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Law: Illumination Against Darkness

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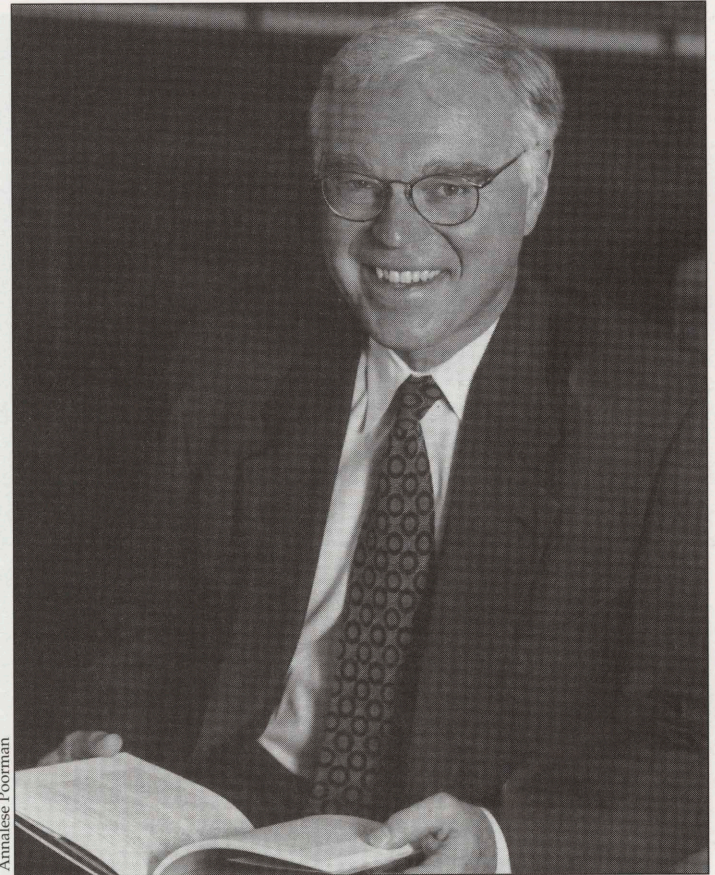
Law: Illumination against darkness

by Alfred C. Aman

The School of Law had an exceptionally successful admissions season this year. The Class of 2004 has the best academic record of any class we have ever admitted. This year's class members have a median grade point average of 3.45 and a median LSAT score of 161. This is a significant step forward for us, and the fact that we were able to take this step is a profound tribute to the dedication of our alumni — the dedication of your example, which inspires us daily, as well as your strong financial support for scholarships, essential to our recruitment efforts. The 214 JD students come to us from 98 different undergraduate institutions; 32 percent of them are 25 years or older. They have chosen law from a rare richness of life experience, including academic experience. In addition, we brought 65 new graduate students to the law school this year, through the LLM program. These students represent 15 countries; they have chosen to study American law, taking time away from exceptionally promising careers. All of these students, JDs and LLMs alike, are extraordinary individuals — and already a pleasure to know and to work among. We have high hopes for all of our students — and high hopes of them. Truly, together, they make us optimistic about the future of our country and the world.

Three weeks into our new school year, on Sept. 11, our law school community, along with everyone, struggled with our shock to make sense of events. Gratefully, I can tell you that the circle of our students and alumni was spared any direct loss that day. In our zone of safety, talk turned to what we know best — studying law and law teaching — and many of us asked ourselves and each other how these might withstand the emergency: Would they still seem important? Our collective answer was a resounding “yes.”

The great beauty — and perhaps the greatest promise — of our legal system always has been most clear when its prevailing ethos is illuminated against darkness, and when — for students, scholars, and practitioners alike — it is more than a means to an end. Law can provide the very model of a just society, by which I do not mean that law alone can provide justice, but that law in our democracy warrants the conditions under which people can attend to each other's needs, exchanging ideas — even



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those ideas expressed in the softest voices — under conditions of safety. Law is the archive of our society's values, an archive that makes plain both the triumphs and the struggles to make it a record of the history of justice. Law teaching opens that record — law's memory and all its unfinished hopefulness — to students, and, through them, to the future. Law and law teaching are more important now than ever before. I would like to share with you some words on this subject, from members of our faculty.

