



## “So we graduate together, you and I.”

Those were the first words Yale Law School Dean Harold Hongju Koh spoke during his commencement address to the class of 2009 on Memorial Day, May 25. It was a role reversal for Dean Koh, who, in his five years leading the school, was accustomed to bidding the graduating class good luck and Godspeed as they embarked on their journeys into an unknown future. Today, it would be farewell for Dean Koh, too, as he anticipated heading to Washington as Legal Adviser to the U.S. State Department.

Yale Law School Acting Dean Kate Stith opened the festivities shortly after noon, recognizing the “great effort and long hours” the families and friends of the 229 degree candidates and members of the Yale Law School family had sacrificed to make the day possible. In keeping with the holiday, she paid tribute to the veterans of the nation’s armed services and asked for a moment of silence in their honor.

Soon into the ceremony, Acting Dean Stith announced a surprise guest—Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton ’73—who entered to a standing ovation.

Secretary Clinton, who had earlier in the day received an honorary degree from Yale University, spoke for about five minutes, noting that when she arrived at the Law School in the fall of 1969, she never could have dreamed where the experience would lead her.

Next to speak was Justus S. Hotchkiss Professor of Law Michael Graetz, who is retiring after more than twenty-five years on the faculty. He reminded the graduates that the pursuit of happiness is an inalienable right and encouraged them to navigate their paths “with energy and laughter.”

The announcement of degree candidates followed, after which Acting Dean Stith introduced Dean Koh as “an outstanding scholar; a challenging and beloved teacher; a champion of the rule of law and of human rights; and a compassionate and insightful adviser to countless colleagues and former students around the country and around the world.”

Dean Koh spoke of his life’s passion, international law, saying that following international law is in America’s interest.

“If we don’t obey international law, we squander our moral authority and shrink our capacity to lead.”

He shared three important lessons he learned at Yale Law School: stick to your values, don’t shy away from taking risky stands, and remember that when you make the tough choices, you are likely to be criticized.

The final speaker was social entrepreneur William Drayton ’70, founder of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public. Drayton had also received an honorary degree from the University earlier in the day.

Acting Dean Stith ended the ceremony by encouraging the graduates to pursue the highest ideals and reminding them that ensuring the public interest is not limited to serving in government or in nonprofit organizations.

“Those who enter the honorable practice of law in any organization, public or private,” she said, “contribute to the public interest by advising clients on how to conduct their affairs within the law, and by counseling them how to do so in a way that causes the least harm.”

## COMMENCEMENT 2009

Photographs by William K. Sacco, Yale University Media Services and Yale Law School Staff

website 

For more on Commencement 2009, including photos and a video, visit [www.law.yale.edu/news](http://www.law.yale.edu/news).



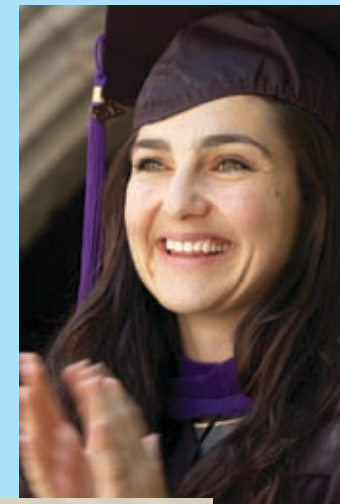
**Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton '73**  
“In this time of great challenge and opportunity, we need the very best we can possibly recruit into public service.”



**Justus S. Hotchkiss Professor of Law Michael Graetz**  
“Throughout your career ahead, ask yourself ‘Do I like my work?’ and ‘Is what I’m doing helping at all to preserve liberty and promote justice?’”



**Dean Harold Hongju Koh**  
“Some of you aren’t sure exactly what comes next. Neither am I. But on this beautiful day, full of hope, we put aside uncertainty for optimism.”



**Acting Dean Kate Stith**  
“We know that you have the ability, the education, and the ambition not just to successfully navigate the world of law and legal practice as they evolve in the future—but actually to influence their evolution. We look forward to the better profession, and to the better world, that you will help create.”

