

JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL

COMMENCEMENT 2015



By the Book

HARVARD'S 364th was a *mannerly*, by-the-book Commencement. After a year of campus protests seeking divestment from fossil-fuel investments, advocates let signs and buttons carry their message. The graduates-to-be, normally somewhat spontaneous, barely deviated from the Morning Exercises script: eager-beaver M.B.A. candidates, directed by the provost to rise for their degrees, had already done so, as he observed; Kennedy School students let loose "Ellwood! Ellwood!" cheers for their departing dean, David T.; and undergraduates greeted their new leader with shouts of "Dean Rakesh!" Khurana—the sorts of disobedience acceptable to administrators. And although rising

heat and humidity from Tuesday through Thursday suggested rain (giving graduation planners something to fret about), the thunderstorms steered north and west, leaving celebrants warm at worst.

The proceedings were serious-minded, too. At Phi Beta Kappa's 225th literary exercises, in Sanders Theatre on Tuesday morning, May 26, one of the works read by poet Laura Kasischke, "To Try," opens with lines that seemed to offer the audience a wish, a prayer, or a set of instructions on how to encounter the world: "Like a bird in no hurry, flying/to fly/not to fly somewhere: May I./ And the brain, a gate, not/open or closed."

That theme, about how to *be* in the world, unspooled in part during the many talks that followed by playing off the tensions between disruptive innovation, led

Clockwise from top left: Kennedy School mid-career-degree celebrants (from left) Tadahiro Ikemoto, M.P.H. '14, M.P.A. '15, of Japan, Zhuldyz Bakytzhanova, M.P.A. '15, Sahar Albazar, M.P.A. '15, of Egypt, and Alvaro Henzler, M.P.A. '15, of Peru; legal glitter; master in urban planning Ethan Lassiter, of Minneapolis; Dunster House members Brent Westbrook (left), of Clayton, Missouri, and Jeffrey Fischer, of Short Hills, New Jersey

THIS PAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STU ROSNER (2); JIM HARRISON (2)



Clockwise from top left: Ph.D. recipients Jacqueline Cooke Rivers (African American studies) of Boston (at left), and Jovonne Bickerstaff (sociology) of Akron, Ohio; Adams House onlookers (from the back) Victoria Zhuang of Galena, Ohio, Ariel Churchill of Clarksburg, West Virginia, and Olivia Krusel of Victoria, British Columbia; class of 2015 First Marshal Sietse Goffard, of Bedford, Texas, with fellow class leaders Bob Wu of Sydney, Australia, Casey Fleeter, of Columbus, Ohio, and Christina Nguyen, of Irvine, California, X'ving their Commencement pride; new doctor of medical sciences in oral biology (D.M.Sc.) degree-recipients Mindy Gil, D.M.D. '11, of Palos Verdes, California, and Peter Charles Grieco, of Garfield, New Jersey, reminding revelers about good dental hygiene

by determined individualists, and the essential efficacy of institutions. The presence of speakers such as Intuit co-founder Scott Cook, M.B.A. '76 (at Harvard Business School's class day) perhaps symbolized the new, technologically driven innovation era—as did the appearance of Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg '06 (literally, on Commencement day, and figuratively, in President Drew Faust's afternoon address). Faust, worried about the excessively inward focus of the selfie generation and rising hostility toward organizations, made the case for institutions, including the one she leads (see page 20). Guest speaker Deval L. Patrick talked about the worthy challenges (poverty, racism, climate change) to which institu-

tions—and organizing and political power—might be applied (see page 23).

The lives of several guests embodied the fruitful intersection of issues commanding action and compelling responses: individually at first, and then on a larger, institutional scale. At its class day, the Law School heard from former U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona—grievously wounded by a would-be assassin in 2011—

and her husband, retired astronaut and U.S. Navy pilot Mark Kelly; they founded and lead Americans for Responsible Solutions, which focuses on reducing gun violence. The Graduate School of Design's keynoter, Rick Lowe, launched Project Row Houses, an arts-based, urban-revitalization enterprise, in an African-American neighborhood in Houston. And the Kennedy School's guest, David Miliband, president

and CEO of the International Rescue Committee, aids those displaced by conflict and disaster (often heartbreaking work much in demand of late, from Iraq and Syria to Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal).