Aviva Orenstein expressed her thoughts in an e-mail to the school written on Sept. 13 from New York City, where she is on leave this year:

Studying civil procedure seems mundane after such a tragedy, but by doing so, we assert our drive to regain a normal, peaceful life and defiantly reject the disruption and barbarism of the attack. As future lawyers, studying the means of dispensing justice, it is essential that we safeguard civil liberties. Studying law and expressing concern for fair processes and just results is a noble answer to those who would try to make their case with terror: The rule of law is a cornerstone of civilized society. By

studying and honoring law, our students promote a culture of non-violence, peaceful resolution of disputes, and respect.

Aviva concludes:

In times of tragedy, values come into focus. The horrors of [the days following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks] have reaffirmed for me that our pursuit of law as a profession is at the deepest level an assertion of our shared values and democratic ideals.

David Williams gave a talk to our 21st Century Society last month in Indianapolis reflecting on these events (see page 3). At the close of his powerful remarks, he spoke of a Hasidic man, who, rushing from the collapsing towers, came upon a young Muslim man from Pakistan, Usman Farman. Farman had just begun to work at the World Trade Center; now he lay on the street. The Hasidic man found him and extended his hand to help him up, so they could both run to safety. David concluded:

So here is a vision of how people might go about taming violence. In a moment of great danger, these two men forgot the cultural scripts that kept them apart. Instead, they joined hands to create instantaneously a culture of two, rooted in the affection that facing danger together brings. And yet they did not have to become the same: Farman is still a good Muslim, and his rescuer an Hasidic Jew. But here is the difference: Now they are friends, and so they can write a bigger and better and braver story. And they give the world hope.

The work of law is never finished, and it does not stop at the limits of our communities, or our country. More than ever, we will be called on as lawyers to keep the idea of law bright, and this will take patience, creativity, and courage. More than ever, a legal education is more than a means to an end. We are educating lawyers to imagine new relationships and partnerships, new approaches to and uses of law, and, most of all, to resist cynicism. Law is among democracy's most powerful weapons against that particular enemy. ■

Spring semester at the law school

Outlined below are some of the exceptional speakers and events on the schedule during the spring semester, which we hope will give a sense of the breadth and the depth of the intellectual life of our school. We are proud of the spirit of inquiry and engagement that exists here at the Indiana University School of Law—Bloomington, and visitors, forums, and conferences like these all contribute to that.

Check our Web site for a regularly updated schedule of public events (www.law.indiana.edu/aca/calendarevents.html). You, our alumni, are always welcome to join us.

- Feb. 1-2, **Conference:** Prominent practitioners and scholars from around the country gather to discuss "Congressional Power in the Shadow of the Rehnquist Court: Strategies for the Future."
- Feb. 6, "Bringing the Terrorists to Justice: Where and How Should the Prosecutions Proceed?" A panel discussion with Professors **Craig Bradley, Daniel Conkle, David Fidler, and Dawn Johnsen**, moderated by **John Scanlan**.
- Feb. 11, **Hall Lecture:** Justice George Lamptey, of the Supreme Court of Ghana
- Feb. 13, **African Summit:** Justice Lamptey, former Liberian President Amos Sawyer, and Oyibo Afoaku, director of IU's Neal Marshall Black Culture Center, discuss legal, political, and social issues pertinent to the African continent.
- Feb. 27, **Ice Lecture:** Professor **Yvonne Cripps** inaugurates the Harry T. Ice Chair in Law with a lecture on "Combinations & Recombinations: A Lawyer's View of the Science and Art of Genetic Engineering." One of the world's leading legal scholars in the field of biotechnology, Cripps was appointed to the Indiana University law faculty in 2000.
- March 7, **Snyder Lecture:** Prof. Susan Marks
- March 20, **Harris Lecture:** Akhil Amar
- April 5-6, **Conference:** "Globalization and Governance: The Prospects for Democracy" marks the 10th-anniversary issue of the *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, which will publish the conference proceedings next fall. The keynote address will be given by Saskia Sassen, of the University of Chicago.