

HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

magazine

SPRING 2024



BIG ISSUES. EXPERT INSIGHTS.
DEGREES OF FREEDOM
RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The central illustration depicts a large, orange-brown wall being pushed away by two stylized human figures. Behind the wall, a vibrant green landscape is revealed, featuring a series of white wind turbines and blue power line towers receding into the distance under a clear blue sky. The scene is set against a warm, orange-hued background that suggests a sunrise or sunset.

POWERING THE
ENERGY TRANSITION



FOR MLD-412: "Greater Boston Applied Field Lab: Advanced Budgeting, Financial Management and Operations" students helped Mayor Carlo DeMaria of Everett, Massachusetts, and his staff envision possibilities for city planning through virtual reality. LINDA BILMES, the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Senior Lecturer in Public Policy, teaches the course. Assistant Professor of Public Policy Justin de Benedictis-Kessner stands to her left.

PHOTO BY JESSICA SCRANTON

HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL takes on the most important public issues of the day—issues that affect communities and countries around the world.

In the following pages, you can read about our efforts to address the existential challenge of climate change. We feature our faculty’s analysis of the many technical, political, and policy issues surrounding a global shift to clean energy, and we share our efforts to be greener on campus. Several of our alumni stories also address climate and the environment—from Jane Gilbert MPA 1994, who is apparently the world’s first chief heat officer in local government, to Julie Wormser MC/MPA 2008, who helps to protect the Mystic River watershed here in Massachusetts.

Beyond work on climate, clean energy, and the environment, we feature a range of stories about people of the Kennedy School who are changing the world for the better.

One of these remarkable people is Athol Williams MC/MPA 2013. A poet, engineer, entrepreneur, and ethicist, he grew up in a township in apartheid-era South Africa, where he saw children in impoverished communities struggle to achieve literacy. He and his wife started an organization to provide books to children. He is also a whistleblower, speaking up against corruption he saw in his country. Another Kennedy School graduate whose work helps young people get ahead is Debra-Ellen Glickstein MC/MPA 2014. She created an organization to make a college education more affordable for all schoolchildren in New

York. I hope you find Athol’s and Debra-Ellen’s stories—and the others in this issue of the magazine—as stirring as I did.

Let me close by noting that this is my last Dean’s Letter in *HKS Magazine*. I will step down as dean at the end of this academic year and become a regular member of the faculty. I look forward to focusing again on economic policy—but I also will miss being dean. It has been an honor to serve such a talented and dedicated community of policymakers, public leaders, and changemakers. I am grateful for all the ways you contribute to making our societies safer, freer, fairer, and more sustainably prosperous.

With my best wishes,

Dean Doug Elmendorf

Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy

Dean Doug Elmendorf at the final Dean’s Discussion of the fall semester that explored the impact of AI.



JESSICA SCRANTON



Debra-Ellen Glickstein MC/MPA 2014 (center) with sixth graders from the NYC Kids RISE program

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY GRACE J. KIM

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IDEAS

HKS Sustainability by the numbers:

Harvard Kennedy School's efforts to promote the clean energy transition are directed both outward to the world and inward to our own community, where multiple projects have been underway to make the HKS campus cleaner, greener, and more sustainable.

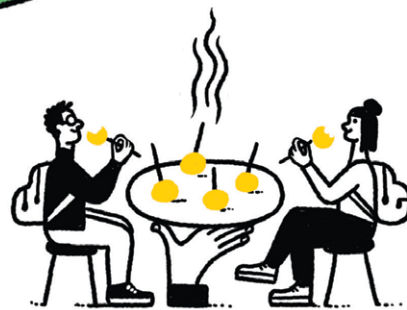
66,000

gallons of rainwater capacity in the HKS retention tank. Installed as part of the 2018 campus transformation, the tank helps the HKS landscaping program go "off-grid" and be self-sustaining in terms of water usage.



400

pounds of food diverted from the waste stream last year by the Food Chain List initiative. The list alerts members of the HKS community to extra food left over from meetings, conferences, and celebrations, which is then made available for free to faculty, staff, and students, including those who may be food insecure.

