unlike the trend in visits to historic sites and museums, a separate report from the Humanities Indicators shows that visits to libraries were still falling in 2017. After rising steadily for almost a decade and a half, per capita visits to libraries fell 21 percent from 2009 to 2017, and are now approaching a level last seen in the mid-1990s. Alongside the trend in visits, the circulation of library items has fallen by more than 12 percent over the past decade, despite substantial increases in the number of electronic and audio books.

Even with the recent uptick in visits to historic sites and museums, members of the field often seem to fit these findings into a larger pattern of decline for the humanities overall – especially when seen in light of the falling numbers of college majors. But the evidence linking these trends is tenuous at best. To help understand the connections, the Indicators recently administered a large national survey to explore the nature and extent of the public’s involvement in humanities-related activities and what they think about the field.

With funding from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Indicators staff developed a wide-ranging survey on the humanities and in fall 2019 administered it in both English and Spanish through a survey panel at NORC at the University of Chicago. The survey received responses from more than five thousand Americans.

The survey explores how Americans engage with the humanities in person and online; the extent of their early exposure to the humanities; the role of the humanities in their work lives; the degree to which they value humanities education; and their perception of how the humanities shape individuals’ lives, civic life, and the nation’s economic fortunes. In the coming months, the Indicators staff will be looking for patterns and connections between the various areas of humanities activity and more general attitudes about the humanities. The results will be released in fall 2020.



For questions about the survey or about other aspects of the Humanities Indicators, please contact Robert Townsend, codirector of the project, at rtownsend@amacad.org.



The World Language Advancement and Readiness Act became the first piece of federal legislation in a generation that addressed the language needs of the nation. This act is the most high-profile achievement of the Language Commission so far.

New Federal Program Among Far-Ranging Achievements of the **Commission on Language Learning**

When President Donald Trump signed the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in December 2019, the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act became the first piece of federal legislation in a generation that addressed the language needs of the nation.

This act is the most high-profile achievement of the Academy's Commission on Language Learning since it released its final report in 2017. That report, *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for*

the 21st Century, highlights the importance of language education for business, science and technology, international relations, and civic life. The Commission, requested by Congress, was chaired by Paul LeClerc, director of Columbia Global Centers-Paris, former president and CEO of the New York Public Library, and former president of Hunter College. It included eighteen leaders from academia, business, and government affairs.

During the public release of the report in the House of

Representatives, Congressman David Price (D-North Carolina) introduced the World Language Advancement and Readiness Act. The bill – cosigned by Congressmen Don Young (R-Alaska), Leonard Lance (R-New Jersey), and thirteen of their colleagues – was written in response to several of the recommendations in the *America's Languages* report. It proposed three-year competitive grants supporting local and state school districts trying to establish, improve, or expand innovative programs in world language

learning. The bill was enacted as an amendment to the 2020 NDAA.

As the Commission members wrote in their report, and as the enacted legislation attests, “[T]here is an emerging consensus among leaders in education and science, business and government, international relations and the military, and community organizations and nonprofits that English is critical but not sufficient to meet the nation’s future needs, and that a greater public emphasis on language education would yield results far greater than any initial financial investments.” The World Language Advancement and Readiness Act, enacted in the U.S. Department of Defense, is a critical initial investment.

But this bill is only one of many important results of the *America’s Languages* report. The federal impact of the report has been particularly significant. In addition to introducing the new legislation, Representatives Price and Young created the America’s Languages Caucus in the House of Representatives, a bipartisan group of sixteen Members and growing who seek to:

- Raise awareness about the importance of world language learning and international education, particularly as it relates to our nation’s economic and national security;
- Ensure adequate resources are directed toward the study of world language learning; and
- Focus on improving access for students and educators who wish to participate in these fields of study, including world languages, Native American languages, and English for English learners.

Representative Price also organized a “Dear Colleague” letter, ultimately signed by 65 Members of Congress, which relied on *America’s Languages* in its defense of federal funding for Title VI education

programs and Fulbright-Hays Fellowships. Senator Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii) organized a similar letter signed by 23 Senators.

The report was influential in the recent debates to reauthorize the Esther Martinez Native American Languages Programs Reauthorization Act, which passed both Houses unanimously and was signed by President Trump in late December 2019. And it has been cited as a justification for four bills awaiting the future reauthorization of the Higher Education Act: the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Act, the Bilingual Education Seal and Teaching (BEST) Act, the Reaching America’s English Learners Act, and the Supporting Providers of English Language Learning (SPELL) Act.

Inspired by the Academy report, the Senate Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Bill in September 2017 included a request for new and increased funding for Native American language immersion programs and called for a feasibility study for the creation of a new, national Native American Languages Center as a clearinghouse for best practices, curricula, and expertise in the preservation of native languages. Although those initiatives have been delayed, they continue to have support in the Senate and are expected to be reintroduced in future committee debates.

Media attention for the report has included features in professional journals for language teachers and op-eds by former Ambassador and Commission member Karl Eikenberry, published in *Inside Higher Ed*, and by former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, printed in the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

To continue this outreach, the Academy and its partners have organized the America’s Languages Working Group – which includes representatives of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign

Languages, the Modern Language Association, the American Councils for International Education, the Joint National Committee for Languages, the Aspen Institute, and the National Humanities Alliance, among others – to plan a coordinated follow-up effort that highlights the Commission’s report, including

- The creation of a petition, “Bridging America’s Language Gap,” now signed by almost two hundred American businesses, NGOs, and others, affirming the importance of language education and the Commission’s recommendations;
- The creation of an online resource collecting promising innovations in language education from around the country; and
- Efforts to encourage or enact specific recommendations of the *America’s Languages* report.

In the coming year, the Working Group will build a pilot of the online resource. At the same time, the American Academy will work with the British Academy and scholarly academies in Australia, New Zealand, and Ireland to draft and then sign a joint statement on the importance of language education in the twenty-first century, even among the nations that enjoy a great advantage of having English serve as the international language of business and diplomacy.

The Academy is grateful for funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Henry Luce Foundation, and the Longview Foundation for supporting in part the activities of the Commission and the America’s Languages Working Group.



More information about the Commission on Language Learning is available at www.amacad.org/project/language-learning.

A photograph of Mark Bradford, an African American man with glasses, wearing a white jacket with a green collar and a Dickies patch. He is gesturing with his hands while standing in front of a large, vibrant, abstract artwork composed of many small, colorful fragments. The text "Mark Bradford" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Mark Bradford

Mark Bradford is an artist and Co-Founder of Art + Practice. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.



A Celebration of the Arts and Humanities

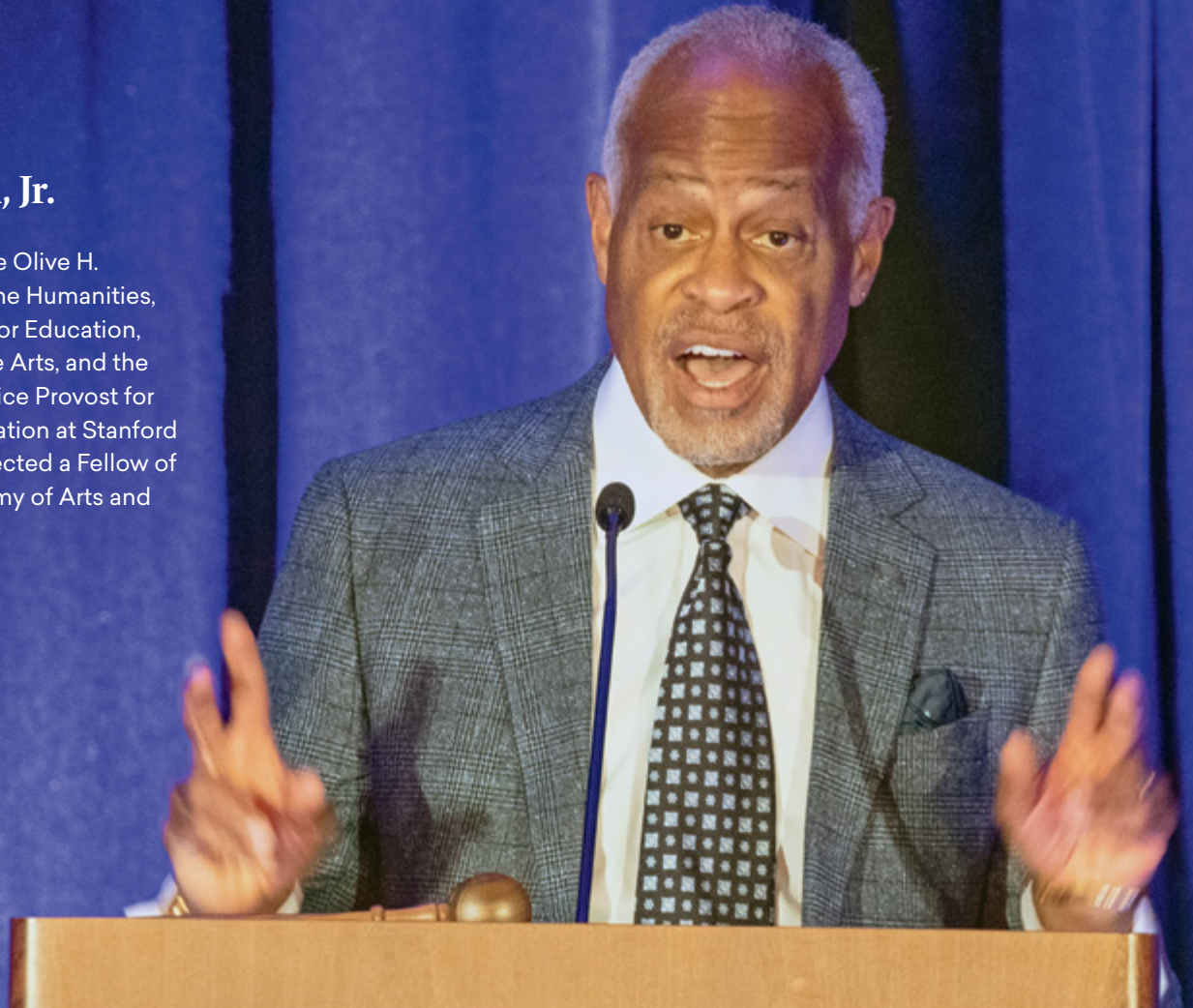
From visual arts to jazz, theater to poetry, the opening program of the Academy's 2019 Induction weekend celebrated the arts and humanities. The event included a video featuring artist **Mark Bradford**; a performance by composer, pianist, and singer/songwriter **Patricia Barber**; remarks about the power and importance of the performing arts from theater director and scholar **Harry J. Elam, Jr.**; a reading by playwright **Donald Margulies** from his play *Sight Unseen*; and remarks and readings by poet, writer, and foundation leader **Elizabeth Alexander**. Edited transcripts of several of the presentations follow.

2082nd Stated Meeting | October 11, 2019 | Cambridge, MA

Portrait of Mark Bradford
Photo: Sim Canetty-Clarke
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Harry J. Elam, Jr.

Harry J. Elam, Jr. is the Olive H. Palmer Professor in the Humanities, Senior Vice Provost for Education, Vice President for the Arts, and the Freeman-Thornton Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at Stanford University. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.



When I came to Stanford some twenty-eight years ago, I found the university in the midst of a severe budget crisis: \$40 million needed to be lopped off of the operating budget. One easy way to alleviate some of this deep deficit, the administration assumed, was to eliminate unnecessary departments and programs. The Department of Food Agriculture went away, as the administration decided that food was no longer intellectually relevant. A similar fate threatened my department, the Drama Department, and the Committee on Black Performing Arts, which I had also come to direct. Why was the Drama Department expendable? Because some members of the faculty and administration looked to our peers – Harvard and Oxford – and saw that they did not have theater departments and concluded, in their wisdom, so why should Stanford? More fundamentally, their thinking was that theater was recreational and not intellectual, that

there could be nothing serious in a play – nothing of significance in either the making, direction, performance, or study of theater. Their budget priorities laid bare this bias. And so I asked myself, what was I doing here? Why had I ever come to Stanford? The answer to my question soon came as the Drama Department banded together as one and used the drama and theatrics of our predicament to our own advantage. I remember I wore a big “Drama Matters” button on my suit coat to a new faculty reception at the house of then President Donald Kennedy, and as he shook my hand, I tried to position my boutonniere in his sight line, just so he could see it. Our department staged rallies and performances that dramatized our situation; we wrote letters and op-eds; we called alumni and colleagues from other institutions: we summoned all our resources in our defense. At the same time, one of my Stanford colleagues, Anna Deavere Smith, gained national renown for her

ground-breaking work in one-person shows and for her celebrated play, *Fires in the Mirror*. Her success helped raise the profile and esteem of the department as a whole. More than that, her work powerfully demonstrated how art might intervene into civic dialogue, into moments of unrest and distress in ways that offered not simply illumination but ways forward. In that sense, drama saved drama. And we are still here!

Whenever there is a cause of social need,
one of the ways people seek redress or
voice their unrest is to dramatize their
cause, to catch the conscience of those
in charge, to put on a play. ”

And yet, casually dismissive assumptions about scholarly work in theater and performance studies still emerge not just during budget or hiring but also in everyday social interactions: At a party at the home of the dean of humanities and sciences at the end of my tenure as department chair, a woman came over and asked me, “What do you chair?” When I responded Drama, she exclaimed, “What fun!” I asked about her own department and she responded, “My husband chairs Statistics.” “Oh, what fun!” I exclaimed. “No,” exasperated she corrected me. “Statistics isn’t fun; it’s serious work!” In innumerable academic settings, even after my professional bio has been shared and even as my colleagues get questions about their own scholarship, I get asked tabloid-level queries about *what* such and such actor was wearing on the red carpet or asked for advice from parents convinced their kindergartener is an acting prodigy.

So, this is where we in theater scholarship often find ourselves: boxed into spaces where the seriousness and rigor of play, of performance, of theater are undervalued; where the concept of scholarship in theater or the humanities more generally is suspect. Part of what we must continually do, then, is educate others to what we do and why it matters. What I mean here is that we need not just be defensive nor merely assert the value of our profession in *reaction* to the naive comments or misunderstandings of others. Rather, I think that strategic advocacy means developing calculated and deliberate tactics that draw on the power of theater itself to foreground the importance

of performance and of theater and performance scholarship.

My first book, *Taking It to the Streets: The Social Protest Theater of Luis Valdez and Amiri Baraka*, analyzes Black and Chicano protest theater in the 1960s and 1970s. My interest in the cross-cultural commonalities of social protest theater, of Black and Chicano performances in particular, began in graduate school. Previously growing up in segregated Boston, I was well familiar with Black revolutionary dramas of the 1960s. I performed in a troupe of Black teenagers we called “The Family.” Then as a graduate student I found compelling parallels between Black revolutionary theater and Chicano social protest theater. At that time, such comparative analysis was particularly underexplored and even discouraged. A continued commitment to cross-cultural analysis and a profound interest in how theater functions as an agent for social change still drive me today. For, invariably, whenever there is a cause of social need, one of the ways people seek redress or voice their unrest is to dramatize their cause, to catch the conscience of those in charge, to put on a play. How does theater then achieve social efficacy or function as a form of advocacy? What is it about a play that can make people think and possibly even move them to act? These are issues that have motivated my further explorations of the work of playwrights Suzan-Lori Parks, Cherrie Moraga, Tarell McCraney, Lynn Nottage, and August Wilson.

In the process of writing my second book on Wilson and his twentieth-century cycle of plays, *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson*, I had the occasion to meet with the late, great Wilson at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles. We met during the break between the Sunday matinee and the evening performance of *King Hedley II*. We had to sit outside on the plaza, because as you may know, he chain-smoked and, of course, they would not allow smoking in the theater. We talked for three and a half hours straight that day. He truly represented what my grandfather would have called a *race man*. Wilson believed that as a Black artist he owed a responsibility to the history of African-American struggle and survival. Accordingly, he plotted a path of strategic advocacy in which he pointedly critiqued the social and economic structures that limit Black excellence; promoted institutions that could nurture Black theatrical practice; professed the need for African Americans to claim with pride the complexity of our stories; prompted African Americans to move through and with the psychological traumas of the past that still persist.

Within my book I critically engage Wilson's work and contextualize his proclamations of social advocacy in relation to earlier Black theater activist-artist-intellectuals such as W.E.B DuBois and Amiri Baraka. I consider his representations of gender through such theorists as bell hooks, Angela Davis, and Saidya Hartman. I also put Wilson's depictions of the Africanness in African-American life in conversation with the work of Nigerian Nobel Prize-winning playwright Wole Soyinka's theorization of Yoruban drama. Through this analysis I position Wilson not as a racial separatist but as a strategist countering the lens of the dominant culture.

Sitting that day outside of the Mark Taper Forum, Wilson existed at once inside and outside the regional theater system and its hegemonic control. Significantly, as the most produced playwright in the United States during the 1990s as well as the first decade of the twenty-first century, Wilson's popularity extended across the color line. So, part of my challenge involved relating his race politics to his cross-cultural esteem as arguably the most significant American playwright of the contemporary period.

Throughout history, art and literature have functioned not just as entertainment but as social forces capable of affecting and effecting change.

Across time and across the globe, communities and nations have banned and burned books, imprisoned novelists, and executed actors not simply because they questioned a particular work's "pleasurable" qualities but because they feared the substantive potential of art and literature to influence minds and threaten their preferred social order. Surely one of the many things that the arts and humanities most broadly can "do" is energize social change and have social consequence. That is part of its power – and for some, its existential threat.

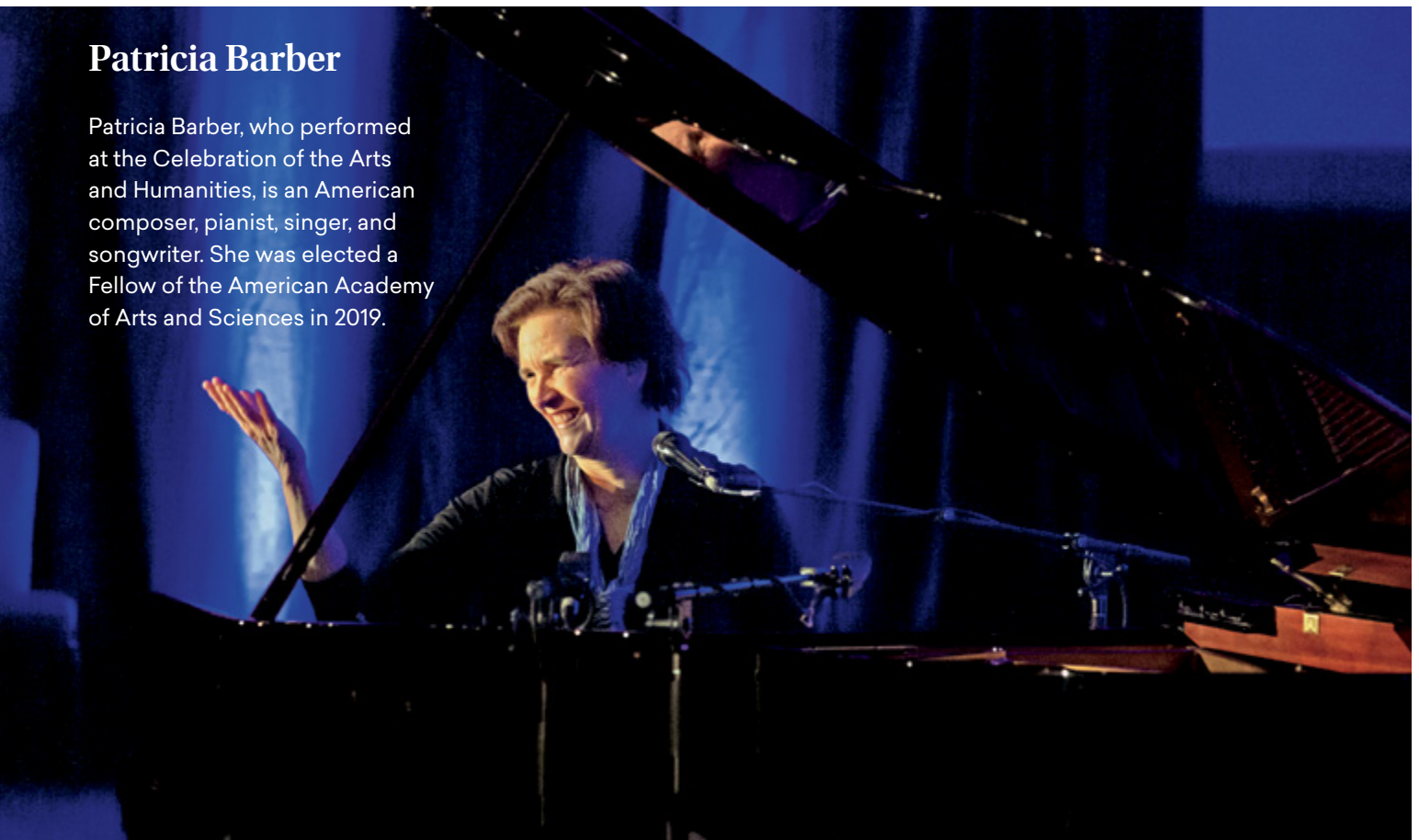
In my view, strategic advocacy puts theater and performance studies not as antithetical but as central to the crises in academia and in our world today. Theater's collaborative ethos, the yoking of practice *and* theory, its valuing of *both* process and "end-product," and the crossing of political camps and ethnic boundaries that so often characterizes theater practice and scholarly inquiry historically have and can today serve as a model. For unlike political stalemates, theater folks *get things done; the show after all must go on.*

