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Message From the Dean

Jeffrey S. Lehman
University of Michigan Law School

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MESSAGE FROM DEAN LEHMAN

Over the summer, I decided to devote my messages to the ways that a great attorney's "voice" can shape his or her relationship with listeners through choices about timing, syntax, tone, and word selection. In this message, I would like to reflect on two ways in which the events of September 11 altered our voices. The first has to do with the ways in which faculty, students, and alumni spoke within the Law Quadrangle during the subsequent two weeks. The second has to do with the way one of our graduates chose to speak out a month later.

At 11 a.m. on September 11, I cancelled a luncheon across campus and raced back to Hutchins Hall. I and my faculty colleagues fanned out among our students — in the hallways of Hutchins, in the Lawyers Club Lounge, and in the cafeteria — and we struggled together to comprehend the news that was unfolding.

I called an emergency faculty meeting that afternoon, in which we talked about how to speak with our students. We found ourselves in a completely unfamiliar role. We ourselves were anxiously seeking reassurance and comfort, and we knew that many of our students were looking to us for those same things. The term in *loco parentis*, long since banished from the scene of the modern university, had made a startling reappearance.

The voices we ultimately chose were, I think, instructive. We each found our own voices in the moment, and we resisted any impulse to impose an artificial uniformity on ourselves. At the same time, the voices we chose shared several notable qualities.

We were, first of all, honest with our students about our own grief and fears. We were honest about not feeling adequate to the task we had been given. We were honest about the powerful ambivalence we felt: on the one hand, we needed to interrupt our routines to acknowledge something profoundly different and significant; on the other hand, we needed to continue our routines, to draw on our own strengths, to contribute in our own ways, to be unbowed.

At the same time, we tried our best to be gentle. I like to think that the atmosphere within the Law Quad is usually considerate and warm. But this was different. Everywhere one looked, one could find examples of faculty and students reaching outward in new ways to understand and support the people around them. Whether in quiet coffee around the television, at a shared moment of silence, or in a meeting with Arab-American students to talk about their feelings, I saw people working hard to experience the world through others' eyes. For a few moments, it seemed as though we were all New Yorkers.

In the end, we were also reflective. We understood that the special gift of a legal education is the disposition to ask serious and difficult questions. And so we turned out to hear a panel discuss the authorization under international law for retaliation against the Taliban, and the limitations posed by international human rights law on the form of a response. And we turned out again to hear the Director of our Office of Public Service candidly discussing what it meant for him to have been a public defender representing a defendant in the first World Trade Center bombing trial.

Only a few weeks later, we heard in a different way from Robert Fiske, '55. Those of you who know Bob will recognize his voice — one that is exceptionally honest, gentle, and reflective. At this extraordinarily challenging moment in our history, Bob decided to speak out through action. He decided to make a statement on behalf of our nation's resilience, a statement that expresses our fundamental national values.

Bob committed himself to establish an extraordinary new program at the Law School. Beginning this year, the Law School will select three Fiske Fellows each year from among a pool of candidates who have chosen to enter government service upon graduation or after a judicial clerkship. Thanks to Bob's generosity, the Law School will cover all of the Fiske Fellows' educational loan payments for up to three years.

The Fiske Fellows program speaks to our nation's confidence in its democratically elected government. It speaks to the belief that we are well served when the most

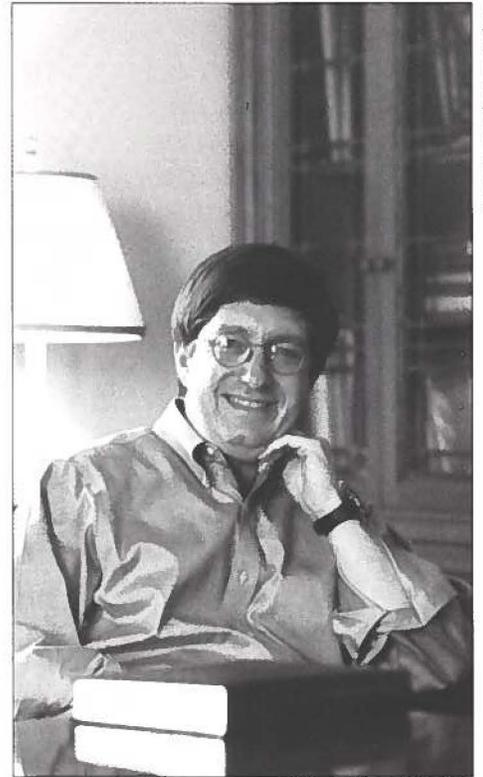


PHOTO BY THOMAS TREUTHER

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talented and best trained lawyers participate in the project of shared governance. And, like our response in the days and weeks after September 11, it affirms the University of Michigan Law School's continuing responsibility to provide leadership in our world with voices that are honest, gentle, and reflective.