



A Letter From
Dean
Harold
Hongju
Koh

Dear Graduates and Friends of Yale Law School ,

By the time you read this, I will have taken office as the fifteenth dean of Yale Law School. The task feels daunting, but the assignment seems straightforward: making sure that the greatest law school of the 20th century becomes an even greater law school in the 21st century. To do so, we must stay true to our values and traditions, while at the same time changing to meet four key challenges:

First, globalization: Many law schools have waved the “globalization” banner, but no law school has truly asked and answered the question: “What does it mean to have a genuinely global curriculum, faculty, student body, and programs in the 21st century?” At Yale Law School, we have already integrated an international perspective into many of our core courses. We also have a huge array of internationally focused programs, ranging from the Schell Center on International Human Rights, to the Corporate Law Center, to the Middle East Legal Studies Seminar, to the China Law Center, to our Global Constitutionalism conference. But what is the best way for us to build upon these strengths to create a modern law school that is explicitly global in its focus? Please join us from October 8–10, 2004, at this year’s alumni weekend, when we will ask together: How should a Yale Law School Education Address Global Legal Issues?

Second, speaking to the profession: Our graduates change the world every day. They rank among the leaders of the judiciary, academia, private practice, and public service. Yet the myth lingers that Yale is primarily a school of theory. Our students will face the challenges and demands of a global private and public practice. How can we better train our students to meet the professional responsibilities and regulatory frameworks of a transnational legal profession? What are the best ways for us to bring our unparalleled academic and clinical faculty together with our alumni to do so?

Third, calling our students to public service: Yale Law School has uniquely served the public interest and created lawyers who have most shaped the public interest. My deanship will reaffirm our long-standing commitment to public service. Don’t we, the most privileged in our educational fortunes, have a duty to serve the

least privileged? How can we ensure that each of our students devotes significant energy toward serving some conception of the public interest as he or she sees it?

Fourth, and finally, renewing the faculty: We have the world’s greatest law faculty, but it needs renewal. How can we diversify and rejuvenate our faculty, to ensure that our faculty is even better twenty years from now?

Globalization, the profession, public service, renewal: these have been my own life’s commitments. I see my job as simple: keeping Yale Law School a community of commitment to world-class scholarship, professional excellence, and service for the greater good. In law, there are many committed individuals; there are all too many unfocused communities. But Yale Law School has always been—and under my deanship must always be—a community that is committed to both humanity and excellence, both theory and practice, both talent and passion.

On the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown vs. Board of Education*, it moves me deeply to think that America’s greatest law school has chosen its dean based not on the color of his skin, but on the content of his commitments. It was more than forty years ago that my parents first came to Yale Law School as visiting lecturers. When I walked into the Law School for the first time, I thought—as I thought this morning and as I think every morning—that Yale Law School is the most impressive and humane institution of which I have ever been a part. I promise you that I will do everything in my power to keep it that way. I am hugely excited about the future, and I thank you for joining me in building this community of commitment together.


Harold Hongju Koh