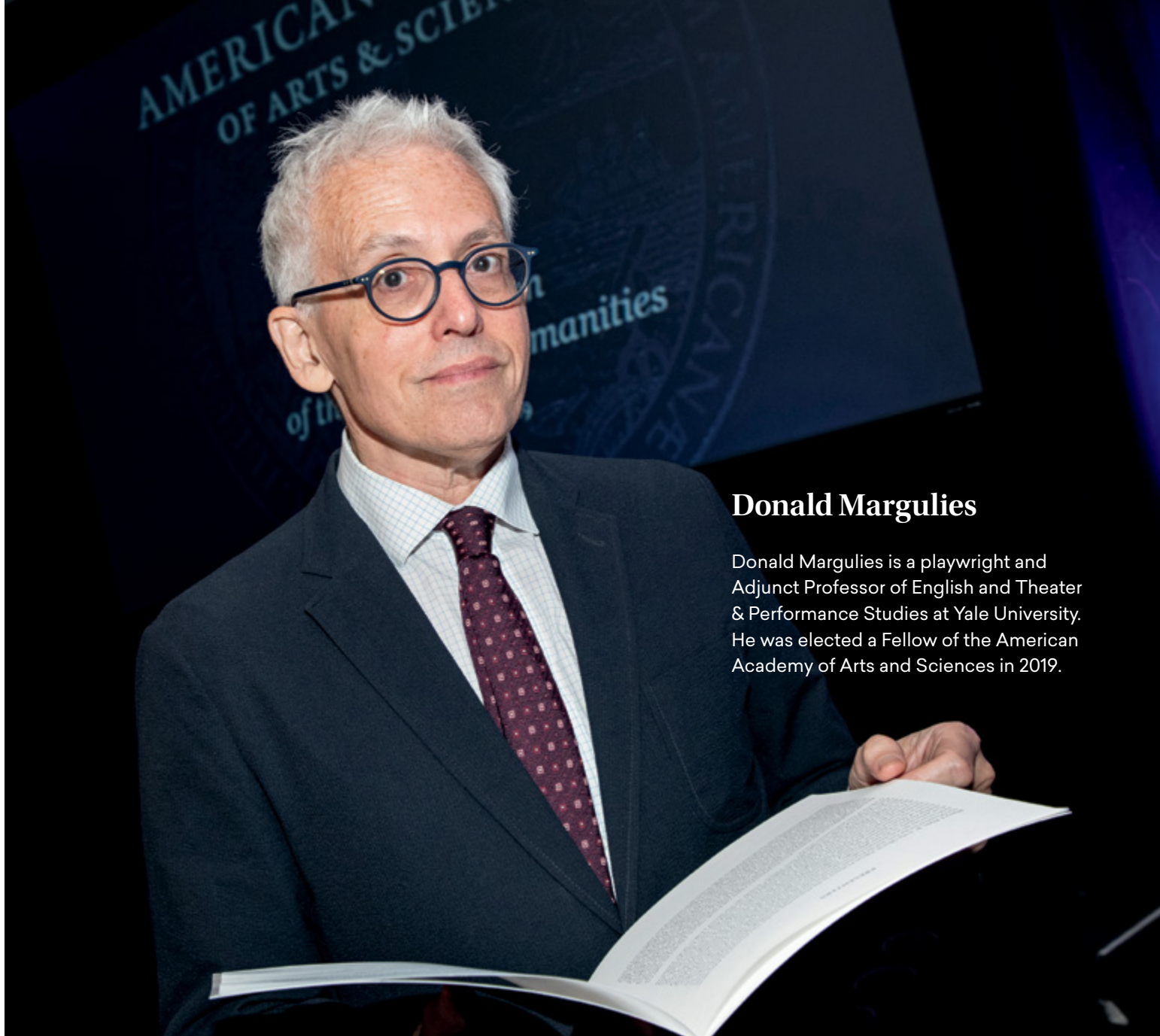
So, we need not ask or petition for our legitimacy. Rather we in our very nature, in our work, in our calling, provide a crucial key to the answers.

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Patricia Barber

Patricia Barber, who performed at the Celebration of the Arts and Humanities, is an American composer, pianist, singer, and songwriter. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.





Donald Margulies

Donald Margulies is a playwright and Adjunct Professor of English and Theater & Performance Studies at Yale University. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.

What I am going to read to you is an excerpt from my breakthrough play *Sight Unseen*, which I wrote a long time ago, when I was a young man. Like the playwright who created him, Jonathan Waxman is a Jewish artist in his thirties, a figurative painter. I began writing the play in the late eighties, early nineties, when the New York art market was exploding. It was a patently autobiographical drama about a struggling artist; consequently, it was not very interesting.

I set the play aside. When I revisited it a few months later, I gained a fresh perspective. I realized that I needed to make the autobiographical figure the *not me*; in other words, someone who may share some of my biography but who is an

alternate me. Instead of Jonathan Waxman being the unknown artist I was at the time, he would be a superstar artist at the pinnacle of his success, something I had not yet experienced. That epiphany galvanized the play that became *Sight Unseen*, which, when it was first produced in 1991, proved to be that elusive breakthrough.

In this scene, Waxman is in a London art gallery for the opening of a retrospective exhibit of his work. While in the UK, days prior to this occasion, he reconnected with the muse of his college years, a reunion that went less than smoothly; the reverberations of that visit provide the subtext. As the retrospective unfolds, Waxman, the Jewish artist from Brooklyn, is interviewed by a sleek, smart German art critic.

A READING: FROM SIGHT UNSEEN

GRETE: You just said your definition of good art is “art which effectively reflects the truth.” Do you think it is your responsibility as an artist to always tell the truth?

JONATHAN: In my work? Yes.

GRETE: And in your personal life?

JONATHAN: My personal life is my personal life. Look, if my work tells the truth, then I think people are compelled, they *have* to deal with it, they can’t not. I like to shake ‘em up a little, I admit it. People see my stuff at a gallery, a museum, and the work *competes* for their attention. They’re preoccupied, overstimulated. All I can hope is maybe – *maybe* – one night, one of my images’ll find its way into their unconscious and color their dreams. Who knows? Maybe it’ll change their perception of something forever. I mean, in art, as in life, we tend to affect people in ways we can’t always see. You can’t possibly know what that other person has taken away with her. You can’t see it. And just ‘cause you can’t see it doesn’t mean it didn’t happen.

GRETE: Hm. Getting back to “good art . . .”

JONATHAN: Okay, let me ask you something: When *we* talk about good art, what are we talking about? Stuff we like? Stuff our friends make? We’re talking about value judgments. Most people, do you think most people, most Americans – my *father* – do you think most people have any idea what makes good art? . . . The little old lady who paints flowers and pussycats at the YMCA – and *dazzles* her friends, I’m sure – I mean, does that little old lady make good art? I mean, why not?, her cat looks just *like* that. I’m not putting her down; I think it’s great she’s got a hobby. But is what she does good art? See, most people . . . I remember, years ago, the big van Gogh show at the Met?, in New York? The place was packed. Like Yankee Stadium. Buses emptied out from all over; Jersey, Westchester. All kinds of people. The masses. Average middle-class people. Like they were coming into the city for a matinee and lunch at Mama Leone’s. Only this was Art. Art with a capital A had come to the shopping-mall generation and Vincent was the chosen icon. Now, I have nothing against van Gogh. Better him than people lining up to see the kids with the

big eyes. But as I braved that exhibit – and it was rough going, believe me – I couldn’t help but think of Kirk Douglas. Kirk Douglas should’ve gotten a cut of the house.

See, there’s this Hollywood packaging of the artist that gets me. The packaging of the mystique. Poor, tragic Vincent: He cut off his ear ‘cause he was so misunderstood but still he painted all these pretty pictures. So ten bodies deep they lined up in front of the paintings. More out of solidarity for Vincent (or Kirk) than out of any kind of love or passion for “good art.” Hell, some art lovers were in such a hurry to get to the postcards and prints and souvenir place mats, they strode past the paintings and skipped the show entirely! Who can blame them? You couldn’t *experience* the paintings anyway, not like that. You couldn’t *see anything*. The art was just a backdrop for the *real* show that was happening. In the gift shop! . . .

Now, you got to admit there’s something really strange about all this, this kind of *frenzy* for art. I mean, what is this thing called art? What’s it for? Why have people historically drunk themselves to death over the creation of it, or been thrown in jail, or whatever? I mean, how does it serve the masses? *Can* it serve the – I ask myself these questions all the time. Every painting I do is another attempt to come up with some answers. The people who crowded the Met to look at sunflowers, I mean, why *did* they? ‘Cause they *thought* they should. ‘Cause they thought they were somehow enriching their lives. Why? ‘Cause the *media* told them so!

GRETE: You seem to have such contempt –

JONATHAN: Not contempt; you’re confusing criticism with contempt.

GRETE: – for the very same people and the very same system that has made you what you are today.

JONATHAN: What I am today? What *am* I today? I just got here. People like *you* suddenly care what I have to say.

GRETE: I *do* care.

JONATHAN: I know you do. It cracks me up that you do; it amuses me. You know, up till like eight or nine years ago, let’s not forget, I was painting *apartments* for a living. Apartments. Walls. Rooms. I was good at it, too. I’d lose myself all day while I painted moldings, then

I'd go home and do my *own* painting all night. A good, simple, hardworking life. Then, like I said, like nine years ago, my world started getting bigger. I couldn't even retrace the steps; I can't remember how it happened. All I know is I met certain people and got a gallery and a show and the public started to discover my work. The night of my first opening, it's like these strangers witnessed a birth, like the work had no life before they laid eyes on it. We know that's ridiculous, of course, but this is what happens when you take your art out of your little room and present it to the public: It's not yours anymore, it's *theirs*, theirs to see with their own eyes. And, for each person who sees your work for the first time, you're discovered all over again. That begins to take its toll. You can't be everybody's discovery. That gets to be very demanding. Who *are* these people who are suddenly throwing money at you and telling you how wonderful and talented you are? What do *they* know? You begin to believe them. They begin to want things from you. They begin to expect things. The work loses its importance; the importance is on "Waxman."

GRETE: Would you prefer to have remained an outsider?

JONATHAN: Preferred? No. It's cold and lonely on the outside.

GRETE: And yet being cozy on the inside –

JONATHAN: "Cozy"?

GRETE: – seems to make you uncomfortable as well. Is this not an illustration of that Jewish joke?

JONATHAN: What Jewish joke?

GRETE: Forgive my paraphrase: not wanting to be a member of a club that would also have you as a member?

JONATHAN: That's not a Jewish joke, that's Groucho Marx.

GRETE: Groucho Marx, then. Is he not Jewish?

JONATHAN: Yeah, so?

GRETE: Well, does not that joke apply to the problem Jews face in the twentieth century?

JONATHAN: What problem is that?

GRETE: The problem of being on the inside while choosing to see themselves as outsiders? –

JONATHAN: Is that a Jewish problem?

GRETE: – even when they are very much on the inside?

JONATHAN: "Very much on the inside"? What is this?

GRETE: Perhaps I am not expressing myself well.

JONATHAN: No, I think you're probably expressing yourself *very* well.

GRETE: All I am suggesting, Mr. Waxman, is that the artist, like the Jew, prefers to see himself as alien from the mainstream culture. For the Jewish *artist* to acknowledge that the *contrary* is true, that he is *not* alien, but rather, *assimilated* into that mainstream culture –

JONATHAN: Wait a minute wait a minute. What is this *Jewish* stuff creeping in here?

GRETE: You are a Jew, are you not?

JONATHAN: I don't see what that –

GRETE: *Are* you?

JONATHAN: Yeah; so?

GRETE: I am interested in the relationship between the artist and the Jew, as Jonathan Waxman sees it.

JONATHAN: Who *cares* how Jonathan Waxman sees it? I'm an *American* painter. *American* is the adjective, not *Jewish*, *American*.

GRETE: Yes, but your work calls attention to it.

JONATHAN: How?

GRETE: The Jewish cemetery in *Walpurgisnacht* –

JONATHAN: *One* painting.

GRETE: *One important* painting – the depictions of middle-class life, obviously Jewish –

JONATHAN: How can you say that? "Obviously" Jewish.

GRETE: I have studied your paintings, I have done research on your upbringing –

JONATHAN: Oh, yeah?

GRETE: – I have written many critical studies for art journals in my country. The middle-class life you explore – It is safe to say that your paintings are autobiographical, are they not?

JONATHAN: In what sense? Of course they're autobiographical in the sense that they come from *me*, they spring from *my* imagination, but to say that the subjects of my paintings are *Jewish* subjects, because a Jew happened to paint them, that's totally absurd!

GRETE: Mr. Waxman, I cannot tell to what you have most taken offense: the suggestion that was made, or that it was made by a German.

Excerpted from Donald Margulies, *Sight Unseen*.
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Elizabeth Alexander

Elizabeth Alexander – a poet, educator, memoirist, scholar, and cultural advocate – is President of The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.



Thank you for the honor of being asked to talk about my work. I am an educator, a scholar, a poet, and a mother. Now I also bear the unusual title “philanthropist.” I write and I collaborate with and champion other artists and art forms. I teach African-American literature and culture, and now I lead a foundation dedicated to supporting the arts, the humanities in higher learning, and our cultural heritages and deep knowledge.

I am proud to have helped build the field of African-American studies, and at that nexus of disciplines and critical approaches I have found all the myriad tools I’ve needed to help me do my present work. I am an Americanist, a diasporist, and an evangelist for black culture, which I see at the center of dynamic American culture. Without the experience of black people in the United States – our fundamental experience of being denied freedom

and humanity – we would not fully know the humanities. African Americans asserted their subjectivity, claimed their humanity, and made culture that rocks the world on many fronts.

I write many poems that look to history, for I have found that the archive of African-American and women’s history especially holds extraordinary voices and tales that long for poetry to reanimate them. The sonnet that I will read takes up the story of Prudence Crandall, a white Quaker educator in Canterbury, Connecticut, who in the early nineteenth century started a school solely “for young ladies and little misses of color” after the townspeople objected to her teaching black and white girls together. Young women from the age of eight to twenty-seven traveled from states away for this extraordinary opportunity that was beyond the wildest imaginings of most in this antebellum moment. The townspeople were not

I write many poems that look to history, for I have found that the archive of African-American and women's history especially holds extraordinary voices and tales that long for poetry to reanimate them. ”

happy. They terrorized the girls, they terrorized Ms. Crandall, and eventually they burned the school to the ground. Many decades later, Prudence Crandall was recognized as a state heroine of Connecticut, and I thought a lot about what drove her, in the face of so much opposition, to educate those young women, and about what drove those young women to travel to learn. In writing the poem, from the imagined perspective of Crandall, I found words that I myself believed about the power of education.

Allegiance

*Teacher is bewildered when packages
and letters come from far to say how brave,
how visionary, how stare-down-the-beast
is Prudence Crandall of Canterbury.
Work, she says, there is always work to do,
not in the name of self but in the name,
the water-clarity of what is right.
We crave radiance in this austere world,
light in the spiritual darkness.
Learning is the one perfect religion,
its path correct, narrow, certain, straight.
At its end it blossoms and billows
into vari-colored polyphony:
the sweet infinity of true knowledge.¹*

My mother is a historian. As a professor, she used to tell her students to think about their grandparents, their words and deeds, how they smelled, who they were to them and what they learned from them, and to understand that as American history. She asked them also to understand the proximity and how a grandparent can reach us back to touch the hem of an earlier century. Then she would tell them that she knew her maternal grandfather in her remembered childhood, and that he was born enslaved. My mother passes stories of her known grandfather, these stories, to my now grown children. The nineteenth century is not far away, and the legacy of slavery is experientially with us.

That grandfather helped to found and build Tuskegee Institute. Imagine the audacity of men and women born property, born three-fifths human in the eyes of the law of the land, to make an institution dedicated to the higher education of those people. I think about that now when I think about my own work running a foundation that is dedicated to the question of the value and brilliance, and the importance, of access to higher education. Sometimes you find yourself doing what you were destined to do, even if you haven't known it along the path to get there.

I share the following excerpt from my memoir *The Light of the World* to illustrate work that takes you in unexpected directions, how simply living our lives sometimes beckons us down an unknown path, asks us to take a turn. I have tried in all of my work, both in my writing and elsewhere, to follow those turns, even when I didn't always understand what I was doing or why I was doing it. To appreciate this passage, you need to know one character: my late husband Ficare, a painter.

The language of flowers is not a language I grew up knowing. I grew up in the city, Washington, DC, the child of transplanted New York Harlem apartment people who did not know how to grow things. There were crocuses in spring time that my mother planted along the walkway of our townhouse, I remember my grandmother – born in Selma, Alabama, and reared in Birmingham, then Washington, DC – advocating that we plant hardy pachysandra, which her sister in Durham used as groundcover.

As a little girl in Washington I liked to sit on the ground beneath the dogwood tree in our tiny front yard at 819 “C” Street Southeast and search for four-leaf clovers. Clover was all I knew of “flower”; that was the time I spent in “nature.” A family joke was, they say I bawled when first placed on grass to crawl. At my elementary school, honeysuckle vines and mulberry trees grew surrounding the parking lot; my best friend and I would gorge at recess in springtime and imagine ourselves foragers in the wilderness. Rain puddles seemed as significant as lakes or ponds. In our neighborhood in the Sixties when I was growing up, country people still lived on Capitol Hill. I'd see them in their front yards catching a breeze

1. Elizabeth Alexander, “Allegiance,” in *Crave Radiance: New and Selected Poems 1990–2010* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2010).

“We are here on earth to learn from each other. We are here to be reverent of the beauty and power that life presents us. And we are here on earth to love each other.

when our family would go for slow walks on weekend summer evenings. In their yards grew geraniums and others that I thought of as the province of black people, Negro flowers. Though as an adult I have rarely been without fresh-cut flowers in my home – even a fistful of dandelions in a water glass – I did not begin to know flowers until I knew Ficare and we moved into our house.

Now, the first full spring after his death, the still lives he set in the garden emerge. A small composition rises in a corner by the driveway: a stalk of grape hyacinth, scientific name *muscaria*, derived from “musk” referring to the intoxicating scent which Ficare knew was my favorite olfactory harbinger of spring. A rare, almost cocoa-colored tulip which I now learn were originally planted in the Arts and Crafts era to match those houses in the style of ours. A shiny, frilled, purple-black parrot tulip that feels as late Victorian as the time period of the house. The whole cluster forms a dark, strange, gorgeous little still life, as carefully made as Ficare’s paintings, with histories and etymologies and referents that continue to unfold.

With each community of flowers in the garden, a story: white and pink-streaked peonies, which always, always blossomed on my birthday, May 30, his birthday gift to me each year. There was never not a peony clipped and in a short drinking glass to greet me on my birthday morning, its head heavy with morning dew and often a small beetle. This spring I learn our peonies are double blooming, the rarest and most revered by gardeners. Ficare did not see them achieve this status but he was more patient than anyone I ever knew by far, and knew they would come up in the future. This year, the peonies are magenta and white, and they blow open as big as toddlers’ heads, and soon they are spent and rotten, their petals brown and withered in the ground. Over and done until next year.

And then, this morning, out the back: huge, ruffled, cream- and apricot-colored iris. I have never seen these before. I bring the boys to the window, one at a time. “Look,” I say, “Daddy is saying hello to us,” and he surely is. Through the stalks and the blooms come the touch of his hands on the bulbs. Hi, honey, I say, and I hear him say, Hi, sweetie, and the hurt is completely fresh, the missing, the where have you gone. I do not feel comforted. And I am still bewildered, from the archaic, “wilder”: to

be lured into the woods, into some wildness of mind. Will I really never speak to him again?

I look again at the color of the iris. It appears in many of his abstract paintings. The New Haven Italian printers who manufactured a catalogue of reproductions of his book kept coming to the studio to make color corrections, because they said, “this color doesn’t exist.” It only existed in his paintings.

Ficare did not paint what he saw. He saw in his mind, and then he painted, and then he found the flowers that were what he painted. He painted what he wanted to continue to see. He painted how he wanted the world to look. He painted to fix something in place. And so I write to fix him in place, to pass time in his company, to make sure I remember, even though I know I will never forget. “This is a compound like the one I grew up in,” he said, when we first visited the house. He squatted in the yard like it was land to be farmed. Compound: where families were safe, even when they were unsafe. Where families were families.

Flowers live, they are perfect and they affect us; they are God’s glory, they make us know why we are alive and human, that we behold. They are beautiful, and they die and rot and go back to the earth that gave birth to them.²

We are here on earth to learn from each other. We are here to be reverent of the beauty and power that life presents us. And we are here on earth to love each other. How to learn from intimacy and do that in ever-widening communities and not just one-on-one is the work I am trying to do.

2. Elizabeth Alexander, *The Light of the World: A Memoir* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2015).

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These presentations, as well as the visual arts video and musical performance, are available online at www.amacad.org/induction2019.



