

## Wise Restraints

**A**s a historian, I often find it easiest to look forward by first looking back. I had occasion to do exactly that in October when I helped kick off Harvard Law School's Campaign for the Third Century, the last launch as part of the Harvard Campaign. Digging into history, I found it difficult to imagine the School at the time of its founding nearly two centuries ago—a floundering enterprise with just one faculty member and a single student. Enter Nathan Dane: a mild-mannered Harvard College alumnus who endowed a new Professorship of Law and through sheer persistence managed to persuade sitting U.S. Supreme Court Justice and Harvard graduate Joseph Story to fill it in 1829. Story did so with legendary vision, brilliance, and charisma.

From the beginning, Harvard Law School was animated by a pioneering idea of what the law could be—not a simply a craft, but a public-spirited profession that its first professor, Isaac Parker, called “a comprehensive system of human wisdom.” It has dominated American legal literature and developed whole new forms of legal education for generations. It is where Louis Brandeis shaped a constitutional right to privacy, Charles Hamilton Houston prepared to do battle against racial segregation, and a whole host of individuals, beginning in the 1980s, laid the groundwork for what is now a constitutional right to marry whomever you love. Today the School's faculty lead and inspire students in 29 clinical programs, from food law and policy to criminal justice reform, and they take on society's thorniest issues and argue them before the Supreme Court.

Harvard Law School students manage to master coursework, run influential journals, and contribute hundreds of thousands of hours of pro bono work annually. Over the past year, they have provided free legal services that benefit low-income clients close to home and in one hundred towns across the country and 44 countries around the world. They defend human rights in dangerous prisons from Boston to Brazil and advocate for tenants' rights, returning veterans, and criminal justice. They also have trained Syrian civil-society activists in peace-building techniques, studied the potential and limitations of body cameras for police, and created a legal handbook for immigrant entrepreneurs. Under Dean Martha Minow's leadership, these talented individuals develop a profound sense of how the law can serve society as they articulate and pursue common goals. The quest for justice and the search for wisdom are best met when we work together.

As Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., put it, “The aim of the Harvard Law School has been, not to make men smart, but to make them wise in their calling...,” a calling, as he later described, where “self-seeking is forgotten in...the best contribution that



we can make to mankind;... [and] our personality...swallowed up in working to ends outside ourselves.” The School has educated heads of state, legislators, business leaders, and educators, not to mention its share of film producers, generals, Olympians, and novelists—and our president and six of the current sitting U.S. Supreme Court justices. It is unsurpassed in training leaders at the highest level of public life across the United States and around the world.

Every year at Commencement, the Harvard president greets the new class of Harvard Law School graduates with these words, engraved in Langdell Hall: “You are ready to aid in the shaping and application of those wise restraints that make men free.” The Harvard Law School creates extraordinary leaders and brings clarity to confusing and divisive times. Never has the challenge felt more urgent.

Sincerely,