



LAW, LOVE, AND WORK IN SERVICE OF A WISH GRADUATES ENCOURAGED TO USE LAW TO WORK TOWARD AN IMAGINED FUTURE

Photographs by William K. Sacco, Yale University Media Services, Harold Shapiro,
and Yale Law School Office of Public Affairs



COMMENCEMENT 2014

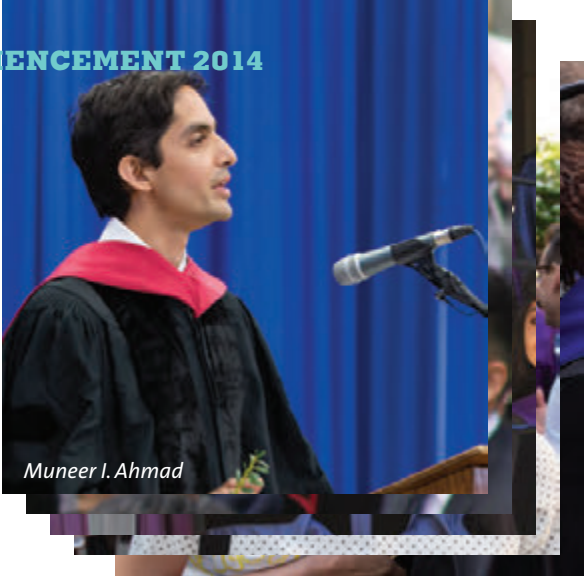
A celebratory crowd of more than 1,400 friends, family, and faculty honored the more than 200 graduates of Yale Law School on Monday, May 19, at the William K. Lanman Center at Payne Whitney Gymnasium.

In his remarks to the Class of 2014, Dean Robert C. Post '77 advised graduates against dwelling on the “small things we imagine we can control: a good clerkship, a high salary, a prestigious career placement.” Instead, Post said, “I have a modest suggestion about how to find your way through the unpredictable and hostile world that awaits you after this graduation: you must make a wish.”

In explaining the context for his advice, Post invoked the two experiences of time described by the literary critic Walter Benjamin: the short-term “gambler’s” sense of one proposition after another, which is ultimately unfulfilling; and the more substantive, long-term understanding of time, which is defined by work in service of a wish. “A wish,” Post said, “can accomplish something remarkable. It can fuse together the scattered fragments of your life into a coherent and extended temporal arc. It can infuse the entirety of your life with integrity and purpose.”

Two other speakers joined Dean Post in addressing the graduating class: Clinical Professor of Law Muneer I. Ahmad and Michael H. Posner, a leader in international human rights who received an honorary Doctorate of Law from Yale University earlier in the day.

A gallery of photographs, a video of commencement ceremonies, and full texts of the speeches by Dean Post and Professor Ahmad are available online at www.law.yale.edu.



Muneer I. Ahmad



Michael H. Posner



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... It can infuse the entirety of your life
with integrity and purpose.

— Dean Robert C. Post

Professor Ahmad followed Dean Post’s remarks with an invitation to each graduate to re-connect with the self they were upon arriving at the Law School. “This is a moment to listen to your individual voice,” said Ahmad. In inviting the graduates to reflect on the meaning of their education, he challenged them to consider “not just what you have accomplished as students, scholars, and practitioners, but who you have become as people, and how you can best deploy your talents in a world of overwhelming, even unbearable need.”

Ahmad advised the graduates to not be content in allowing their learned competencies in “intellectual engagement, persuasion, and lawyering” to provide the final answers when faced with the profound—and inevitable—moments of “inarticulate” incomprehension.

These “inarticulate moments,” Ahmad explained, are often informed by the issues that live closest to the self, and he offered moving examples from his own life. After hearing his mother recount her experience of hunger because of gender biases in her native Pakistan, Ahmad had no easy answer: “Gender-based hunger was not some abstract sociological phenomenon, it was a lived experience whose

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The limits of language are merely frontiers. — Muneer I. Ahmad

pangs echoed in my own household, even though I had not previously heard them.”

Ahmad counseled the Class of 2014 to approach these “inarticulate moments” as opportunities to expand the realms of meaning and justice for both oneself and the shared world bound by the word of law: “The pioneering of new language is a form of contestation, and can help us

to anticipate new and more inclusive realities... My hope is that by learning law’s language, and developing a sophisticated ear, you have learned how to develop new languages of your own. The limits of language are merely frontiers.”

Following Ahmad’s remarks, Michael H. Posner addressed the graduates. Posner served as assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor from 2009 to 2013, and before that, as head of Human Rights First from 1978 to 2009.