2019

Induction Ceremony

Climate change, soil erosion, human rights, Indigenous peoples, and “fixing” our democracy — the class speakers at the 2019 Induction Ceremony addressed major issues facing the world today, with calls to action and calls for change. Following a reading from the letters of John and Abigail Adams by humanitarian **Jane Olson** and attorney **Ronald Olson**, newly elected members spoke passionately about their life’s work. The ceremony featured presentations from paleoclimatologists **Ellen Mosley-Thompson** and **Lonnie G. Thompson**; microbiologist **Jo Handelsman**; former United Nations diplomat **Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein**; historian **Margaret Jacobs**; and lawyer and advocate **Sherrilyn Ifill**. An edited version of their presentations follows.

2083rd Stated Meeting | October 12, 2019 | Cambridge, MA

Ellen Mosley-Thompson

Ellen Mosley-Thompson is Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Geography (Atmospheric Science Program) and a Senior Research Scientist in the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center at The Ohio State University. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2011.

Lonnie G. Thompson

Lonnie G. Thompson is Distinguished University Professor in the School of Earth Sciences and a Senior Research Scientist in the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center at The Ohio State University. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.



It is an honor for us to address this distinguished assembly of passionate and accomplished people on behalf of Class I, the Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

The twenty-first century faces numerous challenges, and one of the greatest is dealing with unprecedented, global-scale environmental changes. Virtually everything depends on how Earth's climate fluctuates and how we choose to mitigate and adapt to it. Our national and global economies, agriculture, quality of life, societal stability, and the availability of food and safe water, among other things, depend on a relatively stable climate. Unfortunately, this critical issue gains prominence in the American public eye only during and in the wake of extreme events such as deadly heat waves and catastrophic hurricanes that affect the U.S. mainland. After the emergency has passed and the task of recovery and rebuilding are well underway, the conversation about climate change returns to mere background noise in the media and public

discourse. Our lack of attention to climate-related human tragedies in other countries arises from the belief that what affects people far away will not bother us due to the advantage of distance.

However, where climate is concerned there is no such thing as "far away." Climate does not respect national borders or cultural or ethnic differences. Because of hemispheric and even planetary atmospheric teleconnections, weather that affects regions on one side of the world generally affects those living elsewhere. Polar and alpine ice is melting at unprecedented rates and raising global sea level, which will continue to accelerate and result in marine encroachment on coastal cities and wetlands. The retreat of the Arctic sea ice in summer is altering atmospheric circulation patterns and bringing unusual and often extreme weather to the mid-latitudes, including our nation's agricultural belt. Adverse climate conditions in poor nations are already contributing to mass migration to wealthier countries, sometimes resulting

As the world's population and our technology to exploit natural resources continue to grow, the need to understand human influences on the processes driving climate change and environmental degradation are more critical now than ever. ”

in strident governmental reactions. The situation will become more critical in the coming decades as mountain glaciers in developing areas such as the Andean and South Asian regions retreat and eventually disappear, resulting in water resource, agricultural, and economic stresses that can exacerbate political unrest. The increases in the atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide and methane, have paralleled the growth in world population and economic development. Evidence from Antarctic ice cores tells us that current greenhouse gas concentrations are higher now than at any other time in the last eight hundred thousand years. The concept that human activities are closely connected to the environment is not new. The naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, who lived two hundred years ago, was the first to make this connection. He recognized the effects that environmental degradation would have on future generations. When von Humboldt was undertaking scientific expeditions throughout the world in the early nineteenth century, world population was around 1 billion. The environmental effects of the Industrial Revolution were restricted to Northern Europe and small regions of Eastern North America. Today, Earth is home to over 7.5 billion people, with over 80 percent living in developing countries that increasingly rely on carbon-based fuels and are developing their economies at the expense of the environment. Not only as citizens of nations, but as citizens of Earth, we must face and overcome the challenges presented by our changing climate. As the world's population and our technology to exploit natural resources continue to grow, the need to understand human influences on the processes driving climate change and environmental degradation are more critical now than ever.

To meet that need we must redouble our efforts to train and support our aspiring scientists, ensure they have opportunities to observe their world first-hand through field experiences, and encourage them to develop the communication skills needed to instill public trust in the scientific enterprise. Sherwood Rowland, Nobel laureate

in environmental chemistry, who is best known for his contributions to discovering the chemical compounds destroying the ozone layer, asked a poignant question: “What’s the use of having developed a science well enough to make predictions if, in the end, all we’re willing to do is stand around and wait for them to come true?” The public and the private sectors must invest in the development and implementation of renewable energy sources at the expense of carbon-based energy.

In the past, nations have put aside cultural, political, and religious differences to mitigate threats to the well-being of humanity. For example, during the world wars of the twentieth century, adversaries formed alliances to defeat aggression on several continents. Although the effects of a changing climate are manifested more gradually, we are facing a type of “war” in which all nations, including adversaries, must cooperate for the ultimate welfare of existing and future generations. Many countries that are politically and economically at odds are nevertheless collaborating on climate research. In our research program, for example, over the past forty years we have drilled ice cores from glaciers and ice sheets around the world. This was possible only because international teams of scientists and mountaineers were willing to endure harsh living and working conditions, lasting from weeks to months, in very remote regions far from the basic comforts we often take for granted. We hope that the global community will ultimately work together to diminish the causes of the current anthropogenic climate changes and to mitigate their worst impacts. Our fear is that if we delay, mitigation will no longer be our best option and our only choices will be adaptation and suffering. Human actions have created the unfolding climatic and environmental crises, but we have the opportunity to recognize the reality of our current situation and work together to change our habits of energy production and consumption and thereby put Earth on a more healthy and sustainable course.

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Jo Handelsman

Jo Handelsman is Director of the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a Vilas Research Professor, and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Professor. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.

For the final three years of the Obama administration I served as one of President Obama's science advisors. I advised the president on issues as diverse as precision medicine, gene editing, forensic science, Ebola virus, and STEM education. Some of the topics were of his choosing, some mine. Some were rapid responses to emerging world problems. In those three exciting years, I wrote many memos to the president informing him about issues that are close to my heart and many that needed to be closer to our nation's heart.

One of my greatest regrets about my time in the White House was that the only memo that I was never able to send to the president was about what may be the most pressing issue of our time – loss of soil. I wrote a memo, but could never penetrate the phalanx surrounding the president with this one. I was blocked at every turn. So I vowed to make the subject of that memo the top priority of the rest of my career as a scientist. In that capacity, I would like to read to you now a memo that I *might* have sent to President Obama.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I write to alert you to the soil crisis that threatens soil across the United States and many other regions of the world. Soil is a precious resource that underpins the health of Earth and its civilizations. Yes, we're talking about soil – we also call it earth and dirt; suelo in Spanish; Łeezh in Navajo; adama in Hebrew; talaj in Hungarian; udongo in Swahili; and dojo in Japanese.

Whatever we call it, it is the product of millennia of biological and physical forces acting on Earth's crust. Pulverized geologic material is weathered and mixes with dead and live plant, animal, and microbial materials and the chemicals released by their decomposition. These are the starting

materials of soil. Water percolates through, air fills empty pockets, plants penetrate, animals burrow, and microbes turn the crank of nutrient cycles. Over hundreds of years, soil is enriched and deepened by these processes to produce the fertile material we know as topsoil on Earth today.

Soil supports many essential processes. Familiar to most people is its role in agriculture and forestry, where soil forms the substrate in which plants grow. But soil's profound impact on Earth extends far beyond plant growth. All organisms depend on soil for clean water – in fact, soil serves as the largest water filter on Earth. Soil microorganisms manage the nitrogen, phosphorus, and water cycles, and soil serves as the largest repository for carbon on Earth – it contains three times the amount of carbon in all plants combined and twice the amount in Earth's atmosphere. Practical uses of soil abound. It is used by people for constructing buildings, roadbeds, and pottery and is the source of drugs used in traditional and modern medicine, including three-fourths of the antibiotics used in clinical medicine today. It contains the most biologically diverse environment on Earth, gifting us with the potential of great discovery and great beauty.

By some projections, the United States will run out of soil on much of its sloped agricultural land by the end of the twenty-first century, but many regions will be barren in the next ten to twenty years. ”

Now soil is under threat. It is being eroded and degraded rapidly, and those processes are likely to accelerate with the projected climate changes that produce more frequent heavy precipitation events. The United States and many other countries are eroding soil ten to one hundred times faster than it is produced. By some projections, the United States will run out of soil on much of its sloped agricultural land by the end of the twenty-first century, but many regions will be barren in the next ten to twenty years. Although the exact endpoint is unclear, it is abundantly clear that the current trend is not sustainable – if it continues, we *will* run out of soil. The endpoint will vary across the landscape depending upon the slope of land, weather events, and

farming practices. The Midwest has already lost half of its soil since 1850, and in many locations in Iowa, subsoil is visible where all the topsoil has eroded. With these trends, food production will confront unprecedented challenges as erosion intensifies.

There is a long history of civilizations collapsing because of soil erosion. The population of Easter Island declined from fourteen thousand to two thousand after their soil eroded from steep mountainsides into the ocean, leaving the island without agricultural production. Similar examples of societies that have over-tilled their soil, which then eroded along with the ability to produce food, abound in regions of China, Africa, and the United States. The good news is that sufficient knowledge is in hand to diminish or even halt soil erosion with relatively little short-term cost and substantial long-term savings. Agricultural practices such as no-till planting, use of cover crops, and interplanting crops such as corn with deep-rooted prairie plants comprise the trilogy of proven methods to prevent erosion and rebuild soil health.

These farming practices would enhance soil carbon storage, thereby reducing greenhouse gases. In the Paris climate talks of 2016, there was a proposal to increase soil carbon worldwide by 0.4 percent, which would be sufficient to compensate for the projected increased carbon emissions, thereby keeping atmospheric carbon at its current levels.

There are several policies that your administration could implement that would encourage farmers to adopt soil-protective practices and build up soil carbon. The administration could galvanize consumers to participate in a movement toward a “soil safe” label for food that would be based on certification of farming practices that build rather than destroy soil. The administration could partner with farmers, environmental groups, agricultural companies, food retailers, and consumers to develop criteria for certification and then guide its implementation in a manner that makes changes in farming practices financially feasible for the producers.

Mr. President, thank you for your tireless work on behalf of Earth's health. I deliver to you a challenging problem, but one that can be quickly solved. All we need is the will, and we dare not lack that will or our civilization as we know it will not be sustained.

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Dear friends, I am honored to be delivering the following statement on behalf of Class III, the Social and Behavioral Sciences, and before this magnificent Academy with so many of the world's most accomplished and esteemed scholars. While I am very grateful to the Academy, there's obviously been some sort of terrible mistake when it comes to my induction – not only am I not a career academic, but the last time I published anything scholarly was a long time ago! I have a receipt here from one rather upset fellow named Claus who, using the most disrespectful language – replete with expletives – wrote to me in 1802. I am suspending reality for a moment! He writes, “you so-and-so . . .,” he was quite drunk, “you dirty dog,” now that is the PG part, “. . . you still owe us, my family, for printing services rendered by great grandpapa Gutenberg!”

So you see, dear friends, it was a long time ago when I last published anything! Now before the bailiff or police officer throws me off the stage for willful impersonation of someone who deserves to be here, and before I am disowned by Class III, let me offer a few thoughts if I may, capped by an appeal to the Academy.

I have come to realize, over time, that most people don't know what their rights are, or even what human rights are.

Yet however they view them, most people seem to think human rights exist as some sort of moral post-it note or a feel good – almost a decorative annex to the human experience. If not whimsically simple, then human rights are seen from the other extreme, as being overly technical, overly legal, ultimately a weakish creation. And overall, the layperson's understanding of human rights is best captured by the iconic image of Eleanor Roosevelt holding up the Universal Declaration, or seeing photos on some UNICEF poster of primary schoolchildren reading its articles. And if you are better informed, then a few desks tucked away in a human rights center – usually an office found within the small number of law faculties that house them – is academia's way of acknowledging the presence of this awkward, interdisciplinary, almost orphan-like subject matter we call Human Rights. Human Rights. Two words that often gate-crash into a reader's field of vision when they are scanning the penultimate paragraph in a report issued by the UN Secretary-General. And that is the good

Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein

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news – at the very least, the two words are there in the UN report.

But sadly, they are barely detectable within the broader expanse of academic scholarship, especially with respect to the social sciences: namely, economics, development economics, political science. Now don't get me going about business or corporate literature – for goodness sake, don't mention these two words. We will upset China or some of the Arab states . . . we will lose our funding, our readership, our market, or some investment or research opportunity. Better to slice human rights



up (after all, the perforations already exist) and speak of them in part only – civil rights, women’s rights, LGBTQI rights. And if this is still beyond what our nerves can bear – too threatening to others – euphemisms work well too: shared values, harmony, inclusive economies, gender mainstreaming, and so on; but not those two words. . . . Voldemort would be so proud!

Upset? Why should the Arab states and the like be so upset? Human rights mean nothing to most of the lay public internationally and to many of my academic colleagues who ought to know, they

actually know very little about human rights. Tragically, many could not be bothered to learn about them because they are not humanitarian principles as is so often presumed.

And yet . . . and yet . . .

A few weeks ago, the head of a leading IT company argued with me that only the human rights community – not the most powerful of the European governments – could exert the higher forms of pressure on Silicon Valley that are needed to bring AI into greater alignment with human rights law.

“ Human rights are a set of interlocking treaties (nine of them) codifying all manner of rights — from women’s rights, to child rights, to the rights of persons with disabilities.

What? What epitome of weakness! The spindly thing, spindly when compared to France and Germany, spindly when compared to corporate power, with all their CEOs — their eyebrows furrowed — extolling shareholder value or their fiduciary responsibilities, respecting only (or so it would seem) some retired military four-star officers, speaking geopolitics to them.

And yet it is the human rights community, the human rights NGOs, with their minuscule budgets — the Frodos of this world — that must take on the big five with their combined annual revenues of many hundreds of billions of dollars, if not trillions, and make them change.

So how does one make any sense of this?

Dear friends, human rights are not boutique, nor are they weak, marginal, or even values. They are a set of interlocking treaties (nine of them) codifying all manner of rights — from women’s rights, to child rights, to the rights of persons with disabilities — while establishing clear prohibitions for the violation of a specific number of these rights, including torture, enforced disappearances, and racial and gender discrimination.

They impose legal obligations on those governments that accede to them and establish an international standard that ought to be met by the rest. In sum, they form an injunction built on three basic expectations: that a government will not discriminate against any individual on prohibited grounds; that (correspondingly) a government will not deprive that individual of social and legal protections and services; and that a government will not govern by fear.

And while elections are a key prop for the legitimacy of governments — a legitimacy conferred on them by their constitutions — only when those governments then actually serve their people can that legitimacy be properly certified. When a government fails to do that and defaults on and violates its human rights obligations toward its people, it submits its legitimacy not just to their scrutiny and doubt, but also to that of the wider international

community. And that, my friends, is why human rights are politically so immensely powerful! They delegitimize as easily as they legitimize, and the authoritarian-minded leaders of the world simply do not like that, and hence do not want them.

The violators of human rights are challenging the universal human rights framework in a manner not seen since 1948 — human rights are the antonym for what they, with their thinner agendas, stand for. Though human rights proponents may be few in number, they are pushing back everywhere: the people of Hong Kong are in the ring; so is the NAACP; the Democrats on the Hill are in it too; the people of Ecuador are protesting daily; Denis Mukwege and Nadia Murad are on the front lines; Agnès Callamard, the extraordinary UN Special Rapporteur, is simply heroic; so too is her colleague Philip Alston; and Maria Ressa is also fighting. Greta Thunberg is utterly phenomenal too. So many other extraordinarily brave people are shaking off their fear — from Poland to Egypt to Venezuela — demanding their rights, the rights of others, the human rights of all, and, almost always, without wanting to hurt anyone.

Notwithstanding what we heard this morning about nonpartisanship, I submit to you that this is not the time for it! I appeal to the Academy to join in, and do so forcefully, to be more involved: to use its power and influence in placing human rights center stage, where they must be — academically, politically, culturally. For many of us here who are tenured in the United States, we enjoy both job security and the protections of the First Amendment. This is an opportunity for us to make a mark. We must do so and defend the universal rights agenda where we can because our lives and the lives of those we hold so dear — indeed all that we have created together as human beings — rest on their being upheld.

With that, I am now quite ready to be thrown off the stage!

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A photograph of Margaret D. Jacobs, a woman with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue top and a black cardigan, speaking at a podium with a microphone. The background is a dark, wood-paneled wall with a large, ornate crest.

Margaret D. Jacobs

Margaret D. Jacobs is Chancellor's Professor of History at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.

Thank you for welcoming me into the Academy, and for asking me to speak on behalf of Class IV, the Humanities and Arts. I am truly honored to speak before you today, at this historic place and institution, and on the homelands of the Wampanoag people.

In a culture consumed with the present and even more so with the future, we historians may seem as antiquated as the subjects we study. We get a little frisson when we enter a library. We swoon at the musty smell of the archive. A positive thrill electrifies us when we stand on the site of a historic event. We can sense the past alive in the present.

In our current attention economy, history may seem irrelevant. It's so . . . yesterday. But recovering, acknowledging, and learning from our history—a key task of the humanities—may be just what we need to truly live well with one another, now and in the future.

June 10, 2018: A farm in Nebraska. It's hot, humid, and hazy with an insistent wind. This likely fits your image of our state. The farm's owners,

Art and Helen Tanderup, might confirm your stereotypes, too. They are White and in their sixties. Art is portly, seemingly gruff. Helen exudes stand-by-your-man farm wife. This homestead has been in Helen's family ever since the late nineteenth century.

But this isn't Little House on the Prairie. There are Indians everywhere: Poncas, Omahas, Winnebagos. They ride up to the Tanderups' farm in fully decked-out pickups. They tumble out of their trucks in shorts, jeans, and flip-flops. Some of the women wear handmade calico skirts ringed with ribbons. There are non-Indians, too, wearing baseball caps, cargo shorts, Birkenstocks. Kids turn cartwheels on the grass; their grandparents lounge on folding chairs.

The hugs and the smiles make clear that these people have known each other for a while. They had originally come together in 2013 to oppose a transnational oil pipeline that would bisect the Tanderups' farm and the homelands of the Poncas. Then, something else happened. Political

alliances grew into personal friendships. And these blossomed into a new tradition: the planting of sacred Ponca corn on the Tanderups' farm every year. These events led to this historic summer day.

The Tanderups are holding a ceremony with two leaders of the Ponca nations of Oklahoma and Nebraska. At a similar gathering, 160 years ago, Ponca leaders had signed over thousands of acres

Tanderups and the Poncas who are out-of-touch; it is the United States. New Zealand created a tribunal to respond to the grievances of the Maoris – in 1975. The Canadian and Australian governments both carried out extensive inquiries into the forcible removal of Indigenous children from their families. In 2008, both nations issued official apologies for this heartless abuse.

“In the United States, when faced with the cruelties of our history, most of us in the White population retreat into denial. We can hardly imagine that any person could act out of moral responsibility, not crude self-interest.

of their homelands in Nebraska to the U.S. government in return for a small reservation. This land was redistributed to homesteaders like Helen's ancestors. Despite this treaty, the government decided to relocate the Poncas to Indian Territory, now Oklahoma. In the 1870s, at the point of bayonets, the military forced the Poncas to march six hundred miles to a foreign land. Today, the Tanderups are signing a kind of reverse treaty that returns ten acres of their farm to the Poncas.

During the ceremony, Art says, “it can never make what went wrong right, but it can show how we feel about this [injustice].” As Art and Helen sign the deed to transfer the land, Casey Camp-Horinek, of the Ponca tribe of Oklahoma, breaks down. When she can speak again, she says, “This day our Mother the Earth sustained us, and gave us reason to live.” She signs the deed and passes it to Larry Wright, Jr., chairman of the Ponca tribe of Nebraska. He declares, “This means a lot. To be able to sit here as partners, to come together out of the goodness of your heart[s] and undo what the federal government did.”

This ceremony encompasses the components of restorative justice. Ponca leaders told of their history, the mistreatment they had suffered at the hands of settlers. The Tanderups honestly confronted this history. They took responsibility for these past harms, as witnesses looked on. Then they offered redress.

This gesture of personal truth and reconciliation may seem like a quaint throwback to the early civil rights era. Yet in a global context, it is not the

But in the United States, when faced with the cruelties of our history, most of us in the White population retreat into denial. We can hardly imagine that any person could act out of moral responsibility, not crude self-interest. But there are a few, like the Tanderups, who step up and face the truth of history and accept accountability. And then they go one step further – they take action to make amends. The cynics think that those who acknowledge this history have a lot to lose. But Art says, “it's something that makes our hearts feel good.”

Mekasi Horinek, a Ponca, played his drum and sang at the end of the ceremony that summer day in Nebraska. Just before he began, he said, “over the past 5 years [Art and I] got to spend time with each other and know each other's families. To know each other's hearts. And I know that what he's doing is from his heart. From my heart I just want to say I love you, my friend.”

Facing our history, together, is not an exercise in shaming. It is an act of respect, integrity, and interconnectedness. The Poncas and the Tanderups show us just how much we have to gain by confronting and learning from our history, not denying and evading it. They teach us, too, that anyone – and everyone – can engage in acts of truth and reconciliation. And that it may be these small gestures that have the greatest power to heal the wounds of history. The humanities, it turns out, have a lot to teach us about restoring our humanity.

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I really cannot express in words what an honor it is to be inducted into this august group and to have the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of Class V: Public Affairs, Business, and Administration. When I agreed to speak for our class, the Academy team very kindly sent me the remarks made by class speakers over the last four years, which I made the mistake of reading. So impressive. And intimidating.