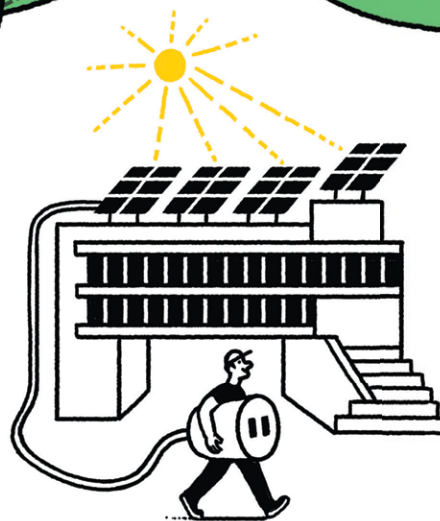


2

carbon offset projects, vetted by 45 experts from around HKS and Harvard, to mitigate the carbon emitted owing to faculty and staff air travel. The projects chosen were a prairie grassland conservation program in North Dakota and a program in Thailand that collects, contains, and destroys ozone depleting substances from the waste stream.

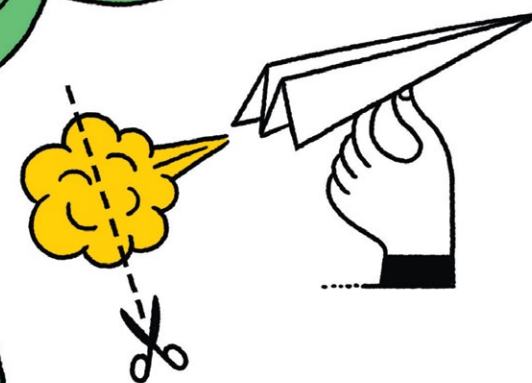
2018

The year HKS completed a renovation and green transformation of its campus. The design added three new buildings—Ofer, Wexner, and Rubenstein—that are all certified LEED Platinum, the highest level of environmental and energy certification. The "biophilic" design also brought natural elements—increased sunlight and green space—indoors, which studies show can enhance cognitive function, creativity, productivity, and a general sense of well-being in users.



100

megawatts (MW) of clean electrical power generated annually by the 153 solar panels in the HKS solar array, located on top of the Wexner, Ofer, and Rubenstein buildings. Additional panels are planned for the roof of the Littauer Center soon.



2,122

tons of carbon emissions emitted as a result of national and international air travel by HKS faculty and staff for work. The figure is the result of an extensive survey of faculty and staff to identify a baseline and to support finding ways to reduce unnecessary travel.



4,000

pounds of plastic waste every year removed from the Harvard-wide waste stream thanks to an initiative created by Dean Douglas Elmendorf's Sustainability Leadership Council, which is composed of 15 faculty, staff, and student representatives. Piloted at HKS and later adopted at seven other Harvard schools and departments, the program developed a new recycling stream for plastic bags, film, and wraps.



After Mayor Ben Walsh (third from right) participated in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative in 2019, Syracuse built its innovation practice with Diaz (center). Mayor Walsh, Nicolas Diaz, and colleagues on the Syracuse Analytics, Performance, and Innovation team joined fellows from Harvard College and Syracuse University on a tour of the bell tower on top of Syracuse City Hall.

ALUMNI
Creating Better Access to Data

NICOLAS DIAZ MPP 2020, who leads a team of innovators and data-analytics experts for the city of Syracuse, New York, has a goal to improve data ecosystems to deliver more equitable outcomes for residents. While at the Kennedy School, Diaz took advantage of field lab and fellowship offerings to test out the theories he was learning in the classroom in the real world in city government. He spent a summer in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, as a Bloomberg Harvard Summer Fellow, where he learned to drive change through collaboration and focusing on mayoral priorities. Now, as the chief innovation and data officer in Syracuse, Diaz is working on a project to make data more accessible, reliable, and equitable for all city residents.

What is the goal for this project?

This is one of around 60 projects that my team is

currently working on, all of which include working with the city to innovate and incorporate data in their operations and decision making. But this specific project deals with building out a larger investment in data ecosystems, which involves comprehensive changes in infrastructure, governance, and culture. We want to build the muscle of using the right data in our day-to-day decision making, not only with the mayor's office but within each layer of city hall. When we do that, and when the data is open and accessible to all, we'll have more results-driven policymaking that addresses the city's needs in an equitable way.

Why is creating better data ecosystems important?

