



Commencement 2006

YALE LAW SCHOOL

After a week and a half of rain, the skies over the Elm City turned blue just in time for the Law School's Commencement on May 22. Gowns, caps, and purple hoods emerged early in the morning as candidates for degrees in law—233 in all—lined up on Cross Campus under a sign boldly proclaiming “Law.”

Sounds of cheering and African drumming (courtesy of the neighboring Divinity School candidates), added to the anticipation as the procession began.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM K. SACCO, YALE UNIVERSITY MEDIA SERVICES

Nusrat Choudhury



Oonagh Breen



Carine Williams



Eric Jensen



Degrees conferred:

Juris Doctor **198**Doctor of the Science of Law **6**Master of Laws **28**Master of Studies in Law **1**

The march to the University's exercises offered an opportunity for members of this year's class to reflect on how their time at the Law School had changed them. Joshua Hawley, who came to Yale to, in his words, become a "philosopher-in-action," said he leaves the Law School with the belief that the law is "a vocation but also an invitation to reflect." Hawley explained, "It's easy to forget, in the crush of learning rules and precedents, that all law is for something, directed toward some end. The job of the reflective practitioner, I take it, is to help ensure those ends are the right ones." Hawley will be clerking for Judge Michael McConnell of the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals next year. "I look on this experience as a once-in-a-lifetime kind of thing," he said of his next venture.

Oonagh Breen, a J.S.D. candidate from Ireland, came to Yale Law School first as an LL.M. student in 2003 to study the regulation of charities and their involvement in public policy formation. Coming to Yale was a bit of a culture shock for Breen after having studied law from a strictly black letter doctrinal approach in Ireland. "YLS has afforded me the most wonderful opportunity to explore the relationship between law and public policy," Breen said. "I think that I am now more aware of the limitations of the law as much as its possibilities." Breen will return to Ireland this year and resume her teaching position at the University College Dublin's School of Law—but she's looking forward to continuing legal conversations with her YLS classmates as they scatter to the corners of the globe.

It was by route of Teach For America and a fourth grade inner-city Washington, D.C., classroom that Katie Kimpel

first arrived at the Law School. Frustrated by what she calls "vast societal obstacles that promised to suppress the potential of even my brightest students," Kimpel came to YLS with the belief that a legal education would arm her in fighting what she sees as large, structural injustices. "I guess you could say I came to law school to get bigger guns for the fight for civil rights," she said. Next year Kimpel will serve as counsel to Senator Russell Feingold. After that, she might consider more work in politics, but Kimpel hopes to eventually become a clinical professor. "While legal reform has its limitations, I still believe that law is one of the best resources available to activists committed to the quest for social justice," she said.

Brian Netter, who like Hawley and Kimpel earned a J.D. this year, arrived as a 1L with an engineering background, seeking "a more human element" to his career. "When I started three years ago, I had plenty of questions about what I thought the law was," Netter said. "Those questions went largely unanswered, but I learned that they weren't the right questions to ask. More than anything, I have appreciated how the Yale Law School experience has exposed me to great thinkers—among the faculty and my classmates—who have shaped the way I approach most every problem, legal or otherwise."

Eric Jensen, who received an LL.M. degree this year, was similarly complimentary of his peers and faculty. Jensen, who had ten years of experience as a lawyer before arriving at Yale last fall, now serves as Chief of the International Law Branch at the Office of the Judge Advocate General in Washington, D.C. "Even after having practiced in the legal



Dean Harold Hongju Koh

“No ceremony of this length would be complete without an ancient Korean saying. So let me offer this one: *Never let your skill exceed your virtue*. As lawyers, you will develop skills that will give you power that few in our society possess: the tools to throw people in jail, to save millions of dollars, and to destroy people’s lives. Please use this power wisely. And remember that each of these tools has its time and place.

“So use the awesome power of cross-examination to break down a hostile witness, not to terrorize your children. Use your drafting skills to win your clients lawful relief, not to shield them from their lawful responsibilities.

“Please remember that your clients are not just those who pay you. Your clients include the integrity of the law itself.”

field for more than a decade, I still learned so much,” Jensen said. “I come from a more politically conservative background so I enjoyed hearing the different perspectives that were raised by my professors and peers. It was great!”

Because the Law School’s academic schedule is slightly different from that of the University, the Law School candidates were presented to Yale University President Richard Levin as conditional candidates. “When they have been recommended by the faculty of the school and approved by the corporation I *shall* ask you by your official act to confer upon them these degrees,” Dean Harold Hongju Koh announced to President Levin and the thousands of onlookers.

Then it was back to the Law School Courtyard, where

hundreds of family members and friends awaited the Law School’s own ceremony. The presentation of degree candidates was followed by remarks from Dan Kahan, Deputy Dean and Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Law, who was elected by the Class of 2006 to deliver the Commencement Address, and Retired Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Sandra Day O’Connor, who received an honorary doctor of laws degree from the University—and a standing ovation from the 20,000-person crowd—earlier in the day.

Though no one knows for sure exactly how many classes the Law School has graduated, this year’s group of degree candidates was at least the 192nd to have studied at Yale Law School. ∞



Sandra Day O'Connor, Associate Justice (Retired), Supreme Court of the United States

"Judicial independence doesn't happen all by itself. It is tremendously hard to create, and easier than most people imagine to destroy. We must therefore be ever vigilant against those who would strong-arm the judiciary into adopting their preferred policies, or who seek to undermine the ability of the courts to play their constitutionally ordained role. This is where you

come in. There is no natural constituency for judicial independence. So we need lawyers to get out there and defend it. We need you to explain the importance of judicial independence to the public, and to defend its basic preconditions to the other branches of government."



Dan Kahan, Deputy Dean and Elizabeth K. Dollard Professor of Law

“...being an effective advocate requires an ability to arouse the situation sense of other lawyers, including judges. Those who believe that making convincing arguments consists in knowing formal rules are professionally autistic. They can’t make arguments that engage the emotional motivations of

those they are trying to persuade. Only those who understand the role of situation sense, who are acquainted with the norms that construct it, are poised to explain, to predict, and through strategic framing and advocacy, to *influence* legal decision makers.”