They were all amazing, but I found that I couldn't quite shake the opening from Walter Isaacson's wonderful talk for this class in 2016. He began his remarks with a stark assessment: "The Internet," he said, "is broken. We broke it. We allowed it to corrode, and now we have to fix it."

And so I'd like to paraphrase Mr. Isaacson's opening and frame my remarks around the following thesis: "Our democracy is broken. We broke it. We allowed it to corrode, and now we have to fix it."

I realize that this is a rather sober opening for the final remarks of the day. But I don't mean to be

discouraging. In fact, I want very much to encourage us. Because what I want to talk with you about today is how we confront what I believe to be the question that plagues my every waking and sometimes sleeping moment: What is our responsibility? What is the responsibility of the citizen when her democracy is broken?

Well, I've already cribbed the answer from Walter Isaacson: we must "fix it." But what does it mean to "fix" our fractured democracy? Well I want to suggest that the fix requires something more than simply gluing the jagged, imperfect, fundamentally flawed pieces of our democracy back together in a semblance of integrity and coherence.

Because our democracy is not newly broken. Those of us who do the work of civil rights – work that at its core requires us to face without flinching the deep cracks and fissures in our democracy – we knew that our democracy is broken. Many of us tried to sound the alarm. We spoke about voter suppression and gerrymanders and out-of-control

Sherrilyn Ifill

Sherrilyn Ifill is the President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2019.



wealth inequality. We sounded the alarm about a culture of cruelty, about the decimation of public life, and the denigration of public goods in our country. These fissures have now become full-on fractures. And so the task before us is not a simple patch job.

And this is the opportunity I see in this difficult moment in our country. We have the opportunity to dig deep and to marshal our ambition and courage to reimagine what we will need to strengthen and undergird a better democracy than the one whose loss so many of us now lament. And this will require us to embrace a newly invigorated sense of our own obligations and responsibilities as citizens to build and maintain democratic institutions, ideals, and values.

It will not surprise you that for inspiration for this daunting task before us, I turn to the powerful example of ordinary people who took on the work of repairing a broken democracy, and created a new America – one that could produce the diversity and dynamic mosaic of esteemed individuals in this room today. Their courage made the trajectory of my life possible – from the youngest of ten children in Queens to standing at this podium today. What moves me most about the group of mid-twentieth-century democracy builders – these civil rights lawyers who executed a decades-long legal strategy to end segregation – legal apartheid – in this country is that they embarked on this ambitious, often dangerous course without a blueprint. But American democracy was broken, and they knew it. Segregation – nearly a hundred years after the end of the Civil War – was designed to permanently brand Black people in our country with the mark of inferiority and to render us as permanent second-class citizens. It was an expression of White supremacy as powerful and damning as slavery itself. So when Thurgood Marshall and the team at the Legal Defense Fund created a plan to challenge it, they knew they were seeking to dismantle what had been a core feature of American identity – a corrosive and toxic perversion of democracy, but one to which millions of White Americans and almost every institution of American government were fervently committed.

To do this they had to trust in a strategic vision premised on values of equality and justice. They could not become discouraged by loss (and there were losses). They themselves, as African Americans or Jews, were often in peril as they worked

on their cases in the South. Their dignity was often challenged in ways great and small. And they had to work past it and through it to meet their goal.

At the end of the first day of the trial in his suit challenging the exclusion of Black students from the University of Oklahoma Law School in 1947, Thurgood Marshall and his client Ada Sipuel talked about how hungry they were. Marshall had prepared meticulously for the trial. But he hadn't prepared for the fact that he and Ms. Sipuel, as African Americans, would not be permitted to eat in the cafeteria at the federal courthouse. According to Sipuel, Marshall remarked to her as he packed up his briefcase and they prepared to leave the courtroom, "Tomorrow, I'll try the case and you bring the bologna sandwiches."

Individuals like Marshall and Constance Baker Motley and Jack Greenberg are the lawyers who inspire me and the LDF staff – especially now.

But it wasn't only them. There were others who saw the brokenness of our democracy and were determined to use their skills, their assets, their resources – wherever they were in business, in the academy, in education, in their homes and churches and temples – to contribute to the transformation of our democracy.

These individuals, and countless others, worked in a relatively few short years to help transform this country – building a set of norms and policies and narratives that became part of how we came to define our national character. What they successfully created did not benefit a small group of Americans who were treated unjustly. The strengthening of America's commitment to principles of equality and justice benefitted the entire country.

We too often fail to recognize, for example, how the successes of the Civil Rights Movement strengthened America's geopolitical power and influence in the Cold War – a war often fought in surrogate third countries, where the image of America as a place of expanding equality and opportunity had powerful currency. Presidents Truman and Eisenhower knew this. I commend to you both Mary Dudziak's book *Cold War Civil Rights* and the scholarly work of civil rights lawyer Derrick Bell, who powerfully document this reality.

This country owes a great debt to those who marched, and sacrificed, and endured prison, and died to give this country the opportunity to prove itself better than our foes in the Cold War.

Indeed the historical record of this country demonstrates that whenever America expands the reach of equality and provides greater opportunity for those on the bottom, the entire country benefits.

What better example can there be than the ratification of 14th Amendment of our Constitution in 1868. The opening provision of the amendment is pure democratic genius: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside.”

The radical framers who shaped the provision we now call “birthright citizenship” designed it to ensure that newly freed slaves and other Blacks would become full and equal citizens of this country – a status that was stripped away by the Supreme Court’s disastrous decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* in 1857. But that provision – designed to protect citizenship for people like me – ensured that many of your great-grandparents and par-

rebuilt American democracy at the end of the Civil War, and those civil rights pioneers who remade American democracy yet again in the middle of the twentieth century. It’s time to rebuild again. The good news is that there are hundreds of us here and thousands, millions, tens of millions more around the country who believe in the building blocks that make a democracy strong – we believe in facts, truth, transparency, dissent, art, science, ethics, opportunity, equality, the rule of law, and justice.

And now as we are confronted with the fragility of our democracy, we – the citizens – must be strong. Our responsibility as citizens requires more than just showing up on election day. We now know that our democracy needs us to put on our hard hats and get to the difficult work of reshaping, reframing, and remolding the very foundations of our democracy. We shouldn’t settle for spackle and a fresh coat of paint. We need a re-imagined capitalism. A redefined sense of corporate responsibili-

The historical record of this country demonstrates that *whenever America expands the reach of equality and provides greater opportunity for those on the bottom, the entire country benefits.* ”

ents could travel to this country and, in one generation, fold their family into full American citizenship. They didn’t need to be wealthy, literate, well-connected, or beautiful. They just had to be here and become naturalized. Their children born here became immediate citizens. This provision of the 14th Amendment made possible the widely accepted concept of America as a “nation of immigrants.” However incomplete that description of our country (slaves after all were not voluntary immigrants), the power of this framing has for more than a hundred years defined the unique and, until recently, widely admired experiment of twentieth- and twenty-first-century America.

Do you see it? The provision was created for people who look like me, but it bestowed full citizenship on more White Americans and secured the national legitimacy of more White immigrant families than any other provision of the Constitution.

And so, to “fix” our democracy, we should remember that there is a guaranteed dividend when we strengthen the guarantees of equality and justice for those at the bottom. So let’s start there.

We are now called to be as ambitious and courageous as those framers of the 14th Amendment who

ty, not only to shareholders, but to democratic ideals and values. A truly transformed vision of criminal justice. A lasting commitment to the arts and humanities. An education system that really provides the foundation for citizenship. A reconfigured system of elections and politics that promotes true and equitable representation. A new commitment to facts and truth and public goods.

At the conclusion of his 2016 speech Walter Isaacson listed the possibilities of what we might gain by “fixing” the Internet. He ended with “the possibility of a more civil discourse.” For the fixing of our democracy – which, by the way, is not unrelated to fixing the Internet – the possibilities are infinitely more ambitious and potentially enduring. And the stakes are too high to even contemplate failure.

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A Conversation with Anna Deavere Smith

2084th Stated Meeting | October 13, 2019 | Cambridge, MA
Annual David M. Rubenstein Lecture



Anna Deavere Smith is many things: an actress, playwright, author, and founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University, where she is also University Professor at Tisch School of the Arts. In 2019, she became a member of the Academy and was a featured speaker at the Annual David M. Rubenstein Lecture held during the Induction weekend. After performing two original pieces that combine art, commentary, and journalism, she joined David M. Rubenstein in conversation. Their discussion — edited and presented in the pages that follow — explored a wide range of topics, from auditions and growing up in Baltimore to memorization and the school-to-prison pipeline.



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 and is a member of the Academy's Board of Directors.

I am very proud to be able to moderate a conversation with Anna Deavere Smith, not least because she has the advantage of coming from Baltimore, my hometown. Let me put it in context. When John Adams, John Hancock, James Bowdoin, and other scholar-patriots created the American Academy, you might have called them Renaissance men. Benjamin Franklin might be classified as another, and Thomas Jefferson as another.

Long a phrase reserved for White men, “Renaissance man” has gone out of favor a bit: with increased specialization comes fewer opportunities to do so many different things. But from time to time, Renaissance men still come along, just as, from time to time, Renaissance women come along. We are very fortunate to have one such Renaissance woman with us today. Anna Deavere Smith is an author who has published several books—on the creative process, and on language, politics, and verbal communication. She’s a playwright who has written some eighteen plays. She’s a celebrated theater actress who you will also recognize on television and in film. She’s a social activist. She’s a professor at the Tisch School of the Arts and the founding director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue

at New York University, where she also teaches at the NYU School of Law. She has served on the faculty of the University of Southern California, Stanford University, and Carnegie Mellon University. And she has invented a new form of performance, education, and entertainment called *docudrama*.

Let me tell you exactly what that is. When an event occurs that interests her, for example, the Crown Heights riot or the riot following the Rodney King beating, she will interview many, many people—hundreds of people—who have been involved. She listens to them, sometimes across several years, and she distills those interviews into a one-woman play, performing as eighteen or twenty of those characters and reciting their words verbatim.

This new form of theater performance is quite unique, and she is, as you might expect, the master of it. This morning, we’re going to hear a little bit from three of her docudramas. I think you will quickly understand what makes her work so exciting, and why we’re so privileged to have her both as a member of the Academy and as our guest this morning. It’s my pleasure to introduce Anna Deavere Smith.

Anna Deavere Smith

Anna Deavere Smith is an Actress, Playwright, and Author; and University Professor at the Tisch School of the Arts and Founding Director of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at New York University. She was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2019.



The subject of this presentation is getting through things. My grandfather told me that if you say a word often enough, it becomes you. And so I started going around America in the early 1980s with a tape recorder, recording people and trying to become America word for word.

You might think that insisting on becoming as much of America as I could had something to do with me trying to solve the problem of my own belongingness, growing up in a segregated city like Baltimore, Maryland. My plays are written using verbatim excerpts from those interviews. But I try to represent the people as precisely as possible in terms of not just what they've said, but how they've said it. I'm interested in catastrophe, in part because I'm a dramatist. But also I find that when people are caught in the midst of a storm of things that have gone wrong, when things have fallen apart or things are upside down, the way that they express themselves is incredibly interesting. As they try to make sense out of what is now nonsense, and sometimes even restore dignity to themselves through our conversation, they reveal much. Many of the sites of my explorations have been race riots. I'm interested in race.

I'm a race woman, as the colored people used to say a long time ago. Education, health care, relationship of the press to the president, incarceration: these are all race issues. I call what I do now portraits. They're not impersonations. I'm not really striving to impersonate anyone. You might think something is humorous, but I'm not a comic. It's all to try to make this verbal portrait for you. My latest play is about what is variously called the poverty-to-prison pipeline, the cradle-to-prison pipeline, the womb-to-prison pipeline, and most often the school-to-prison pipeline. We've all become, by now, aware of mass incarceration as a grave problem in this country, and I decided to look at that through the lens of what's happening to children. The result was that I did over 250 interviews in four geographic areas.

The play is called *Notes from the Field*. It's now a film on HBO. For it, I went to Northern California to Stockton, which, at the time before Mayor Michael Tubbs, was a bankrupt and homicide-ridden city. I went further north to the Yurok Tribe reservation, then on to Philadelphia, to South Carolina, traveling up and down what's called the corridor of shame because the schools are so bad. And then to my and David's town, Baltimore. And it just

so happened that we arrived in Baltimore immediately after the riots in 2015. These followed the police beating and death of a young man named Freddie Gray. The beating was captured on video. He died, it is felt, in custody because of, it is felt, the way that he was treated.

I also interviewed and performed Sherrilyn Ifill for *Notes from the Field*, but obviously I'm not going to perform her today because she did such a great job of performing herself at yesterday's events. I don't want to follow that act. But she's a very important character in the show.

This first profile is Kevin Moore, who took the video of Freddie Gray being beaten by Baltimore police officers. This is called "Just a Glance," and again, it's taken word for word from his interview.

The screams [are] what woke me out my sleep. The *screamin'*. I'm like, well, "What's all this screaming?" And then they came to pull me up, like, "Dude, they tasin' him, they tasin' him!" I'm like, "Wooh!" (*High-pitched.*) So I jumped up and threw some clothes on and went out to see what was going on, you know. And then I came out that way, and I'm like, "Holy shit!" You know what I'm saying?

They had him all bent up and he was handcuffed and, like, facedown on his stomach. But they had the – the heels of his *feet* like almost in his back? And he was handcuffed at the time. And they had the knee in the neck, and that pretty much explains the three cracked vertebrae and crushed lernix [*pronunciation of larynx*], 80 percent of his spinal cord being severed and stuff. And then when they picked him up, I had to zoom in to get a closer look on his face. You could see the *pain* in his face, you know what I'm saying? But then they pulled around on Mount Street and pulled him out *again!* To put leg shackles on him. You put leg shackles on a man that could barely walk to the paddy wagon? That doesn't make sense to me. And I've never known a-a-a on-the-beat officer to carry leg shackles in – on their person or in the van, that's something that you do when you're going to another compound or when you're being transported to the court or something like that. They don't put leg shackles on you outside, they just don't do it! You know, so you put leg shackles on a man that can't walk. You know. Then you toss him in the back of the paddy wagon like a dead animal. You know what



I'm saying? Then you don't even put a seat belt on him. So basically, he's handcuffed, shackled, sliding back and forth in a steel cage, basically. 'Cause that's what – it's not *padded* back there. I don't know why everybody seems to say, "Oh, oh, uh, it's a pad – it's padded." No, it's not padded. It's about – it's – it's about as padded as that v – the outside of that van.

It's *ridiculous* how bad they hurt that man. I mean, come on, a crushed lernix? Can you do that to yourself? Three cracked vertebrae? Can you do that to yourself? Can you sever 80 percent of your own spinal cord? You know what I'm saying? In the back of a paddy wagon, shackled and handcuffed, no less? I wish you could just see how they had him. So I'm like, "Man, this shit is just crazy, man. They just don't care anymore!" Man, I just feel like we need to *record* it, you know'm saying? We need to get this word out that this thing is – is happening. This is the only weapon that we have that's actually . . . the camera's the only thing that we have that can actually protect us, that's *not* illegal, you know what I'm saying? But in – in the same sense, these guys could feel threatened or, "Oh, well, I mistook this camera for a gun." You know what I'm saying? So that's what I'm sayin'! [Like I said,] I haven't really filmed anything before, or been known for filmin', you know what I'm saying?

But *that* time I was like, man, "Somebody has to see this." You know what I mean? "I have to *film* this." When I touched back down around, I just basically called every news station that I could and just got the video out there! You know, mainstream, thirteen, forty-five, uh, eleven, *New York Times*, *Russia Today*. (*Laughs.*) I don't even speak *Russian* but, you know, I did the interview.

(*Answering a question.*) No, it was actually [I took it with] my phone! (*Laughs.*) And . . . I had some brothers from Ferguson, and they came out and supported me. Yeah, and they actually spent the night at my house! My brothers from Ferguson, they took me to *Best Buy*. And brought me four cameras. Basically *arming* me! It's a movement. It's not gonna stop here.

(*Answering a question.*) Eye contact. *This* story [of Freddie Gray's eye contact] was with the – the *whole* story since it be – since it happened. That's how the officers, I guess, wrote the paperwork: That [Freddie] made eye contact. And he looked suspicious. Oh. "And that gave us probable cause to" . . . do whatever. We know the truth, y'know what I'm saying? Just a glance. The eye contact thing, that – it – it – it – it – sets off, it's like a

trigger. That's all it takes here in Baltimore, is just a glance.

(*He sits down somewhere – a step, the curb, a box. He starts to cry.*)

Have you ever been to a place where (*six-second pause*) you don't *feel* tired – you *tired* of being tired. You know'm saying? Where you *fed* up. And it's nothing else left. And you can't get any lower? (*He listens to an answer.*) Past that. You know? So . . . That's where I've been. (*He listens to a question.*)

Gotta keep climbing. You gotta keep fightin'. You gotta keep climbing. You gotta keep praying. You gotta keep doing all'v the things that you know can make you stronger because in the end (*a deep inward breath*), you just gonna need all the strength that you can muster to git yourself from that hole, it's like a bunch of crabs trying to pull you back. You know what I'm saying? It's like *quicksand*. And you fighting and you fighting you just sinking faster and faster. You know.

And I hate it that Baltimore is going through *such* harsh times right now. The fact that my children might have to fight this fight, you know? I'm not gonna be here forever. You know'm saying? Then how do I train my children to deal with this, you know what I'm saying?

(*He stands up, listens to a question from the interviewer/audience.*)

The leaders? Right now, man, the leaders are looking pretty assholeish. Uh. Look. It's – it's just so much the leaders can do. You know what I'm sayin'? It's only so mu – so much they can say. But at the end of the day the leaders gonna make up their minds. They're gonna *do* what they wanna *do*, you know what'm saying, so . . . we have to make it better, not wait *around* for *them* to make it better. These people are *tired* and – and – and they want *answers*. And it seems like the only way they can get answers, to them, is if they cost the city money!

Those are the words of Kevin Moore.

There is a song that most of you know. It's thought to be a Welsh tune written by an English slave captain of a ship who had a religious experience and thought about his evil ways of putting people into bondage, and he became a Christian evangelist. The song is "Amazing Grace" and almost everybody knows "Amazing Grace." Let's sing the first verse of "Amazing Grace." [*An audience member is invited and comes to the front to lead the audience in song.*]



AUDIENCE [SINGING]

*Amazing Grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
T'was blind but now I see.*

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Thank you.

The next person I'm going to represent made a very famous, quite beautiful recording of this song, and some of you may have had an opportunity to hear her sing it in person. She is the late Jessye Norman, who died on September 30, 2019, just fourteen days after her seventy-fourth birthday. I went to Augusta, Georgia, just this past Thursday to pay my respects to the family at Mount Cavalry Baptist Church, the church where she grew up and her father Silas Norman was a deacon. This afternoon a street is going to be named after her outside of the Jessye Norman School of the Arts.

I spoke with Jessye Norman many times about singing, and one of the reasons I wanted to include her today is that she often talked about singing *through* events. I saw her in Reims, France, in 1999, standing on the steps of the cathedral singing

through the solar eclipse of the sun, from darkness into light. When I interviewed over three hundred people to write *Twilight Los Angeles*, about the Los Angeles riots in 1992, many youths told me that what had occurred was not a riot, rather it was an "uprising." I asked what song they sang in the uprising, and they kind of shrugged and cited the famous N.W.A song "[expletive] the Police," which they played in car radios but did not actually sing. And so I went to visit Jessye Norman and asked her why she supposed that in the uprising, if it was an uprising, there was no song, no anthem?

What I'm going to do here is a mash up of two interviews: one that reflects on the song "Amazing Grace," which I conducted for a workshop version of my play *Let Me Down Easy*, and another that came from an interview in which Jessye Norman shared her views about why there was no singing in the streets of Los Angeles during the 1992 riot. I just call this "Protest Songs."

"Amazing Grace." I sing this song all over the world. Everybody in the world knows "Amazing Grace." Of course, there's a great deal of question as to where the melody, sort of is derived. And my feeling is that John Newton, having made more than *one* trip across the Atlantic and the Horn of

Africa – taking people from their homeland to a new land to be enslaved – I would have thought, and it certainly has been proven, that the tune of “Amazing Grace” is much closer to old tunes still found particularly in West Africa. And that the – the – that John Newton was from what was at that time the United Kingdom.

So the fact that the song has been sort of given credit to the Welsh and to the Scottish, by the way, that this, in my mind, simply does not, as it were, hold water. Because certainly, people in the bowels of a ship had to somehow – and I say this all the time – Anna, that as a people we have sung our way *through* things, not sung our way *out* of them. That is something different. But these songs that have been created in – throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth century *by* the enslaved, that this was a matter of simply getting through the day, not getting out of it, getting through it. And so “Amazing Grace” could have been an African tune. Oh, absolutely! Oh, absolutely! The rhythm of it, the length of it, the meter of it is much closer to an African song than to anything that is Welsh or Scottish.