It's not only about building dashboards but investing in the right data infrastructure and working with the community. When you do that, government activities are more transparent,

and the residents can use maps, visualizations, and other tools to understand what's happening in the city and how we are progressing toward our goals. Part of that is our data dashboard, called Open Data Syracuse. We currently have over 100 high-quality datasets, many of which are updated daily thanks to our investments in data infrastructure. People can review datasets focused on water, public safety, housing, recreation, and many other categories. For example, residents can see a map of all the properties in the city that have been issued code violations or a breakdown of those violations by ZIP code, both updated daily. And anyone can submit an idea for a new dataset they'd like to see.

How do you plan on engaging the community with this focus on data?

In addition to the open data program, we are hosting our first Open Data Day where

members of the community are invited to learn more about the data the city shares with the public, grow their data skills, network with professionals, and create their own project to submit in a data project contest. It's free and open to everyone and we have over 100 people signed up so far.

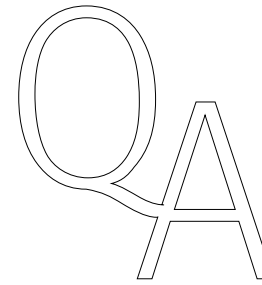
What are your future goals for the project?

We're looking forward to seeing the results from the Open Data Day. We reached out to different community groups, like Women in Coding and local colleges and universities. We also made connections with local activists and civil rights groups to collaborate and learn how data could be useful for their goals. We'll continue engaging with the community and building on the work we've done to make our data even more accessible.

—
By Brianna McKinley

FACULTY

How we affect the land, and how the land affects us



IN HIS WORK understanding how humans are changing, and being changed by, the environment, **CHARLES TAYLOR** believes in the importance of being both on the ground as well as zooming in from outer space. Taylor, an assistant professor of public policy affiliated with HKS's Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government and Harvard's Salata Institute, is an environmental economist. His work has allowed him to engage with farmers around the world, understanding their unique needs and environments. It has also pushed him to use new methods, such as remote sensing technology and satellite data, to understand problems more systemically.

How does your research and teaching connect to solutions to pressing problems in the world today?

I am an environmental economist focusing on climate change, agriculture, water, and ecosystem services. At a high level, I'd say that I'm interested in how humans affect the land, and the reverse feedback of how land-use decisions affect human welfare. Often, I try to find ways to use new scientific and satellite datasets to answer socioeconomic questions. My research relates to several big policy questions. For example, what are the impacts of climate change on agriculture? How can we reduce damage from flooding? How can we sustainably manage groundwater? In the U.S. context, I've studied the impacts of environmental regulation such as the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, farm bill policy, renewable energy permitting reform, and more.

What research findings have been the most eye-opening or surprising for you?

I see a growing tension between environmental groups focused on climate change and those more focused on conserving land. I think this needs to be addressed or it could hinder renewable energy expansion. Climate change will have a large negative effect in aggregate, but its overall effects are complex. There will be some winners along with losers. Understanding this is important when formulating effective climate policy.

What do you want students to come away with from your teaching?

First, data and statistics: I want students to come away with an appreciation for the power of data to improve policy—as well as a healthy skepticism when people say, "The data tell us" What questions can they ask to probe such claims? Can they tell when

a chart is intentionally misleading? What quick back-of-the-envelope calculation can they make to assess whether a claim is valid? How do they communicate empirical findings in a clear and simple way for use in policymaking?

Why Harvard Kennedy School?

There are few places in the world with HKS's combination of policy reach, academic rigor, and network of world-changing students and alumni. And with the increasing urgency of our world's environmental challenges, the launch of Harvard's Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability makes it a very exciting place to be!

What else would you like the Kennedy School community to know about you and your work?

I went to graduate school after co-founding a company that invested in land and environmental assets with a goal of developing sustainable land management business models. Through my work I spent countless hours with farmers, land managers, and scientists, gaining knowledge about real estate,



agriculture, climate dynamics, natural resource management, and environmental regulation—both in the United States and internationally. I saw up close the trade-offs between economic development and environmental protection, as well as the complementarities. Smart policy is needed to address large-scale societal challenges like climate change, water pollution, natural resource depletion, and ecosystem conservation. I hope my research and teaching can help in solving these problems.

COURTESY OF BLOOMBERG CENTER FOR CITIES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY

WINSTON TANG



Wages grow faster for college graduates who have more opportunity for on-the-job training

What's the issue?

A college education sets workers up for higher wages later in life. But how and where to those gains come, and how can we design better jobs for everybody?



What does the research say?