Two honorands represented this commitment at the highest level. Gynecologist Denis Mukwege founded—and despite an attempted assassination, con-

tinues to lead—Panzi Hospital, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, to care for the thousands of women in his conflict-plagued country who are subjected to sexual violence and rape, both deployed as weapons of war. And closer to home, in a year when (as Deval Patrick forcefully put it) “The killings of unarmed black men by unaccountable police officers in

Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, New York, moved young people and many others to take to the streets to proclaim that Black Lives Matter,” the work of Bryan Stevenson, J.D.-M.B.A. '85, on behalf of those ill-served by the criminal-justice system, resonated particularly loudly. Faust cited him in her Baccalaureate address, as did Pusey minister Jonathan

Honoris Causa

Six men and four women received honorary degrees at Commencement. University provost Alan M. Garber introduced the honorands in the following order, and President Drew Faust read the citations, concluding with the recipient's name and degree. For fuller background on each honorand, see harvardmag.com/honorands-15.

Wallace S. Broecker. Newbury professor of geology at Columbia, popularly credited with coining the term “global warming.” Doctor of Science: *Prescient Poseidon of geoscience, fathoming the depths and currents of climate change, he has peered far into our planet's past and compelled our concern for its future.*

Robert M. Axelrod. A University of Michigan political scientist, acclaimed for interdisciplinary work on the evolution of cooperation. Doctor of Laws: *Impelled by the perils of nuclear war, intrigued by biology's complex puzzles, a paramount scholar of cooperation and modeling and a model of scholarly cooperation.*

Linda B. Buck. Co-winner of the 2004 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine for the discovery of odorant receptors and the organization of the olfactory system.

Svetlana Leontief Alpers '57, Ph.D. '65. Professor of history of art emerita at the University of California, Berkeley. Doctor of Arts: *Connoisseur of the craft of informed looking, transformative force in the history of art, she posits that pictures need eyes, not words, and*

spurs us to see the familiar anew.

Peter Salovey. President of Yale University; Argyris professor of psychology, and co-developer of the “emotional intelligence” framework. Doctor of Laws: *Superlative psychologist and Bulldog in chief, who likes his Veritas with a dash of Lux; a warm and wise Eli of high E.I., whose world, like his grass, is ever blue.*

Bryan Stevenson, J.D.-M.B.A. '85. Public-interest lawyer, founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative. Doctor of Laws: *His deep conviction that justice must be done has undone convictions of the wrongly accused; tireless, dauntless, his eyes on the prize, he presses on, the upward way, to point us toward a higher ground.*

Patricia A. Graham. Warren professor of the history of American education and dean of

Harvard Graduate School of Education emerita. Doctor of Laws: *How schooling can foster both knowledge and virtue has set the syllabus for her singular life; an adroit leader and trusty trustee, she has not just illuminated history but made it.*

Denis Mukwege. Founder and medical director of Panzi Hospital in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a leader in treating women victimized by wartime rape and in campaigning against sexual violence. Doctor of Science: *An incarnation of courage and compassion giving succor to his country's women of valor; for him, it is always a time to heal and a time to build up, a time to love and a time for peace.*

Renée Fleming. Internationally renowned opera soprano. Doctor of Music: *Consummate Contessa, soprano sublime, exalting her art for exultant audiences, renowned for her arias but not for her airs; when her voice soars, our hearts sing.*

Deval L. Patrick '78, J.D. '82. Former two-term governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Doctor of Laws: *Exemplar and exponent of the American dream, embracing commonwealth as a lived ideal, he has worn his excellency with humility and grace, while kindling in others a reason to believe.*



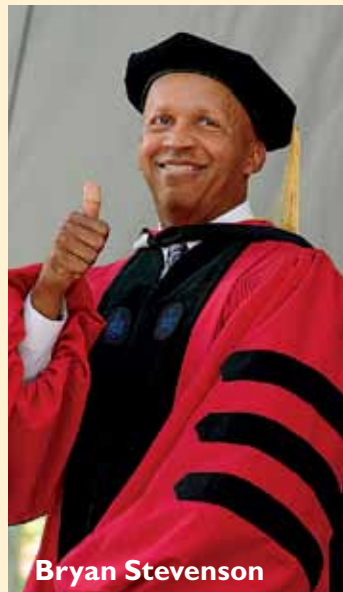
Patricia A. Graham



Peter Salovey



Linda B. Buck



Bryan Stevenson

Walton in his benediction at the end of the Morning Exercises.