We as African Americans have a great tradition of singing our way through troubles. And yes, why was there no singing in the streets of Los Angeles? That we know of. Well, it’s all confusion. And the more we talk about this the more facets of this confusion I can understand and see. I was coming back after having given a performance in Seattle. And so I was in Los Angeles on the day of the riot, and some friends of mine, who were very involved in things having to do with civil rights said, you know, you really ought to stay. And I said I can’t. I have to – I’m in the middle of a tour. I can’t. And who knows if the verdict’s going to come down today anyway? And so I was sitting on the plane thinking, “Well gosh. I didn’t have time to stay in Los Angeles, but what would I have done anyway besides go to somebody’s church and sing a few songs?” What could I have done except to talk or to sing to anybody who would listen to me, and I don’t think that people were in the mood to sing at that time, somehow. Of course, of course, of course, exactly! In the civil rights movement, you’d sing first, and then you would organize whatever protest, you know, was happening that week or day or whatever.

And then you would sing at the end of it as well. You’d sing all through it. This is how the spiritual came into being. That in order to *deal* with this unbelievable situation, of having been transported from one’s homeland to a new land and being

made a slave – we had to sing ourselves *through* that. But I think that if I were . . . a person, you know, sort of a teenager, a youngster, twenty or something. . . . And I felt that I were being heard for the first time. . . . It would not be singing as we know it. It would be a roar. Oh, I think it would be a roar. Oh, it would come . . . Oh, it would come from the bottom of my feet. It would be, I really think that it would be . . . like a lion just *roaring*! It wouldn’t be *singing* as we know it. It wouldn’t be words. It would be, it would just be, like the earth’s first utterance. I really do feel so.

DAVID M. RUBENSTEIN

Let’s talk for a moment about our hometown of Baltimore. When you and I were growing up in Baltimore, roughly around the same time, it was among the most rigidly segregated cities in the United States, in the North certainly, by religion and race and ethnicity. So the area you grew up in was essentially an all-Black neighborhood?

ANNA DEAVERE SMITH

Mm-hmm.

DR: I lived in an area that was essentially all Jewish. I didn’t know anybody who wasn’t Jewish until I was thirteen. I thought everybody in the world was Jewish, and then I realized that not many people are Jewish. But you had the advantage of a family that was pretty well educated by standards in those days. Your father was a businessman. Your mother was a teacher. And your grandparents were involved in your upbringing. So did they help you get the self-confidence to be a performer? Were you a good student?

ADS: I was an okay student. I was part of this experiment where they gave my school, which was in a segregated area, some of the things that kids in White schools had, like French lessons. I had two brothers and then two little sisters, and some very naughty cousins. But I had to be the sensible one. I think people translated that to me being smart. So I was part of a group that skipped the fifth grade. But it was more that I was afraid of getting in trouble.

DR: Baltimore had a tradition then of central high schools, usually single-sex high schools, that drew students from the whole city. I went to an all-male high school called City College. You went to



Western High School. What was Western High School like? It was White and Black?

ADS: It was an incredible experience for me. These are public, single-sex schools: Western, Eastern, City, and Poly. I actually went to an integrated junior high, Garrison. I was part of an experiment there, and that was terrible. So that meant traveling up there through the Forest Park area. Garrison Junior High was an awful place. Kids in tribes. Even people who did very well, who I've seen later in my life, maintained that it was awful. I had a tough time. But Western is where I learned that not all White people were the same. That's where I saw anti-Semitism at work. I realized these are all White people, but they don't like each other.

DR: You discovered there that you were pretty good at languages, and you originally wanted to major in languages or linguistics. What changed?

ADS: It seemed a lot like mathematics, so I fled from it. And I just buckled down in French and French literature, but when I left, I followed another path. I kind of tripped over an acting class and found out then that it was something I could do.

DR: Is acting what you were most interested in? And what did you do right after college?

ADS: I got my theater education at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. Then, I was going to leave to go to New York and the person who ran the theater said, "I hear you're going to go to New York." "Yeah," I replied. He said, "Well, you know, you should stick around because we'd like to have a master's program here, and we don't have any students." So I was one of the first students who walked out of there with an MFA. Then I joined the Guild.

DR: And did your parents say, “You know, acting is not the most stable profession”?

ADS: To this day my Aunt Lorraine – who’s the only living woman in my parent’s generation – would be very concerned if I left the perceived safety of teaching at NYU.

DR: Well, my mother always told me I should keep my law license because you never know if my business career would fall apart. So I’m still a member of the D.C. bar. But when you started trying out for parts, how did agents or companies respond to you as an African-American woman? Were they open to casting you or would they say something like, “we’re not sure you’re the right fit for this,” “come back later,” or “we’ll call you another day”?

ADS: Well, it was a little bit more rude than that, I would say. [*laughter*] You know, it’s very different now, but maybe it will forever be that there are popular shades and unpopular shades. And my shade was not popular at that time. The first agent that I ever went to see for a meeting – I don’t think she’s still alive, and not because of anything I did to her. I was very scared going into it, and I still am scared of agents and auditions. She took a look at me and said, “Well, I really couldn’t” – she was British – “I really couldn’t possibly send you out because it would antagonize my clients.” “What do you mean antagonize?” I asked. And she said, “Well, what would you go as? Would you go as Black or White? You don’t look like anything.”

DR: So what did you say?

ADS: Nothing.

DR: So when did you get your first break?

ADS: You know – and this is for anybody who has a child who’s an artist. I think what’s most important is that you do what you want to do in the arts. I had been very interested in language, probably as an outgrowth of being a language major. And then the lights switched on for me with Shakespeare. We were trained with the idea that if you just say the words, the inner life will come. I was so charged up about that that I spent every down minute I had, which weren’t many – when I was in conservatory, learning everything I could and finding out why I had problems with the so-called “Method.” Our watered down version touted that

you can be anyone in the world, that all kinds of humans live inside of you the individual actor. Everything in the world is me. I had a spiritual problem with that. And so by the end of the 1970s, I knew I wanted to understand acting in a different way than that. And ultimately, now, I’m interested in revealing difference – I appreciate gaps. Now, many years later, I talk to my students about reaching towards another human being and understanding that you might not make it. I call it the “broad jump towards the other.”

Moreover, I wasn’t comfortable – and still am not – with auditioning. I remember we used to get a restaurant job to make enough money to get these little postcards made. We’d have to get new photographs made for them. We’d give them to an agent, and they would say, “This doesn’t look like you.” So then we’d go get another restaurant job. We’d make some money, get new photos, get more postcards made, and repeat that same cycle. I remember the day when I took all those postcards and threw them in the trash and said to myself “I’m not going to spend my time doing this anymore.” Instead I buckled down and worked harder to teach myself what I could about the relationship of speech to identity.

I came here to Cambridge to the Bunting Institute at Harvard. It was the first year of my adult life that I didn’t have to go to work every day, and it’s then I wrote *Fires in the Mirror*. And although it was the thirteenth play that I’d written, it changed my life. I received significant attention because of that play, and out of that attention I was offered opportunities to do television and some movies.

DR: How did you support yourself when you were struggling?

ADS: I was a teacher. My poor students to this day have to hear me trying to remember the many years I’ve been teaching. I started teaching in 1974. Then, I got a tenure track position at Carnegie Mellon University, excellent school. But I took a break from academia immediately and I spent the next five years just developing my work, taking temp jobs and stuff like that to support myself. And then I went back onto the tenure track at USC and then Stanford and now at NYU. So I’ve always had this underlying teaching thing going on.

DR: You supported yourself by teaching, and eventually parts came along. You found work in television, including on *The West Wing*. What was that like?

ADS: I felt very privileged to be on *The West Wing*. One thing about *The West Wing*, and the same is true working with Shondaland, Shonda Rhimes's production company, is that on the first day, they tell you some version of, "We say what's written." And on *The West Wing*, there was a woman whose sole job was to come up to you and correct you if, for example, you said "it's" instead of "it is." And then they did another take. Because my character came in and out of the story, and I wasn't, like, on the regular team of Martin Sheen, for God's sake, and Bradley Whitford, I had to relearn this whenever I came back on set. So I was always terrified that they were going to call *CUT* because I'd made a mistake with a single word in a line. And even my mother said, "You know, I just don't understand what anybody's saying on that show, they speak so fast." And she wasn't alone. Once this Japanese man, whose accent I'm going to butcher, came over to me in a hair salon: "You that woman. You that woman. You on that show. Everybody speaks so fast. I don't know what they saying. I just know that every time you come on, everybody's scared!"

It was very demanding. It was kind of like you're thrown onto the floor of Madison Square Garden. And filming a twelve-hour day, you have to be ready for whenever it's your turn in front of the camera for fifteen minutes.

DR: So is film acting harder or easier than television acting?

ADS: The thing that's great about movie acting is that you have the script in advance that stays relatively the same throughout the shoot—relatively. With television, you don't know what's going to happen. I remember being on *Nurse Jackie*, which was a fantastically written television show. Every Friday on *Nurse Jackie* we would have a read-through where everyone came into a room with the script. And you open the script, because they almost never gave us scripts in advance, and that's when you find out what you're going to be doing next week. I was in a cab one time when I got this phone call from the producer's assistant saying, "Oh, Anna, Linda wanted me to tell you that, uh, God, tomorrow in the read-through Gloria Akalitus," who was my character, "is going to be fired. So don't worry about it." She said, "Don't worry about it." I asked, "What do you mean? What

do you mean she's going to be fired?" "I—I don't know anything. I don't know anything. She's going to be fired." And so she got fired, and my character was gone, though she did come back. But it's like you could die in the story and it's a surprise. With a movie, at least you know what you're getting into.

DR: Obviously, you're a good writer and very verbally skilled. Did you ever say to writers on these shows or movies, you know, I have an idea that might be better?

“ In television, it's like you could die in the story and it's a surprise. With a movie, at least you know what you're getting into.

ADS: You can't do that, no. [laughter] It's very hierarchical, making movies in Hollywood, and you've got to know your part in it. I feel so sorry for my students who'll say, "I don't want to say that." In school, that can be OK, people will respond, "That's cool, you don't have to say it." And I'm like, well you're not going to work. You'll be fired. You have to say what they want you to say. You don't say, "I'll never say that."

DR: What's it like working with Shonda Rhimes? Is she a different type of producer?

ADS: Well, Shonda is a real phenomenon. She might be one of the best-known African-American women of letters. I mean, what if Toni Morrison were born when Shonda was, would she have written television rather than novels? I don't know. Shonda has an enormous amount of power. "Shondaland," her company, is really well run. And it's run in a way that is very respectful of actors. That's a great thing.

DR: Did your parents live to see your considerable success?

ADS: They did.

DR: And did they say to you, "We raised you this way. We knew you were going to be successful"?

ADS: My mother did. My mother went all over the country to see the tiniest play I was in, and she was very kind. My father didn't really get it about my work. He just really wasn't into it, and actually he never said congratulations to me about anything in my entire life.

DR: Wow.

ADS: Until I got tenure at Stanford. *[laughter]* And how old was I? Maybe forty?

DR: When you taught at Stanford, and when you teach at NYU now, what did/do you teach? Writing? Did/do you teach acting?

ADS: It's evolved. Originally, I taught actors, but you can't really teach actors unless you can be with them every day, because learning to act requires transformation, psychologically, linguistically, physically, emotionally. So you really have to be there with your students the way a coach is with athletes. My professional life has several parts, which makes it difficult to commit to that kind of time. Now what I teach is best described as narrative: what is your story? I think that we all have about three fundamental stories inside of us about our lives, about how we see the world and why. Those stories make up our personal mythology. The exercises around which I build a class have been influenced by a great woman of the theater, the late Zelda Fichandler. I work with students for the purpose of taking a very close look at those per-

We all have about three fundamental stories inside of us about our lives, about how we see the world and why. Those stories make up our personal mythology. ”

sonal mythologies under a microscope, and then we refine them. They sometimes realize that they are not actually the star of their own show. I ask them to round out and flesh out others in the story. My students are in their twenties, for the most part graduate students, and some of them want to look at some rather horrible things that happened to them in their families. They come to the realization that the villain in the story is more complex than at first sight. I help them enrich these stories with the hope that the story will be resonant and

useful. It could be useful in leadership, in a relationship, even when applying for a job. What's the most important thing to say about yourself that will help you engage substantively with others.

DR: Do you think actors have to struggle to be successful? Is that a necessary part of an actor's mythology?

ADS: I don't really think it has to do with that kind of struggle. But I do think that's one of the wonderful, wonderful, wonderful things about art. Yes, there are people who get a leg up: they know somebody, or their father is a producer or whatever. But to me, one of the most glorious things about art is the mystery of where talent comes from. If you think about what happened in this country between Tin Pan Alley and jazz, it was people who came from utter poverty. Louis Armstrong was in an orphanage. Ella Fitzgerald had been in a reform school. Yet they created this amazing music. They didn't have music lessons. They didn't go to Julliard. How could they just – without supposed training – play the piano and play the bass or play the saxophone? Of course, they learned on the job – which is what it is all about. Art can be one of the great places to find true democracy and true equality in that some people just come out with a God-given gift, but that's not always enough. Some people have talent, but they're not resilient. Resilience may be something that you're born with. We don't know yet.

DR: When you started your docudramas, how did that come about? Did you set out to invent a new genre, or did it evolve?

ADS: I wanted to learn as much about America as I possibly could. The first show I made had other actors in it. I wanted to talk to people and have the syntax of their language break down. I observed that when people seem to make a mess of what they're saying is when they're saying the most. And a linguist gave me three questions that I could ask to ensure that would happen. Those were: Have you ever come close to death? Have you ever been accused of something that you didn't do? And do you know the circumstances of your birth? The first show I made featured twenty actors, and I found twenty real people. And I literally approached strangers and said "I know an actor who looks like you. If you give me an hour of your time, I'll invite you to see yourself performed." And we talked about swimming lanes at

the Y; I talked to Meredith Monk about her music; I talked to a hairdresser about narcissism. And then somewhere in it I would say, gee, you know, I'm asking everybody, "have you ever come close to death?" and so on. And the architecture of their language would completely change.

The first docudrama was an extension of that experiment. I thought it was successful, and I loved seeing the real people march in with their friends and family. I played only one character. Afterward I wanted to have an acting company that does this. This is 1981, and I thought, "Well, I don't know a thing about raising money. That's not going to happen." I then remembered that as a child, I was a mimic, and so I thought well, I'll just do all the parts I can until I figure out how to raise money.

reminded me of visiting my Jewish friends at Western High School in Baltimore who had unassimilated grandparents, their "bobes." I thought, wow, this feels just like sitting in those kitchens. I felt completely at home in a place that would on the surface, appear to be strange. The last thing I'll say about it, and this is why *Fires in the Mirror* worked better than my other plays previous to it, is that nobody told the same story. Some Blacks said that it was a rebellion of sort. Some of the Jewish residents said it was a pogrom. And so I was able to write a play where it went back and forth, back and forth, with everybody expressing a different reality.

DR: And how many did you interview and record for this?

“ Some Blacks said that it was a rebellion of sort. Some of the Jewish residents said it was a pogrom. And so I was able to write a play where it went back and forth, back and forth, with everybody expressing a different reality.

DR: Let's talk about Crown Heights. For those who may not remember that, can you briefly re-cite what happened that led to the crisis and the controversy?

ADS: This was 1991, and Crown Heights was then a neighborhood that was largely Lubavitch, which is a group of Orthodox Hasidic Jews. There's always been tension there between the Black community and the Jewish community. Now that Crown Heights has been gentrified. It's probably very different. But in 1991, the Grand Rebbe – which is just what it sounds like, the big rabbi – was going through the streets of Crown Heights with an entourage of cars, and one car in his entourage ran a red light, drove up a sidewalk, and hit and killed a little boy named Gavin Cato, a Guyanese-American boy. Later that night, a group of people stopped an Australian student, a scholar, a young man named Yankel Rosenbaum, and stabbed him. These deaths were followed by a riot. I went over there, and I started talking to people.

One of the things that got me interested is that the Lubavitch could not meet me in a restaurant. So I went to their homes. And sitting there in the homes of the Lubavitch interviewing them

ADS: For Crown Heights, just fifty. And then I made the transcriptions.

DR: Next you decided that you would do a one-person play where you would play all of the parts. How do you make decisions about which interviews to use? And why do you perform them verbatim? Why don't you say, well, this is the essence of what they said, or this is what they were trying to say, and rewrite it in your own language?

ADS: Because then that would be my identity, and what I'm interested in is their identity. And I really believe that their identity is captured in the way they express themselves.

DR: How hard is it to memorize exactly what somebody else said?

ADS: It's very difficult. The rehearsal period in most American theaters is about three weeks. So you have a brief amount of time before you have an audience.

DR: When you performed it for the first time, what was the reaction?

What I'm looking for is people who would scream it from the mountain top. . . .

I want the people who want you to hear what they have to say. ”

ADS: *Fires in the Mirror*, it was successful. It ran in New York for maybe three or four months. And then it went around the country and to London. So it had a long run.

By the way, the Signature Theater is doing *Fires in the Mirror* this fall. We cast a man in it, so it's not a one-woman show, and *Twilight Los Angeles* will run in the spring. It will be the first time in New York that the work is done by someone other than me.

DR: You've won Obie Awards and have been nominated for Pulitzers and Tony Awards. President Obama awarded you the National Humanities Medal. Did you have a chance to talk to President Obama or Michelle then? Had they seen your plays?

ADS: I went to a small dinner at the White House, but before that I had the chance to talk to President Obama twice before he was president, including when he was a senator. The great journalist Studs Terkel, who had been a great influence on my work, was scheduled to introduce me at an event I was doing in Chicago about health care. Studs couldn't make it, so Obama filled in. And this was before he was Obama as we know him. We had a very long talk on the phone the next morning, I remember I was in an airport, about health care, and how important it was as an issue. And then I interviewed him for a piece in *The New York Times* after his great speech at the Democratic National Convention in 2004.

DR: After Crown Heights, you went to Los Angeles during the Rodney King riots. You interviewed how many people?

ADS: Three hundred and twenty.

DR: And when you interviewed them, was it hard to get people to talk?

ADS: That's a very good question. What I've come to realize is that what I'm looking for is people who would scream it from the mountain top. One of the best characters in *Fires in the Mirror* is a woman named Ros Malamud, who's a very wealthy

Lubavitch. And in the middle of the interview she said, "I just wish I could go on television and scream to the whole world!" That's who I want. I want the people who want you to hear what they have to say. And that's why I like catastrophe.

With something like the Los Angeles riots, everybody wanted to get the record straight. And one thing that was interesting about visiting Los Angeles in particular, one thing that was very important for me to understand at the time, was that the story of race in this country, which is usually centered around African Americans, is so much bigger than Black and White. And growing up in Baltimore, that was a limitation of how I thought. In Los Angeles, there's a huge Korean community that I interacted with, a huge Latino community. California is just an explosion of diversity, which I couldn't ignore.

DR: More recently, in 2016, you debuted *Notes from the Field*, which was released as an HBO special as well.

ADS: Right. And PBS has put my other shows on the air.

DR: How many people did you interview for *Notes*?

ADS: I interviewed more than two hundred and fifty, in Baltimore, Philly, South Carolina, Stockton, and an Indian reservation. I included twenty-three characters in *Notes*.

DR: Is the challenge of memorizing these different voices verbatim an obstacle for other people to be able to do this?

ADS: I want other people to do it. That's the teacher in me. I created this because I want people to do these plays, and I would prefer, which is hard in the sort of mood of our country right now, that people play parts that they are not.

DR: How would you reduce the main message of *Notes from the Field*?

ADS: Our education system is broken. Education could be a good and strong intervention against

racism and inequality, but our schools are in trouble, so they can't be that intervention. So we go to the courts hoping that they can do something about it. And the state doesn't have the resources needed to help kids. So you have kids who have been in the system, some of them, if they were foster children or if parents couldn't take care of them, have been in the system since they were little tiny people, and here they are twenty years old and no one and no thing has intervened to help put their lives back on track.

DR: And when you were doing the interviews, among other places, you went to prisons to interview people? What was that like?

ADS: Some of the best hospitality we experienced was in a prison or jail in South Carolina, where they cooked us this huge lunch. They fed our whole crew. In prisons I met people who were so dedicated to taking care of other people. I called these people *walkers*, because they were willing to walk with the people who we say we care about, but who we don't want to be near. The walkers are right there, close to them. That's not to say that, across the board, our prisons are caring places at all – but these people exist, and we don't hear a lot about them. And others like public defenders, who care so much about the kids they represent. They make very little money. And I met the chief judge of the Yurok Tribe, an extraordinary woman, the first Native American woman to pass the California bar exam, who also sat on the bench in San Francisco. She's saving lives every day. And it's in these many, many dark environments. Mayor Michael Tubbs, of Stockton, was a councilman at the time, the youngest in the state I think. He's doing that work as well.

DR: And how important is being there in person? Other people might delegate the interviews to someone else on the team. They could bring it back to you, and you spare yourself some time and miles. But you don't do that.

ADS: No, because it's kind of like I'm making portraits. I've been doing it for a very long time, trying to get better at it, and so when somebody's sitting with me, first of all there's a visceral experience. Before I started videoing interviews, audience members would ask, "Well, how do you

know what they did, their gestures?" Some of it, my body would remember. The person-to-person contact that I'm having with the people I interview is very important.

DR: Have you thought of taking the interviews and putting them in book form, compiling all the characters, not just those brought to life on stage?

ADS: I should do that. I do publish the plays, but that's a very good idea.

“Some of it, my body would remember. The person-to-person contact that I'm having with the people I interview is very important.”

DR: Other than that book, what are you going to do next? How do you top what you've already done? What do you want to do with the next twenty-five years?