Posner touched on three points in his remarks, first acknowledging the sense of powerlessness and skepticism one might feel when faced by a world of complex and seemingly intractable problems. “I want to say, though, that you can make a difference,” Posner reminded them. “From my vantage point, this is one of the few things that is absolutely crystal clear.”

Posner then recounted personal experiences that illustrated the long-term advances in human rights work during his lifetime, and reminded the graduates to recalibrate their sense of time. “Human rights work is not a sport for the short-winded,” he explained. “Progress comes in decades.” Posner highlighted numerous advances in human rights, including the prominence of human rights organizations in the international community, the fall of South African apartheid and Latin American military dictatorships, and the protection of LGBT rights. Posner said, “The history of the last forty years happened because people like you entered the fray and they chipped away at problems that they were told were politically impossible to fix. There is no substitute.”

Posner closed by inviting the Class of 2014 to consider government service somewhere in their careers. “Political participation and government service is the lifeblood of any democracy,” Posner said. “If good people don’t serve, we will not get the system we deserve.”



Dean Post, in his speech to graduates, quoted from the poet W. H. Auden, who famously compared law to love in his poem, “Law, Like Love.”

Like love we don’t know where or why
Like love we can’t compel or fly
Like love we often weep
Like love we seldom keep.

Both law and love, Post explained, are “essential and inescapable” dimensions of human life. “To lose faith in the possibility of law is therefore to betray our humanity.”

In his closing, Post told the Class of 2014: “My wish for you on this auspicious day is that you leave here with

your own wish, one that will give purpose and shape to your life. My hope is that you will have the competence and confidence to pursue that wish, and that the pursuit will give you always a reason to look up from your books, from your career, from your life, and to ask why things can or should be different and better. My hope is that fidelity to your wish may help deflect the anxieties that will inevitably afflict you. And my hope is that, as my great predecessor Dean Harold Koh used to say, you will not die with your options open.”

Two hundred and forty-nine degree candidates were honored at the ceremonies, including 218 JDs, 24 LL.M.s, 4 JSDs, and 3 MS.L.s.

WHAT’S NEXT?

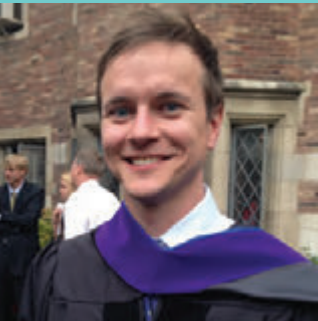
We asked members of the Yale Law School Class of 2014, “What’s next?” Here are some of their responses.



RAVI RAMANATHAN
I’ll be working at a law firm for a year, then clerking for two wonderful federal judges on the SDNY and the Second Circuit.



CHASE SACKETT
Starting in September, I’ll be in DC working on federal housing policy at the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development as a Presidential Management Fellow.



WEBB LYONS
I’m heading to San Francisco to clerk for Judge Vince Chhabria, newly appointed to the northern district court of California. Should be a cool experience clerking for Judge Chhabria during his first year on the bench.



AMANDA EL-DAKHAKHNI (center)
Hoping to get some traveling in after the bar exam and before settling in NYC to work for Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer US LLP.



JOHN JAMES “J. J.” SNIDOW
I’ll be clerking for Judge Raymond Kethledge on the Sixth Circuit in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and then for Judge Amul Thapar in the Eastern District of Kentucky (my home district). Before I start the clerkships, I’m working in DC for the summer for Greg Garre in Latham & Watkins’s appellate group. After clerking, I hope to practice law either in DC or back home in Kentucky.



ADAM GOLDENBERG (right)
I’ll be clerking at the Ontario Court of Appeal in Toronto next year.



LAUREN HARTZ
I’m thrilled to join Sanford Heisler, a public interest class action litigation boutique, where I’ll represent women suing their employers for gender discrimination. All three of the firm’s offices are managed by fellow Yale Law Women! After a year at the firm, I’ll head to NYC for a clerkship.



JEANNETTE FIGG
Right after graduation, I am flying to London to catch a series of transcontinental trains, eventually arriving in Hong Kong a few weeks later. Then I’m off to Los Angeles to study for the bar. Finally, I will be returning to New York to start at Cleary Gottlieb in the fall.



ALEX HEMMER
I’ll be in DC this summer, studying for the bar in the humid Washington air. Then I’m spending a year in sunny San Francisco as a clerk for Judge William Fletcher on the Ninth Circuit.



BEN EIDELSON (left)
I’ll be clerking at the DC Circuit next year, and I hope to keep working on some academic projects about the philosophical foundations of discrimination law.

GRANT DAMON
Working for O’Melveny & Myers in New York for a year, then clerking for Judge William H. Walls in the District of New Jersey.