HARVARD'S OWN engagement with big issues played out during the week, too. Patrick urged the accomplished graduates "to be a little uneasy" about what they knew, and about the state of the world, and to become "uneasy leaders" addressing urgent issues like climate change. One leader thus made uneasy was President Faust, seated to his left; she was on the receiving end of days of sit-ins by divestment advocates—both students and their alumni and faculty supporters. Tellingly, the first honorary degree conferred went to Columbia's Wallace S. Broecker, the "grandfather of climate science."

In the afternoon, the first Harvard Medallist was Charles J. Egan Jr. '54, a longtime alumni interviewer and fundraising leader. He was also, in the months before becoming

president of the Harvard Alumni Association, a leading critic of proponents of divestment from South Africa in the late 1980s, and a campaigner against divestment advocates who ran as petition candidates for election to the Board of Overseers. (Archbishop Desmond Tutu, LL.D. '79,

winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, was elected as one such candidate; the magazine reported on the controversy in the July-August 1989 issue.) Much of *The Harvard Crimson's* twenty-fifth reunion coverage focused on the divestment debates during the class of 1990's College years.

Intellectual pride of place for the week went to Radcliffe Day. Friday morning's panel of all-star legal scholars assessed the work of another eminent institution: the U.S. Supreme Court under current chief justice John G. Roberts '76, J.D. '79. That was prelude to the lunchtime recognition of associate justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, L. '59, LL.D. '11, as this year's Radcliffe Medallist—with prefatory remarks by her retired colleague David H. Souter '61, LL.B. '66, LL.D. '10. (Radcliffe previously honored former associate justice Sandra Day O'Connor, so

schedulers for Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan, J.D. '86, should keep final Fridays in May open. They are probably *not* yet in line to be portrayed in a movie featuring actress Natalie Portman '03, who will play Ginsburg in the forthcoming "On the Basis of Sex." Portman, the College's class day headliner, was odds-on the most sensibly clothed speaker during a summery week, in a crisp eggplant-print dress—befitting a vegetarian.) Radcliffe was rewarded with the week's best day: clear, dry, in the 70s, courtesy of Boston's then-deepening drought.

FOR ALL the high-mindedness, there was time for art as well. Renée Fleming sang "America the Beautiful," sustaining a recent Commencement practice of coaxing a performance from an arts honorand. When she received her degree, the Commencement Choir sang a bit of her beloved Dvořák. (When Peter Salovey, president of Yale, received *his* degree, the University Band played a few bars of the Bulldogs' fight song.)

And room for beauty, too. Amid the morning-after detritus, when discarded *Crimsons* and spent iced-coffee cups littered Harvard Yard, the campus rose above



Diva on duty: honorand Renée Fleming sings "America the Beautiful."

it all. The yellowwood trees planted two decades ago to bloom during Commencement were in full, splendid flower, their pendant racemes (like white wisterias) perfuming Tercentenary Theatre—at the heart of a great institution.

—JOHN S. ROSENBERG



Mather House's Francheska Loza (left) of McAllen, Texas, and Camara Sharperson of Columbia, South Carolina, know how to beat the heat.



Commencement Highlights

From Phi Beta Kappa and Natalie Portman to the Supreme Court's "notorious RBG," harvardmagazine.com/commencement brings you in-depth coverage from Commencement week.



Ginsburg Discusses Justice and Advocacy at Radcliffe Day Celebration

This year's Radcliffe Medallist reflects on her Supreme Court career.

harvardmag.com/rbg-15



Natalie Portman '03: "Your Inexperience Is an Asset"

The actress urges class members to forge their own paths.

harvardmag.com/portman-15



"Be Bold, Be Courageous, Be Your Best!"

Gabrielle Giffords and Mark Kelly speak at Harvard Law School Class Day.

harvardmag.com/giffords-15

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STU ROSNER

FROM TOP: TONY RINALDO/RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY; JIM HARRISON; MARTHA STEWART/HARVARD LAW SCHOOL