ADS: I'm creating a second chapter of *Notes from the Field*, which is focused on girls and young women. When we think about vulnerable children, particularly children vulnerable to the juvenile justice system, we think about boys of color. And I was interested in the girls that I met who were in trouble. I want the second chapter to look at how poverty affects girls specifically. I met the dean of the school of public health of a university. He came up to me after a conference and said, "You have to come and see the people in East Tennessee." And he was right. I will broaden the lens to include poor White girls.

DR: What gives you the greatest pleasure: writing the plays, doing the research, performing the plays, being interviewed?

ADS: I like talking to people. I have to write these plays in a very short amount of time. I arrive at the first rehearsal with, like, four hundred hours of material. It's an enormous amount of work, and if it comes together, it's very gratifying. But sometimes when I'm sitting there talking to the people,





and I love how they talk so much, I think to myself, gee, wouldn't it be great if this is all I had to do?

You're compensated very well in television. You're compensated very poorly in the nonprofit theater in relation to how much work goes into it. The way we pay our actors in the nonprofit theater is not good. So I can subsidize that if I get a television show. And now I am trying to write in different genres, I want to explore different forms of writing. I'm writing something for Shonda Rhimes.

DR: Do you see yourself as a role model for younger artists? And who were your role models?

ADS: I had great role models. I had my grandfather, Deavere Smith Sr, who was tough. He started a business by selling tea in a basket on street corners. He managed to put all six of his kids through college in the 40s and 50s. I learned about kindness and generosity from my maternal grandmother, who would go around with Kleenex on Baltimore's buses, and I would go with her wherever she was going and carrying a Kleenex just in case a nose was running. So you know I've had many role models, many lessons. My mother has

really informed my dedication to education. She believed everybody should read, and nobody left her sixth-grade class without reading. Studs Terkel had a huge influence on me. Many of you assembled know Ruth Simmons, former President of Brown University – a stellar academic in every way. My mentee, Samora Pinderhughes, is a jazz musician. He's a great inspiration to me.

Finally, I feel very excited about being a member of the Academy. It wasn't just a letter that brought me into a club. I'm inspired by this gathering and by learning about all the ways that we can participate. I'm excited to make friends and connections. With the Academy so far I've experienced what I call radical hospitality. And I'm very excited about being here.

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IMPROVING TEACHING

Strengthening the
College Learning
Experience



What do students learn in college? When do professors learn how to teach? How can we ensure students are truly being educated for the future? The answers to these questions are determined in part by the quality of instruction students receive, yet public policy discussions about higher education rarely focus on teaching. **Michael S. McPherson** and **Sandy Baum** explored the importance of improving teaching and strengthening the college learning experience in the Fall 2019 issue of *Dædalus*, which they guest edited. They highlighted the findings at a gathering of Academy members and education scholars. An edited version of their remarks and conversation follows.

2085th Stated Meeting | October 30, 2019 | Cambridge, MA
2019 Distinguished Morton L. Mandel Annual Public Lecture

Michael S. McPherson

Michael S. McPherson is President Emeritus of the Spencer Foundation and a Nonresident Fellow in the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute. He was elected a Fellow of the American Academy in 2014 and is the Cochair of the Academy's Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education.



Thank you all for being here and thank you to our colleagues who are facilitating satellite discussions around the country. We look forward to hearing about your conversations later this evening. My remarks and Sandy's remarks will focus on the general problem of teaching and learning in American higher education. Our interest in this problem grows directly out of the work of the Academy's Commission on the

Future of Undergraduate Education, which I co-chaired and of which Sandy was a member. A basic insight that we discovered was that the nature of the problem of higher education in the United States for undergraduate students as a whole has really changed in the last twenty or thirty years. The traditional access problem, although it's not completely solved, is no longer the most prominent difficulty. We were surprised to see that by

The Commission understood success as having several elements; it isn't only about completing bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, or certificates. And it's not just about ensuring that you leave college in decent financial shape, though all of these are certainly important. It's about learning. What do people learn in college that's of value to them in their lives and in their careers? ”

the time people are thirty years old, 90 percent of high school graduates have at least attempted college, but about half of those students began at a community college and for those students, only about 38 percent have achieved any kind of credential after six years for programs that are generally intended to run for two years.

In baccalaureate institutions – four-year colleges – it's still true that about one-third of the students who begin there don't have any kind of credential after six years. So the problem is more one of achieving success in college, rather than of having initial access to it, and that's where our energies need to be devoted. The Commission understood success as having several elements; it isn't only about completing bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, or certificates. And it's not just about ensuring that you leave college in decent financial shape, though all of these are certainly important. It's about learning. What do people learn in college that's of value to them in their lives and in their careers?

So in the language that has developed around these discussions, the Commission was concerned with quality, completion, and affordability. And we came to see that the quality question was more neglected than the other two. We think the question of what people are really learning in college, how value is being brought to them, is insufficiently examined. And I want to underscore that the quality of undergraduate teaching really must rise to meet the nation's needs over the next twenty-five years. This is a big challenge and it resonated with our Commissioners. Too often faculty in our system get little instruction when they're in graduate school about how to teach undergraduates well. Candidates are often selected for appointment without much regard for their teaching. They receive only limited support to improve their teaching over time and get little reliable feedback on how well they're doing as teachers. This is a big challenge for American higher education.

It's important to understand that a good education is not simply learning to parrot back the subject matter that was in your textbook. Students need to learn how to engage with the material. Teachers need to learn how to engage students so that they can think productively about the material and put their subject matter knowledge to work in problem-solving, critical thinking, and understanding. Several of the essays in our *Daedalus* issue on "Improving Teaching" concentrate on the scholarship of teaching, on the systematic study of teaching improvement. Currently, that work is mostly in the natural sciences and a good part of the explanation for that is that the National Science Foundation will support work on improving teaching in the sciences. There's not really a counterpart in other disciplines. In our *Daedalus* volume, we have three essays written by scientists: Carl Wieman from Stanford University, Sally Hoskins from City College of New York, and a team from the Association of American Universities led by Mary Sue Coleman. We have found that interest is growing in other fields, notably in history, English, and economics, among other disciplines. So this is one major contribution that we hope our volume makes toward better thinking and better work in this area.

Sustained change and sustained improvement will require support, engagement, and money from administrators, but more than that it requires leadership and a sense of mission from the faculty. We all know that these places don't work by command and control from above. Faculty need to embrace this agenda for the future. I want to end my part of the remarks with a key thought from Carl Wieman, a Nobel laureate who abandoned bench science in order to study how to improve teaching in the sciences. What he discovered is that it's hard to change how you teach. It takes time and effort, but once you have done it, it turns out that teaching well is only a little bit harder than teaching badly and it's much more rewarding.

Sandy Baum

Sandy Baum is a Nonresident Fellow in the Center on Education Data and Policy at the Urban Institute and Professor Emerita of Economics at Skidmore College.



The *Dædalus* issue on “Improving Teaching” includes a number of essays about teaching, but also a number of essays about the environment in which students learn. And this is something that is incredibly important: how you learn has something to do with the skill and the dedication of your teachers, but it also has to do with the other people around you. It has to do with a sense of self that you develop as a student. At a residential college campus, for example, students live in dormitories, hang around with other students, eat together in the dining hall, and participate in extracurricular activities and clubs. It becomes obvious that their education is not occurring entirely in the classroom, and this is an important issue not only on residential campuses, but on all sorts of campuses.

In the *Dædalus* volume, we also discuss relationships among people in different groups, including racial and ethnic groups and socioeconomic groups, and the kind of support systems that are in place so that students can both strengthen their academic skills and gain the kind

of self-confidence and knowledge that they need in order to accomplish their goals. Another issue is the interaction among students, among faculty and students, and among staff and students at both residential and nonresidential campuses. We need to think about how to teach people subject matter, but it’s also incredibly important to teach people how to be active civic participants and to engage with each other.

There’s a lot of research on how much of a difference it makes if you live on campus. For a long time, studies said that living on campus increases the probability of completion, and there are some newer studies that now question that finding, but either way, the fact is that most students don’t and won’t live on campus. There are a lot of older students, returning students, and students going to public two-year colleges where they don’t even have dormitories. So living on campus can’t be the definition of being part of a college community. And this doesn’t mean that you can’t have some sort of engagement with the other people around you. You can attend events. You can interact with

people outside of the classroom. There needs to be some sort of effort to get people to engage in this process of learning; there need to be spaces where people can interact. And while many of you may have attended residential colleges, that can't be the only vision that we have of how you engage the whole person and make sure that they're in an environment where they can learn.

The *Dædalus* volume includes a wonderful essay by Beverly Tatum, "Together and Alone? The Challenge of Talking about Racism on Campus." For many students, college is the most integrated place, the most diverse place that they've ever been. They may have grown up in a neighborhood and attended a high school where everybody is like them and then they come to college and there are lots of different people. But the fact that the population is diverse doesn't mean that people are having meaningful interactions with those who are different from themselves. And this is important because if you feel out of place and if you feel like you can't relate to the other people and communicate with them and exchange ideas with them, then that's a serious problem.

Students need a lot more guidance about the choices that they make about their educational pathways. ”

Jennifer Morton has written a really interesting essay for the *Dædalus* volume about the challenges facing first-generation students who are leaving their communities – a family and a community where they have belonged for their whole lives – and moving into a world where, in some sense, they try to move away from their origins, and they need to grapple with how to adapt to that and maintain a positive connection with both of these worlds. There was a wonderful article in the *Sunday Times Magazine* by Tony Jack who wrote a book called *The Privileged Poor* in which he talks about the differences in the experiences of students from low-income backgrounds who went to fancy high schools and were integrated into a different kind of environment versus people who come to college straight from an environment where they have had no contact with the kinds of people that they come into contact with in college. How do you get all of these people in these different environments to have a sense of belonging?

I was talking the other day to a friend whom I went to college with about how she came from a background where she didn't know anybody like the people who were in college with her and how she felt really inadequate. She's now a highly successful person and she's very much a part of a different world; her kids are growing up differently. But she had never thought about the effect that these environments on college campuses have on students. It hadn't occurred to her to translate her experience into the experience of students today who are struggling to be part of a community and develop a sense of self that will allow them to learn well. It's easy to separate out the social part of campus life from academics, but you can't separate them out because that's a huge reason why many students struggle academically. We need to make sure that there are both academic supports and social supports for all the different kinds of people who are going to college.

It is wrong to think that college students are all eighteen-year-olds coming from middle- and upper-middle-class families to residential colleges. Many students are also adults, they're single parents, they are people who don't know anybody else who's been to college. We have a whole diversity of students and we have to meet all of their needs, and it's complicated to be able to do that. But that is something that we have to think about in an integrated way. Students need a lot more guidance about the choices that they make about their educational pathways. There's the idea that you go to college and you're supposed to know what you're doing. Obviously for many students that's not possible.

One of the issues in thinking about this is that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We hear more and more conversations these days about how to give people the training that they need to be successful in the workplace. But we need to focus on a lot more than that. When people talk about tearing higher education into pieces, I see a pop-bead vision of higher education: you could take a course here and a course there and if you add up all the credits, you have a college degree. But if you think about it that way, you're missing what it means to have an education; we're missing what it means to create environments where students can actually learn. We need to focus on all students: first-generation students, the students who are different from most of the students on their campuses, and also not assume that if they're not in the minority on their campus that they don't face any of these problems. How

people relate to each other is an incredibly important part of the learning process, and so as we focus on what does it mean to teach and learn, we want to make sure also to focus on creating environments in which students can learn well.

Our *Dædalus* essay, “The Human Factor: The Promise & Limits of Online Education,” very much relates to what we’ve just been talking about. The promise of online education is great. People have been thinking that putting things online is going to solve a lot of our problems: 1) it should create increased access for people who have geographical and time constraints; and 2) it should reduce cost. You don’t have to have these fancy classrooms. You don’t have to have everybody in the same place at the same time. One professor can stand up and lecture and there can be people all over the country listening and there’s no marginal cost to having extra people in the room. This will be great. It will be cheap and we’ll give access to everybody.

It turns out the reality is much more complicated than that. Using technology can absolutely enhance the learning experience. There’s no question about that. However, to use technology well and to use it creatively is not cheap. Posting a video of a person standing up giving a lecture is pretty cheap, but that’s not enhancing the learning experience. There’s a lot of evidence that hybrid courses that combine face-to-face and technology do really well, but there is accumulating evidence that purely online coursework is problematic. And it’s problematic particularly for the students about whom we’re most concerned. The less prepared students, those who have low GPAs and those who don’t have a lot of experience with technology, are least likely to succeed in these courses and, contrary to our optimistic expectations, fully online learning can actually increase the socioeconomic gaps in educational attainment. This is a real problem.

Online learning is growing rapidly. About 40 percent of undergraduate students now take at least one course fully online and about 11 percent of undergraduates are in programs that are fully online. While a disproportionate amount of the fully online work is in the for-profit sector, there also are a number of public and private nonprofit institutions that have enrolled tens of thousands of students in fully online programs – and are getting a lot of attention for it – but we need to look at the quality of the learning that is going on in

those programs. A lot of well-structured experimental studies have compared students who learn in a face-to-face environment, in a hybrid environment, and in a fully online environment, and what most of these studies show is that students are more likely to drop out from the fully online courses and less likely to pass those courses than they are traditional courses. The students who struggle the most again are those who are least well prepared. If someone who already has a college degree, already knows how to study, has self-discipline, and is highly motivated decides to take an online course, they’ll probably do fine. But if you don’t have all of those things, then it’s going to be really challenging for you.

“How people relate to each other is an incredibly important part of the learning process, and so as we focus on what does it mean to teach and learn, we want to make sure also to focus on creating environments in which students can learn well.”

And so, again, this is a huge problem because the gaps in completion rates and success rates are greater across these groups in fully online courses than in other courses. Why does this happen? It’s not that technology is a terrible thing; technology can be very important to enhancing the learning experience. But there’s a lot of variation in standard classrooms and a lot of variation in online learning – there are great online courses and terrible brick-and-mortar classroom courses – but the fact is that human interaction is very important to the learning experience: interaction among students and interaction between faculty members and students. There have been experiments that show that people do better watching lectures with other people than by watching alone at home. Learning is really a social process.

MICHAEL McPHERSON

Let me put these findings in context. This Internet stuff is not the first time we’ve tried to do education

without personal interaction: Going back to the 1850s, the University of London offered correspondence programs for people who were very distant from London, working elsewhere in the British Empire. And it provided some of the opportunities for education that would otherwise be provided in London. Nobody thought that this was better than what you could get by being in London, but it was a lot more practical. And, in fact, one of the greatest examples is that Nelson Mandela and his imprisoned colleagues on Robben Island got degrees from the University of London extension program. So that was a clear response to the absence of the opportunity to get the real thing.

It surprised me to learn that educational radio was a real fad in the 1920s, and it was developed to broadcast classes. If you ever want to know why there are so many radio stations whose initials correspond to universities, it's because they started with the aim of broadcasting courses. People thought you could simulate what it was like to be in a discussion by listening to a radio drama. It turns out that public radio is very important and very valuable, but not because people take courses with it. The same is true for educational television; I remember watching *Sunrise Semester* as a kid and I took a course on how to use the slide rule. Talk about obsolescence. But everybody came to understand that these are things you do as a compromise with a difficult situation. So in part, that's what these efforts, including the Internet, are: a compromise for those with locational difficulties. But it also is in part an underlying conception of how education works. It's a conception that learning happens within individual brains and that you can do just as good a job of learning sitting in your pajamas in front of a computer as you can interacting with people in a room.

In that conception of things, social interaction is incidental. It's easier to teach ten people at once than to teach one, so you crowd people together in rooms and that's just happenstance. But in fact, we've come to understand – partly by looking at what goes on with the Internet – that social interaction is valuable both as a support to learning, seeing other people struggle with the material, and as a real encouragement to know that it's okay that you need to struggle as well. If you're by yourself, you can fantasize that everybody else gets this and I'm just a loser who doesn't get it. But we're all losers at one time or another and so we spend our time together learning that. More than that, an awful lot of what's important in education, the content of what you're learning, is actually learning how

to communicate, learning how to express yourself, how to understand other people, how to engage in problem-solving collectively whether at work or in the community, and how to work as part of a team. This kind of learning starts in kindergarten and it never stops as long as you are educating yourself with other people. So we don't mean to say that technology can't be valuable, and, in fact, I think there's a lot of evidence that it can be quite valuable, but it is less as a replacement for social interaction and more as a complement or an aid to successful interaction.

Hybrid courses that combine some traditional methods of instruction with video, flipped classrooms that reverse the role of discussion and lecturing by putting the lecturers on video, and other kinds of technologies: this really seems to be valuable. The only problem with it is it's not spectacularly cheap. And, unfortunately, as in many things in life, cheap and good don't always go together.

DISCUSSION

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This is an observation. I was looking at a lot of college catalogs and I was trying to figure out how they define an education. As you say, it's a certain number of units. But if you look, the next layer down each unit is a course and it lists a whole bunch of topics, but it doesn't list things like human interaction, communication skills, and so on. I wonder how the colleges, as they now exist, can switch over this bridge given that their catalogs say they're going to teach lists of topics.

MICHAEL McPHERSON: So here's something that I think is interesting about this. You're absolutely right about what you will see if you look in the catalog for the most part. If you look at the publicity materials, if you look at the descriptions that are supposed to attract people – attract parents to write the checks, attract students to sign up – they're all about critical thinking, learning to interact, building people's capacities, not about the courses. That's the nuts and bolts that has to be accomplished, but people actually get pretty lyrical when they're describing the experience that they're going to receive in these courses. So I think there's a kind of schizophrenia (in the metaphorical sense) where at a certain level, people understand that this is not simply a matter of you learn X, you learn X plus one, you learn X plus two, but is a more integrated, more valuable, more human experience. But what we actually deliver looks more like X, X plus one, X plus two.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I teach history at Harvard and I mention that because it's relevant to the comment that I want to make. I see very few teaching faculty from Harvard in the audience and it does strike me that part of the point of the discussion tonight is to get university faculty to take teaching much more seriously than most of us do. We instituted in the history department a few years ago a program to train our graduate students in how to teach. And it's not only difficult to find faculty members who want to teach that course, it's also difficult to convince the graduate students that they should take it. Even though they're going to be teaching discussion sections and eventually courses of their own, they don't see the connection between pedagogy and the scholarship that they're being asked to do. And so, my first question is how do we change the incentive structure to get graduate students and then faculty to understand that they're going to spend most of their time teaching, not doing their research, and that that's the most important contribution they're going to make as members of university faculties?

The second question has to do with the essay in the volume by Jennifer Morton, who points out that the students who come to college without the best training or who are members of groups that are underrepresented in colleges face a different set of challenges than other students do. And I get that point and I've noticed it in teaching. And yet as a white male, I've felt as though it's more difficult for me to connect with those students. I'm wondering if there are things that the research suggests other than just trying to be as sympathetic as a person can be that could be tools for people who would like to be better at this but who are not themselves members of the groups that they are interacting with in the classroom.

BAUM: So those are big questions, and I'm sure there are people in the room who can give more informed answers than perhaps we can. Your first question about how you convince people that this is important: one thing is that people all over academia need to be convinced. But with all due respect to Harvard, Harvard is probably not the place where people are most dedicated to teaching as opposed to their academic and research pursuits. But many students across the country are in colleges where the faculty are not doing much if any research. For many faculty members, such as



at community colleges, their primary job is teaching. There is a question about the complementarity and the competition between teaching and research and I'm a firm believer that they are complementary, but of course in proportion.

But that doesn't make it any less important to figure out how to get that balance for all students. There needs to be an incentive structure for the institutions, the administration, the faculty handbook, and the requirements for tenure. Because the fact is, you're going to be denied tenure if you spend all your time trying to teach. And so we obviously have to make institutional changes. I do think that recognizing the very different circumstances that people face is important. Harry Brighouse's essay in this issue of *Dædalus* talks about hiring a plumber who may know lots of things and be very smart and very educated but doesn't understand the nitty gritty of how to do what he's being paid to do: plumbing. It's a huge problem, but it's not going to come from individuals.

McPHERSON: I have a little further thought about that, but let me try to address your second question, which was concerned with faculty who are not themselves members of disadvantaged groups or low-income students or first-generation students or students of color: how can they play as constructive a role as possible? Many of us can think back to our own introduction to college and

If you figure this out, if you put in the hard work to understand exactly what you're trying to achieve in your course, and if you get the support from experts in these fields to learn to do that well, it's not that much more work to do it with great skill, and it's much more rewarding. ”

realize we didn't know what the hell was going on and it was a very confusing environment to be in. Our children can call us, often incessantly, to get advice and help because we've been there. But for students who are in the first generation, college is a foreign country, and a lot of things that may seem obvious – like what's in a course catalog or the idea of a course catalog – are very far from obvious. What do office hours mean? What can you expect from a professor? These are things that need to be proactively and determinedly conveyed and not all of it can be done by the professor. The institution needs to have an apparatus that actively supports and pushes out that kind of information. You can't expect people to figure it out for themselves.

I think on the question of improving teaching at Harvard, let me be blunt. Harvard students are going to be fine. They would benefit from having more conscientious teachers, but the big thing to worry about in my view is the millions of students who are getting a mediocre effort from people whose main job is to teach them. That can't be the main job at Harvard with all the graduate education and all the research that needs to be done, but for the majority of faculty over all of four-year higher education institutions, more than 50 percent of their time is spent teaching undergraduates. They spend about 10 percent of their time on research, about 15 percent of their time on graduate education, and the rest complaining about the committees they're on. So we need to reach those people and equip them to do a good job. Support them in doing a good job. I think Carl Wieman is right: if you figure this out, if you put in the hard work to understand exactly what you're trying to achieve in your course, and if you get the support from experts in these fields to learn to do that well, it's not that much more work to do it with great skill, and it's much more rewarding. Carl Wieman – and part of this is explored in the essay he wrote for us – had all this money from getting the Nobel Prize and then he added to that money by saying to the University of British Columbia (UBC): “I will come to your institution if you give me a big chunk of money to use to incentivize this change.” And

so he went to individual departments at UBC and at the University of Colorado Boulder and said, “If you will really try to change the teaching in your science department, I'll give you \$1 million.” That worked pretty well. And I recommend it.

BAUM: One of the issues is that the institutions that are educating most of the students who are most in need of support are very underresourced. If you look at what's going on at community colleges, for example, the fact is that they get much less funding from the states and they get much less tuition revenue, and yet they're trying to educate large numbers of people who really need a lot of extra support. There's one counselor for thousands of students and there are too many students in the classes. We need to put more financial resources into some of those institutions in order to create an environment in which faculty members will have the support that they need to be able to teach successfully.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I teach undergraduate higher education at the faculty of arts and sciences. I was wondering if you could speak about how to measure student learning. This is a topic that the government is often concerned about. How do we know that students are actually learning? We have a lot of indirect measures of student learning. We have completion rates, we have graduate employability. We also have teacher-to-student ratios. The ranking agencies have their own indicators of the teaching quality, but I was wondering if you have any thoughts on how do we know that students are learning?

McPHERSON: We can think about learning with a small L and a large L. The small L is what can we know about how successful a particular course is for the students who are in the course. And the large L is what can we know about the success of an educational program as a whole. Those are very difficult questions, but I think on the first question, for the individual teacher, an important element in that is to really think in a very serious

way about what it is that you're trying to accomplish with these students in the course specifically. That is, not just that they're going to improve in critical thinking, but concrete evidence that you could look at for whether students in, for example, a physics course have grasped core elements of physics. One of the reasons physics has made quite a bit of advance in this area is that a group of physicists thirty or forty years ago worked out in a pretty specific way what concepts they believed students should have mastered by the time they completed an introductory physics course: what is sometimes called the physics concept inventory. And then they tested these concepts at the beginning of the course and again at the end of the course, at places including Harvard, and they found that the students learned absolutely nothing. The only students who learned anything were the students who intended to be physics majors when they arrived and knew how to learn physics.

This produced quite a bit of change in the teaching of physics. An important prerequisite is to be clear, as clear as you can be, about what you really think you're aiming to accomplish, and that will be an aid in your teaching because you will be able to think more productively about what lessons you're planning, what exercises you want to ask your students to undertake, what kind of discussion you want to have in class. And it will also give you some guidance about figuring out what people have learned. I think we could, at least at relatively introductory levels, do much better than we do now. It may be easiest in the natural sciences, but I don't think by any means it's confined to those disciplines. The big L learning is a much more difficult problem because you don't have much commonality of objectives and of resources in order to make meaningful comparisons. So to ask how much did Harvard students learn versus how much did Bay State Community College students learn, the starting points are so different, the ending points are so different, that to make any type of comparison is meaningless. You can compare across well-defined subgroups and I think we could also do better with that than we currently do. It's a big agenda, but it's also our job. We ought to try to figure it out.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My question has to do with the promise and limits of online education. I am a current college student and I take online courses.

You mentioned about 11 percent of students take fully online courses. To me, measuring what it means to have a successful college education or college experience extends to being able to apply what you have learned to get a job. Personally, I have noticed it's very difficult to compete in the workplace after college if your degree is from a fully online program. When we think about graduating with a bachelor's degree, you have to get those internships, but you don't have professors to write recommendation letters for you, you don't have academic mentors to refer you to certain personal relationships that they may have. So it's very hard for online students to have access to the opportunities that help you enter the workplace. What are your thoughts on that?

BAUM: It's a big problem and there are surveys about what different constituencies think about online learning, and the reality is that faculty members are skeptical and employers are very skeptical. If we have higher-quality online programs, then employers are going to see that people can come out of those programs and be very good employees. But that means that we have to have higher-quality programs and mentorship opportunities for students who are not on campus. Institutions that offer fully online programs

“When you look at surveys of what employers want, it's not that they just want people who know how to operate a certain kind of machine; they want people who can communicate and think creatively.

are going to have to acknowledge that it's not pop beads: they can't just have people pass these courses and think that they're going to be able to successfully go out into the world. But it is hard to separate out what you got from the program and what is the perception of it that has to be overcome. And we don't know whether to say we need to help people overcome it until we know whether the merits of the programs are really substantial. The fact is that people don't have to know a whole lot about what people learned at Harvard.





They think oh, you went to Harvard, great. You must be smart. Now, there are obviously lots of people who go to Harvard who are not as smart as lots of people who go to other schools. But it's a signal and it's going to have to be individual experiences that change that. I think it's a really hard problem to solve.

McPHERSON: You made the point about not knowing anybody to write a recommendation for you. That's a telling point and I'm thinking of the fact that in some of Richard Light's work at Harvard, one of the things that he found was that a big factor in determining how successful a student would be at Harvard, a place with a lot of resources, is whether you got to know a professor well. And when you're in a fully online environment, that's really not accessible to you. And it's a big cost. We need to recognize that if we're serious about people having successful lives, we can't excuse ourselves and say, well, you know, it's too bad, these people can't afford an education that involves actually getting to know people and so we'll just leave them with this other kind of education. That's not a good answer in a democracy.

BAUM: But it should be possible in online education. There are interactions that are possible online where you can see people, you can be online

at the same time, and you can communicate. We have to hope that in the future, online education will develop to incorporate more of those things.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a student in the master's program of higher education at Harvard. I was just reading that employer perception plays a huge role in the validity of these courses. I'm wondering what you think about what the role of the labor market should be in developing the future of what higher education looks like.

BAUM: That's a big question. On one hand, one of the things that people want out of higher education is preparation for the labor market, but it's not just that people want a job. People also want to live productive and satisfying lives. When you look at surveys of what employers want, it's not that they just want people who know how to operate a certain kind of machine; they want people who can communicate and think creatively. So we need to pay attention to that. I think that it's also possible to go too far in the other direction. Many conversations are about figuring out what to teach and how to teach it by going and asking the employers in the area what it is that they need. Sometimes we end up thinking what we need is narrow occupational preparation because then people will get a job. And that might get them a job – for a year or two. Instead we need to find that balance. For a long time, there was a lot of resistance, and there still is some, among faculty, certainly at liberal arts colleges. “We’re not here to prepare people for the labor market. We’re not going to talk to them about that at all. If they read Shakespeare, that’s what they need to do.” We need to get people to understand that you can do both of these things, that they are complementary, and that people need all those integrated parts is a challenge.

McPHERSON: In the Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education, we spent an afternoon with business leaders and with technology leaders in education. And what the business leaders, who included people like Wes Bush who at that time was the CEO of Northrop Grumman, said was: “We don’t want you to train our workers. We can train our workers better than you can. We need you to help the people who are going to come to us to think and make decisions and work productively with other people. That’s what we want. We want what a lot of people would say are the elements of a liberal arts education. That’s what you need for a long-term successful career.” There was

another person who advised us, Al Spector, who is a big deal in the interface of computer science and business. And he said increasingly, computer coding is being done by computers. So you go down the path of trying to identify the technology that you're going to prepare for and what you're going to do. In our Commission report, we were bold in saying that the distinction between preparation for a career and a liberal arts education is a false dichotomy. They're not separate things. There are differences in emphasis, but there's a lot of commonality.

BAUM: But convincing state legislators of this is another issue.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm from the other side of town, from MIT. I don't know how many engineering professors are here. I'm speaking from a privileged point of view as someone who served as department head for a few years. You've been talking about the learning environment and about the institutional policy about teaching. I would like to share that I think the microscale environment – the departmental level – in terms of teaching is also important. This is bragging a little bit, but our department uses team teaching, in which one person lectures and two other faculty members sit in the class. I thought it was a really good model because when we have junior faculty come in, like you said, most of them don't have any experience in teaching and we put them into a team-teaching role and they learn from senior colleagues. And the other side is when you have somebody teaching in front and you have colleagues sitting in back, there's a high pressure to do well. So I think that creates a good local environment. It's not an institutional requirement, but as a department head, I was very proud of this model.

I guess my dilemma now – I'm thinking again about teaching and coming to your very insightful online observation – is what I see with my own kids and the Khan Academy, for example. The problem I complain about is that they don't read books anymore and if they have questions, they go to Khan Academy. I think this ten-minute teaching model is very effective. Kids' attention spans are about that long. But the classes I teach are one-and-a-half hours. A challenge that I'm facing is how to bring that online success into my teaching. Do you have any thoughts about this?

McPHERSON: I think those are lovely points. When I started my teaching career at Williams College, I taught in a program in which there were classes with a political scientist and an economist in the room at the same time and it was a fabulous learning experience. And I would say that I learned just as much from the teachers I thought were bad at teaching as from the ones who were good at it. But there are cheaper ways to share observation about how well other people teach and give people a chance to see other faculty in action and learn from them, which we don't take enough advantage of. I don't think most senior faculty in my experience would love the idea of being videotaped and then having their junior colleagues watch what they do. But it would improve their teaching and it would give an opportunity for the younger faculty with less experience to form their own judgments about how they can teach successfully. It's less true now than it used to be where in elementary and secondary school classes, the teacher closes the door and they are the king or queen in the classroom; it's not a socially interactive situation. That's a real handicap in K–12 and it's a real handicap in higher education, too.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So if you take the Harvards out of the equation, you have many more faculty who are teaching students who don't have tenure. They're adjuncts. I think more than half of the faculty in the nation are part-time or at least not in a tenure-track position, which means they're not getting paid well. I'm wondering if in your research you found or looked at that as a factor or barrier for these professors in being able to teach their students. If you're calling for professors to enhance their teaching and finding ways to teach better, how are they able to do that when they're getting paid less than \$4,000 a course?

SANDY BAUM: That's a huge problem, obviously. If you're running around from one college to another teaching seven classes, you're not really going to be able to do a good job of it. The solutions to this problem are not so clear because, of course, the reason that institutions are using adjunct faculty is that they're cheaper, particularly in public institutions where state funding is not keeping up with enrollments. And so passing a law, as some people have proposed, that you have to employ these instructors full-time or put them on the

We need to think about the armies of adjunct faculty. Probably two-thirds or more of all undergraduate teaching is performed by people who are not on a tenure track. And we need to recognize not only miserable pay, but even more important, miserable working conditions and a lack of professional respect. ”

tenure track or pay them a certain amount would raise the price a lot. And maybe everybody doesn't have to be a researcher, maybe everybody doesn't have to be on the tenure track, but everybody has to be treated as a professional and everybody has to be given an environment where they can teach reasonably and have a living wage. This is one of the things that people are hoping online education will help, but the problem is that you really can't do a lot to reduce the faculty-student ratio without reducing the experience of the students. It costs to do this. You have to pay people. And somebody therefore has to pay for it. We don't have any volunteers for whether it's going to be the students or the families or the taxpayers.

McPHERSON: We need to think about the armies of adjunct faculty. Probably two-thirds or more of all undergraduate teaching is performed by people who are not on a tenure track. And we need to recognize not only miserable pay, but even more important, miserable working conditions and a lack of professional respect. Those things count for so much because these folks aren't doing this because they think they're going to get rich. They're doing it because they love teaching. But when you have to conduct your office hours at Starbucks because you don't even have a place to meet students, it's very hard to do your professional best. So my own view – and the Commission, I think, agrees – is that we need to think about how to professionalize the teaching force in an environment where tenured faculty are going to be a small minority of the people who are delivering the education. We need a professional teaching force with career advancement, with reasonable pay, reasonable job security, and support for improvement. And although that's not free, I think it's a realistic goal to have.

In research universities, we have developed something called the research scientist track, which is for Ph.D.-level trained people who work in labs, work on important experiments, do serious work, but are not candidates for tenure. They're never going to lead a research team, but

they have a profession and they have advancement opportunities. So on the one hand, I think we have to be realistic that we're not going to go back to a system in which most people are on a tenure track. On the other hand, if we want high-quality teaching, we have to support people in becoming high-quality teachers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I wanted to go back to the beginning of the presentation regarding improving teaching. What are your thoughts about teaching assistants? Is part of the problem that teaching assistants in various institutions around the country are thrown into the fire in having to teach students when they themselves sometimes just graduated college?

McPHERSON: Universities are inclined to describe teaching assistants as people who are being mentored toward improvement in teaching, which they, depending on their circumstances, may prefer to describe as employees for all kinds of reasons. I think they ought to take that role a lot more seriously. You could integrate work as a teaching assistant with serious work on learning how to teach well and leverage what now may simply be an unreasonable demand that results in weak performance into something that's really valuable. Again, none of this is free, but if it's valuable enough, it is worth paying for.

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The 2019 Distinguished Morton L. Mandel Annual Public Lecture was held at the Academy in Cambridge and webcast live to groups of Academy members and other participants at three remote locations – the University of Wisconsin-Madison; the Association of American Universities in Washington, D.C.; and Teachers College, Columbia University – where the presentation was followed by local discussions. To view or listen to the presentations, visit www.amacad.org/improving-teaching.

In Memoriam: Morton L. Mandel

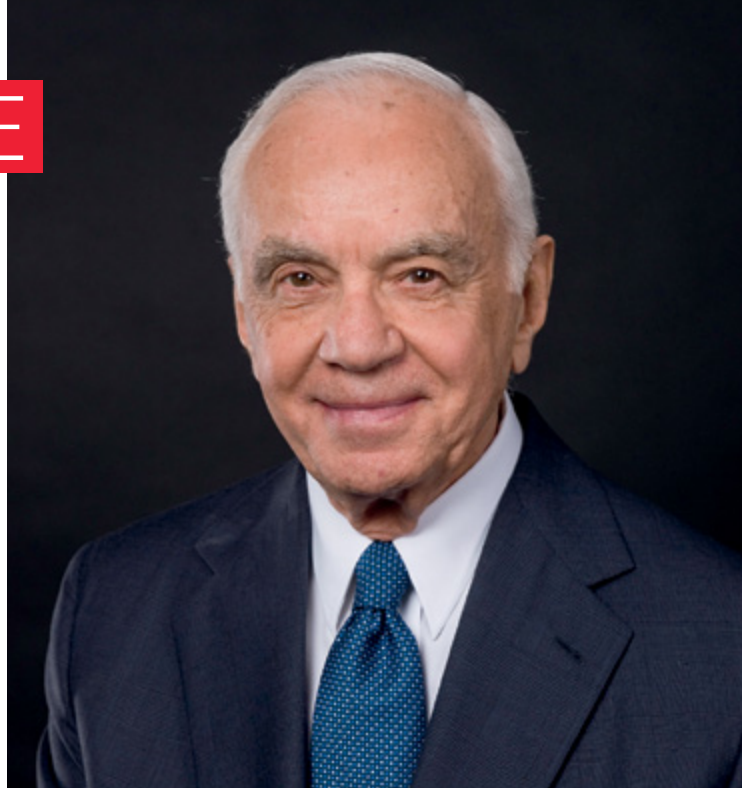
It is with deep sadness that the Academy notes the passing of business leader, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and dedicated public servant Morton L. Mandel on October 16, 2019, at the age of 98.

Morton Mandel, elected a member of the Academy in 2011, was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Parkwood LLC, headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. With his brothers Jack and Joseph, he founded the Premier Industrial Corporation, which later became one of the world's leading industrial parts and electronic components distributors. He served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation from 1957 to 1996, when it merged with a British company.

Mr. Mandel also served as the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation, which funds numerous social leadership initiatives in the United States and Israel. The work of the Foundation is grounded in the belief that exceptional leaders, inspired by powerful ideas, are key to improving society and the lives of people around the world.

Mr. Mandel believed deeply in the work of the Academy and, as the single largest donor in the Academy's history, he helped transform the organization in recent years. Through the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Foundation, Mr. Mandel's generosity allowed the Academy to establish a membership engagement program, further the impact of its studies, provide greater outreach to members across the country and around the world, and improve its technology and infrastructure.

Mr. Mandel epitomized the vision, set forth by the Academy's founders, of a patriot dedicated to advancing the common good and devoted to service to others and to the nation.



On January 11, 2016, at a ceremony held at the House of the Academy, Mr. Mandel was presented with the Academy's Scholar-Patriot Award in recognition of his philanthropy and dedication to public service.

SCHOLAR-PATRIOT AWARD

Citation

For more than seventy years, your energy, generosity, and dedication to the public good have known no bounds. From humble beginnings, your parents instilled within you the basic values of integrity, respect, honesty, decency, and generosity. With your brothers and these core values, you built a thriving global corporation dedicated to the principles of delivering quality products and exceptional service, and the simple yet powerful philosophy: if you find a need, fill it. In your work and your philanthropy, you have developed leaders with passion and intellect. You have modeled the lessons learned early in life to share resources and to be generous relative to your capability, and have inspired generations of leaders in higher education, the Jewish community, and nonprofit organizations to change the world and improve the human condition. You have taught us to dream and to believe dreams can be realized. We are better off because of you.

Business leader, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and dedicated public servant, you are the model of the enlightened, informed, and passionate leader. We honor your outstanding commitment to the community, the nation, and the world.

Select Prizes and Awards to Members

Bruce Alberts (University of California, San Francisco) is the recipient of the 2020 John Edward Porter Legacy Award, given by Research!America.

Elizabeth Anderson (University of Michigan) was named a 2019 MacArthur Foundation Fellow.

Margaret Atwood (Toronto, Canada) was awarded the 2019 Booker Prize. She shares the prize with Bernardine Evaristo (Brunel University London).

Martin Baron (*The Washington Post*) received the 2020 William Allen White Foundation National Citation.

Kevin Campbell (University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine) is the recipient of the Herbert Tabor Research Award from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

Lewis C. Cantley (Weill Cornell Medicine) is the recipient of the Red Door Award for Advances in Cancer Research, given by Gilda's Club New York City.

Clare Cavanagh (Northwestern University) won the Harold Morton Landon Translation Award from the Academy of American Poets for her translation of *Asymmetry* by Adam Zagajewski.

F. Stuart Chapin III (University of Alaska Fairbanks) was awarded the 2019 Volvo Environment Prize.

Michael Cook (Princeton University) was awarded the 2019 Balzan Prize for Islamic Studies.

Max D. Cooper (Emory University School of Medicine) was awarded the 2019 Albert Lasker Basic Medical Research Award. He shares the award with Jacques Miller (The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research).

Veena Das (Johns Hopkins University) was elected a Fellow of The British Academy.

Pablo Debenedetti (Princeton University) is the recipient of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers' Alpha Chi Sigma Award for Chemical Engineering Research.

Peter B. Dervan (California Institute of Technology) has been named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

Jennifer Doudna (University of California, Berkeley) received the 2019 Life Sciences Leadership Award from the California Life Sciences Association.

Rita Dove (University of Virginia) received the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets. She also received the Hurston/Wright Foundation's 2019 North Star Award.

Esther Duflo (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics. She shares the prize with Abhijit Banerjee (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and **Michael Kremer** (Harvard University).

Cynthia Dwork (Harvard University) was awarded the Richard W. Hamming Medal from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

Alex Eskin (University of Chicago) was awarded a 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Mathematics.

Sally Field (Beverly Hills, California) is a 2019 Kennedy Center Honoree.

Daniel Z. Freedman (Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Stanford University) was awarded the Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics. He shares the prize with Sergio Ferrara (CERN) and Peter van Nieuwenhuizen (Stony Brook University).

Jeffrey Friedman (Rockefeller University) was awarded a 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg (Supreme Court of the United States) was awarded the 2019 Berggruen Prize for Culture and Philosophy.

Herbert Gleiter (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany) was recognized by the International Association of Advanced Materials as the Advanced Materials Laureate 2019.

Laura Greene (National High Magnetic Field Laboratory; Florida State University) is the recipient of the 2019 Gold Medal from the Tallahassee Scientific Society.

Franz-Ulrich Hartl (Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry) was awarded a 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. He shares the prize with Arthur L. Horwich (Yale School of Medicine).

Terrance Hayes (New York University) received the Hurston/Wright Foundation's Legacy Award for Poetry for *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*.

Martha P. Haynes (Cornell University) is the recipient of the 2019 Catherine Wolfe Bruce Gold Medal from the Astronomical Society of the Pacific.

Mellody Hobson (Ariel Investment) was awarded a 2019 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy.

Mary Jane Irwin (Pennsylvania State University) received the 2019 Phil Kaufman Award for Distinguished Contributions to Electronic System Design.

Barbara Jacak (Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory) received a 2019 Distinguished Scientist Fellow Award from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Science.

Maria Jasin (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center) was awarded the Shaw Prize in Life Science and Medicine.

Svetlana Jitomirskaya (University of California, Irvine) was awarded the 2020 Danie Heineman Prize for Mathematical Physics.

David Julius (University of California, San Francisco) was awarded a 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. He is also the corecipient of the 49th Rosenstiel Award for Distinguished Work in Basic Medical Research.

Barbara B. Kahn (Harvard Medical School; Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center) received the 2019 Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Excellence in Science Award.

Susan M. Kidwell (University of Chicago) received a 2019 Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal from the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Marie-Josée Kravis (Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Foundation) was awarded a 2019 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy.

Michael Kremer (Harvard University) was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Economics. He shares the prize with Abhijit Banerjee (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) and **Esther Duflo** (Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

Robert Langer (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) was awarded the 2019 Dreyfus Prize in the Chemical Sciences.

David Lee (Texas A&M University) was named the country's 2019 Physicist of the Year.

Virginia Man-Yee Lee (University of Pennsylvania) was awarded a 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences.

George E. Lewis (Columbia University) is the recipient of a 2019 Doris Duke Artist Award. He was also awarded a commission by the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation.

George Lucas (George Lucas Family Foundation; Skywalker Properties) was awarded a 2019 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy.

Morton L. Mandel † (Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Foundation) was awarded a 2019 Carnegie Medal of Philanthropy.

Tobin J. Marks (Northwestern University) was elected a Foreign Fellow of the European Academy of Sciences.

Michel Mayor (University of Geneva) was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics. He shares the prize with **James Peebles** (Princeton University) and Didier Queloz (University of Geneva; University of Cambridge).

Ruth Garrett Millikan (University of Connecticut) received a 2019 Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal from the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Toshiko Mori (Toshiko Mori Architect; Harvard University Graduate School of Design) is among the winners of *Architectural Record's* 2019 Women in Architecture Awards.

Gary J. Nabel (Sanofi) is the corecipient of the 2020 Geoffrey Beene Foundation Builders of Science Award, given by Research!America.

Paul Offit (Children's Hospital of Philadelphia; Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania) is the corecipient of the 2020 Geoffrey Beene Foundation Builders of Science Award, given by Research!America.

Jeffrey Palmer (Indiana University) received the President's Medal for Excellence from Indiana University President Michael A. McRobbie.

Dinshaw Patel (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center) is the recipient of the inaugural C.C. Tan Life Science International Collaboration Award.

James Peebles (Princeton University) was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physics. He shares the prize with **Michel Mayor** (University of Geneva) and Didier Queloz (University of Geneva; University of Cambridge).

Robert Plomin (King's College London) is the recipient of the 2020 University of Louisville Grawemeyer Award for Psychology.

Peter J. Ratcliffe (University of Oxford) was awarded the 2019 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. He shares the prize with William G. Kaelin, Jr. (Harvard Medical School) and Gregg L. Semenza (Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine).

Sharon Percy Rockefeller (WETA) was awarded the National Medal of Arts.

Jesse Roth (Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research) was honored by D-Cure for his lifelong achievements in diabetes research.

Myriam Sarachik (City College of New York) is the recipient of the 2020 American Physical Society Medal for Exceptional Achievement in Research.

Peter Sarnak (Princeton University) was awarded the Sylvester Medal by the Royal Society.

Laurence Senelick (Tufts University) received the 2019 Oscar Brockett Award for Outstanding Teaching of Theatre in Higher Education from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education.

Vera Serganova (University of California, Berkeley) received the 2019 George Gamov Award. She shares the award with Valery Fokin (University of Southern California).

Paul Simon (New York, New York) was awarded a Great Americans Medal by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

Anna Skalka (Fox Chase Cancer Center) was awarded the 2018 William Procter Prize for Scientific Achievement by Sigma Xi.

Howard Stone (Princeton University) has been named a Fellow of the National Academy of Inventors.

Kathryn D. Sullivan (Potomac Institute for Policy Studies) was awarded the 2020 Desert Research Institute Nevada Medal of Science.

Arthur Sze (Institute of American Indian Arts) won the 2019 National Book Award for Poetry for *Sight Lines*.

Samuel O. Thier (Harvard Medical School; Massachusetts General Hospital) was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Michael Tilson Thomas (San Francisco Symphony; New World Symphony) is a 2019 Kennedy Center Honoree.

Craig Tracy (University of California, Davis) was awarded the 2020 Steele Prize for Seminal Contribution to Research in Analysis/Probability Theory. He shares the prize with **Harold Widom** (University of California, Santa Cruz).

Axel Ullrich (Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry) was awarded the 2019 Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medical Research Award. He shares the award with H. Michael Shepard (BetterOutcomes 4Cancer) and Dennis J. Slamon (University of California, Los Angeles).

Harold Widom (University of California, Santa Cruz) was awarded the 2020 Steele Prize for Seminal Contribution to Research in Analysis/Probability Theory. He shares the prize with **Craig Tracy** (University of California, Davis).

Ellen Williams (University of Maryland) received a Distinguished Alumni Award from Michigan State University.

New Appointments

Francis H. Arnold (California Institute of Technology) has been appointed to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

Barry Bergdoll (Columbia University) has been appointed to the Pritzker Architecture Prize Jury.

John Seely Brown (University of Southern California; Deloitte's Center for the Edge) has been appointed to the Advisory Board of Sunverge.

Mary Schmidt Campbell (Spelman College) has been appointed to the Board of Trustees of the J. Paul Getty Trust.

Stephen Ceci (Cornell University) was elected President of the Society for Experimental Psychology and Cognitive Science.

Daniel Diermeier (University of Chicago) was elected Chancellor of Vanderbilt University.

Harvey V. Fineberg (Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation) has been named Board Chair of the Science Philanthropy Alliance.

Renée Fleming (New York, New York) was named Co-director of Aspen Opera Theater and VocalArts.

Joshua Frieman (Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory; University of Chicago) has been elected President of the Aspen Center for Physics.

Roland Greene (Stanford University) has been named Director of the Stanford Humanities Center.

Alice Kaplan (Yale University) was named Director of the Whitney Humanities Center at Yale University.

Mary-Claire King (University of Washington) was appointed Senior Associate Core Member of the New York Genome Center.

Steven Knapp (George Washington University) was named President of Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh.

Ruth Lehmann (New York University) has been elected Director of the Whitehead Institute.

John T. Potts (Massachusetts General Hospital; Harvard Medical School) has been appointed to the Board of Directors of SmartPharm Therapeutics.

Steven Salzberg (Johns Hopkins University) was appointed to the Scientific and Clinical Advisory Board of Biotia.

Phillip Sharp (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) has been appointed Special Advisor to the Scientific Advisory Board of Skyhawk Therapeutics, Inc.

Debora Spar (Harvard Business School) has been elected to the Board of Directors of Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc.

Teresa A. Sullivan (University of Virginia) has been named Interim Provost of Michigan State University.

Luis Ubiñas (New York, New York) has been elected to the Board of Directors of Aura.

Darren Walker (Ford Foundation) was elected to the Board of Trustees of the National Gallery of Art.

K. Birgitta Whaley (University of California, Berkeley) has been appointed to the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology (PCAST).

Select Publications

POETRY

John Lithgow (Los Angeles, California). *Dumpty: The Age of Trump in Verse*. Chronicle Prism, October 2019

Paul Muldoon (Princeton University). *Frolic and Detour*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, November 2019

Carl Phillips (Washington University in St. Louis). *Pale Colors in a Tall Field*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, March 2020

FICTION

Margaret Atwood (Toronto, Canada). *The Testaments*. Nan A. Talese, September 2019

Emma Donoghue (Ontario, Canada). *Akin*. Little, Brown and Company, September 2019

Ariel Dorfman (Duke University), illus. by Chris Riddell (Brighton, England). *The Rabbits' Rebellion*. Triangle Square, January 2020

Louise Erdrich (Minneapolis, Minnesota). *The Night Watchman*. Harper, March 2020

Gish Jen (Cambridge, Massachusetts). *The Resisters: A Novel*. Knopf, February 2020

Thomas Keneally (Manly, Australia). *The Book of Science and Antiquities: A Novel*. Atria Books, December 2019

Alan Lightman (Massachusetts Institute of Technology). *Three Flames*. Counterpoint, September 2019

James McBride (New York University). *Deacon King Kong: A Novel*. Riverhead Books, March 2020

Ian McEwan (London, United Kingdom). *The Cockroach*. Anchor Books, October 2019

Sonia Sotomayor (Supreme Court of the United States), illus. by Rafael López (San Diego, California). *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You*. Philomel Books, September 2019

NONFICTION

Kathleen Bachynski (Muhlenberg College; Academy Visiting Scholar, 2016–2017). *No Game for Boys to Play: The History of Youth Football and the Origins of a Public Health Crisis*. University of North Carolina Press, November 2019

William F. Baker (Fordham University; IESE Business School, Barcelona) and Michael O'Malley (Pearl Meyer; Yale University School of Medicine). *Organizations for People: Caring Cultures, Basic Needs, and Better Lives*. Stanford University Press, October 2019

Tom Brokaw (New York, New York). *The Fall of Richard Nixon: A Reporter Remembers Watergate*. Random House, November 2019

Lonnie G. Bunch III (Smithsonian Institution). *A Fool's Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump*. Smithsonian Books, September 2019

Ken Burns (Florentine Films) and Dayton Duncan (Wapole, New Hampshire). *Country Music: An Illustrated History*. Knopf, September 2019

Judith Butler (University of California, Berkeley). *The Force of Nonviolence: The Ethical in the Political*. Verso, February 2020

E.J. Dionne Jr. (*The Washington Post*; Brookings Institution). *Code Red: How Progressives and Moderates Can Unite to Save Our Country*. St. Martin's Press, February 2020

Stanley Fish (Florida International University). *The First: How to Think About Hate Speech, Campus Speech, Religious Speech, Fake News, Post-Truth, and Donald Trump*. One Signal Publishers, November 2019

Philip Gingerich (University of Michigan). *Rates of Evolution: A Quantitative Synthesis*. Cambridge University Press, June 2019

Rebecca Henderson (Harvard Business School). *Reimagining Capitalism in a World on Fire*. PublicAffairs, April 2020

Robert Iger (Walt Disney Company). *The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company*. Random House, September 2019

Nicholas D. Kristof (*The New York Times*) and Sheryl WuDunn (Mid-Market Securities). *Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope*. Knopf, January 2020

Joseph LeDoux (New York University). *The Deep History of Ourselves: The Four-Billion-Year Story of How We Got Conscious Brains*. Viking, August 2019

Nicholas Lemann (Columbia University). *Transaction Man: The Rise of the Deal and the Decline of the American Dream*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, September 2019

Lawrence Lessig (Harvard Law School). *They Don't Represent Us: Reclaiming Our Democracy*. Dey Street Books, November 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.

Robert Jay Lifton (Columbia University). *Losing Reality: On Cults, Cultism, and the Mindset of Political and Religious Zealotry*. New Press, October 2019

Daniel Mendelsohn (New York, New York). *Ecstasy and Terror: From the Greeks to Game of Thrones*. New York Review Books, October 2019

Martha Minow (Harvard Law School). *When Should Law Forgive?* W. W. Norton, September 2019

Mark Morris (Mark Morris Dance Group) and Wesley Stace (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). *Out Loud: A Memoir*. Penguin Press, October 2019

Mary Beth Norton (Cornell University). *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*. Knopf, February 2020

Naomi Oreskes (Harvard University). *Why Trust Science?* Princeton University Press, October 2019

Diane Ravitch (New York University). *Slaying Goliath: The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools*. Knopf, January 2020

David M. Rubenstein (The Carlyle Group). *The American Story: Conversations with Master Historians*. Simon & Schuster, October 2019

James Shapiro (Columbia University). *Shakespeare in a Divided America: What His Plays Tell Us About Our Past and Future*. Penguin Random House, March 2020

Neil Shubin (University of Chicago). *Some Assembly Required: Decoding Four Billion Years of Life, from Ancient Fossils to DNA*. Pantheon, March 2020

Thomas M. Siebel (C3.ai). *Digital Transformation: Survive and Thrive in an Era of Mass Extinction*. RosettaBooks, July 2019

Anna Marie Skalka (Fox Chase Cancer Center). *Discovering Retroviruses: Beacons in the Biosphere*. Harvard University Press, October 2019

Marshall S. Smith (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching) and Jennifer O'Day (American Institutes for Research). *Opportunity For All: A Framework for Quality and Equality in Education*. Harvard Education Press, August 2019

Kathryn D. Sullivan (Potomac Institute for Policy Studies). *Handprints on Hubble: An Astronaut's Story of Invention*. MIT Press, November 2019

Christoph Wolff (Harvard University). *Bach's Musical Universe: The Composer and His Work*. W.W. Norton, March 2020

† Deceased

THE ACADEMY & ITS FUTURE

A \$100 Million Campaign for the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

FOR 240 YEARS, the nation has looked to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences to offer wisdom and insight into the most profound issues of the time. In 1780, that was the formation of a free republic. In the 1850s, it was understanding the changing natural environment through the theory of evolution. In 1960, it was the creation and exploration of a field called arms control – in fact, the Academy coined that term. Today, it includes such questions as how we can sustain the dream of American democracy in the face of widening divides; and how as citizens of our planet we can respond to environmental change and its implications for migration, conflict, public health, and natural resources in order to provide for a more promising global future.

Numbering nearly 6,000 of the nation's and world's most accomplished individuals, Academy members combine their extraordinary expertise and convene other critical stakeholders to put informed recommendations in the hands of those on the front lines of these issues. Though this kind of independent, balanced, and nonpartisan resource is perhaps needed now more than ever, the Academy stands among very few organizations that have the intellectual stature, interdisciplinary representation, and convening power to provide it.

WE HAVE LAUNCHED A \$100 MILLION CAMPAIGN to build a sustainable financial future for the Academy to continue to serve as a source of knowledge on topics and activities of the greatest global significance.

Importantly, the Campaign for The Academy & Its Future builds on essential strengths and priorities identified through our recent strategic plan:

- **UPHOLD INDEPENDENT INQUIRY:** Examine the most pressing challenges of the time and seek solutions with urgency and independence.
- **ACHIEVE GREATER INFLUENCE AND IMPACT:** Offer policy-makers, scholars, the media, philanthropists, and those in the public and

private sectors the benefit of the Academy's intellectual capital in the ways it can be of greatest service.

- **ENCOMPASS MORE VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES:** Purposefully increase the diversity of perspectives that shape the Academy's work through inclusivity of members, staff, contributors, and audiences.

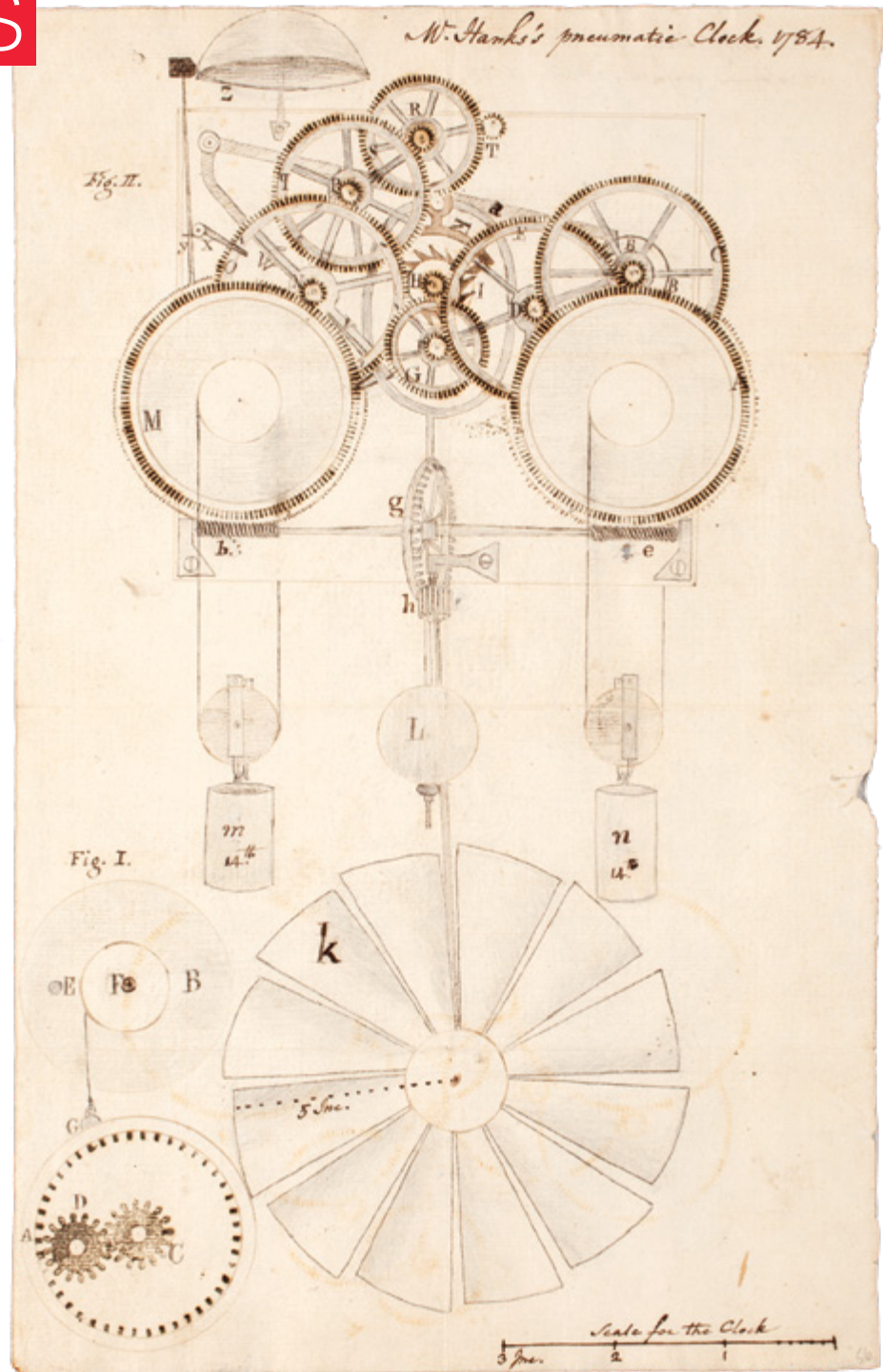
Philanthropic support from foundations and individuals has long fostered our ability to be independent, interdisciplinary, and innovative. As the challenges that we face today – and our aspirations to address these challenges – outpace our existing resources, we seek to ensure our continued stability and growth in the following ways:

- **DOUBLE THE ACADEMY'S ENDOWMENT** from \$35 to \$70 million to enable continuity of long-term programs, provide the flexibility to explore new ideas and launch promising initiatives, and pursue opportunities to increase the Academy's visibility and impact.
- **SECURE PROGRAM GRANTS AND MAJOR GIFTS** totaling \$43.5 million to fund a growing portfolio of influential initiatives.
- **GROW UNRESTRICTED ANNUAL SUPPORT** by increasing the participation of the members and affiliate institutions so that the Academy can respond to immediate needs and opportunities.

The Campaign for The Academy & Its Future, cochaired by Louise Henry Bryson and David M. Rubenstein, has raised over \$60 million and is scheduled to conclude in June 2022.

You can add your support at amacad.org/donate or by contacting the Academy's Development Office (617-576-5066; dev@amacad.org).

Connecticut goldsmith Benjamin Hanks owned a foundry that manufactured cannons, church bells, tower clocks, and various tools. At the request of Academy Fellow Ezra Stiles, Hanks sent the Academy his design for a clock that would never need to be wound manually. In Stiles' letter to the Academy of July 3, 1784, he notes that Hanks was granted a patent for the invention the previous year. Various referred to as an Air Clock, Hanks' machine was a tower clock designed to automatically wind itself using a variance in air pressure. Hanks noted that all that was needed was, "One hours [sic] good wind will raise them the whole Altitude for ten days: and seldom three days but that they are fully wound up."



A DESCRIPTION OF A PNEUMATIC CLOCK

by Benjamin Hanks (1755–1824)
July 1, 1784 (p. 5 shown)

Experiments, made on the Air Clock, shew that there is sufficient Air in motion where there is a close room with a small inlet for the Air to pass; and as it is found by experiments that the Air in such a room is more rare than the external Air, of course the external Air will press in to restore the equilibrium Which will cause a motion of

Air, of sufficient momentum to keep a Machine in motion provided it is constructed to run a long Time as ten Days . . . for there is always Air sufficient to raise the weight in that space of Time.

I shall here shew the principles of the Air Clock, and how to calculate the numbers for the Movements, in as clear and compendious a manner as I possibly can.

It is Necessary to construct this Machine, so that the weight may have the same Power on the Machine, while raising, as decending [sic]; otherwise while winding, it would come to a stand. [p. 1]

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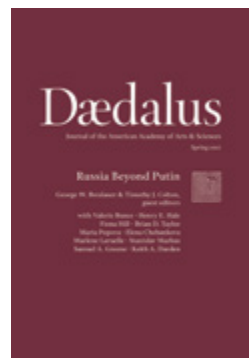
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The views expressed in the *Bulletin* are those held by each contributor and are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors and Members of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.

ONLINE



If you follow the Academy on social media, then you know that **Fiona Hill** – former Senior Director for European and Russian Affairs on the National Security Council who testified at the impeachment hearings – wrote an essay for the Spring 2017 issue of *Dædalus*, *Russia Beyond Putin*. Hill's essay "The Next Mr. Putin? The Question of Succession" can be accessed online in the volume edited by **George W. Breslauer** and **Timothy J. Colton**. In her essay, Hill considers potential successors and the possibilities of a transition from



a hyperpersonalized presidency to a depersonalized system. The issue was released the year Putin turned 65 and on the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution.

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