In new research, HKS Professor **DAVID DEMING**, a labor economist, looks at the earning arcs for workers with a college education versus those without. He finds that:

- The return on a college degree more than doubles between the ages of 25 and 55.
- Faster wage growth for educated workers is explained by job quality—after graduating, college graduates sort into professional jobs.
- This early sorting matters, because most lifetime wage growth is within jobs, not between jobs. Getting a job with opportunities for on-the-job learning is hugely important for wage growth: Wages grow much more with time spent in nonroutine jobs.
- Professional jobs allow for greater learning, allowing workers to build expertise, which in turn leads to wage growth.

What are the takeaways?

College acts as a gateway to jobs with higher wage growths because it allows workers to find jobs where they can develop expertise and productivity over time. Understanding how to design jobs so that workers can continue to learn is an important priority for future work.

Source: Deming, David. "Why Do Wages Grow Faster for Educated Workers?" HKS Working Paper Series RWP23-017, June 2023.



Nonviolent resistance is powerful—but we need to understand the field better

What's the issue?

There is a growing scholarly interest in nonviolent resistance as an alternative to armed resistance in conflicts. But there is also disagreement over whether nonviolence can achieve change.



What does the research say?

In a new article, HKS Professor **ERICA CHENOWETH**, whose research focuses on civil resistance movements, reviews and summarizes the points of agreement and disagreement among experts.

Chenoweth suggests that differences may be due to experts using different approaches and methods, and that the field would benefit from greater analytical precision. They say that the evidence suggests that flanks of organized armed violence appear to reduce the chances for otherwise nonviolent movements to succeed.

Chenoweth finds the study of nonviolent resistance remains important for two reasons:

- Many movements in the world deliberately adopt a nonviolent resistance strategy.
- The concept of nonviolent resistance is politically important.

Source: Chenoweth, Erica "The Role of Violence in Nonviolent Resistance." Annual Review of Political Science, Vol. 26:55-77 (Volume publication date June 2023).



Media narratives have generally blamed Democrats for housing crises in cities. Research suggests that is not the full story

What's the issue?

Cities in the United States are facing a housing affordability crisis. Prices have increased and there are fewer new homes and lower-rent rental homes on the market, making inequality worse. Democrats have received blame for unaffordable urban housing in the media, while figures like Trump have argued that Republicans are the champions of the suburbs and single-family zoning. At the same time, Democratic state and local governments are passing policies making building housing easier.



What does the research say?

Mayors' political affiliations may affect housing policy. Research by Assistant Professor of Public Policy **JUSTIN DE BENEDICTIS-KESSNER** and coauthors found that:

- Democratic mayors are more likely to increase multifamily housing in their cities.
- This increase often takes the form of more units in buildings rather than the creation of more buildings.
- However, in places where city councils can veto new developments, mayors' political affiliation does not make a difference. Electing a Democrat as mayor has no effect on housing in cities where councils have this power.

Source: de Benedictis Kessner, Justin, Daniel Jones, and Christopher Warshaw. "How Partisanship in Cities Influences Housing Policy." HKS Faculty Research Working Paper Series RWP21-035, August 2022.

FACULTY PORTRAITS BY MARTHA STEWART



Research suggests organizations with competitive masculinity harm both men and women

What's the issue?

HKS faculty member **ROBERT LIVINGSTON** and colleagues introduce the idea of Masculinity Contest Cultures (MCCs) in organizations and why they are likely linked to undesirable workplace behaviors such as toxic leadership, lack of psychological safety, and reduced employee well-being— affecting men as well as women and minority populations.

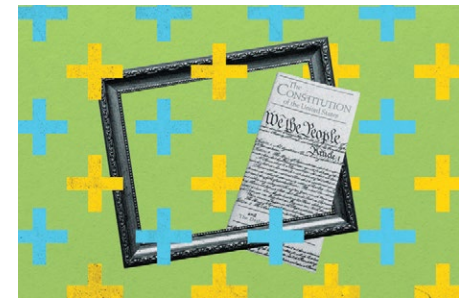


What does the research say?

The authors suggest a key reason the workplace gender revolution has stalled is that the workplace continues to support masculinity contests among men.

Organizations with MCCs define work as a competition won by those with traits men "ought" to have—being aggressive, assertive, independent, ambitious, competitive, and strong. The research indicates that such cultures create "cascading negative consequences that flow from the top down."

Source: Berdahl, Jennifer L., Marianne Cooper, Peter Glick, Robert W. Livingston, and Joan C. Williams. "Workplace masculinity contests and culture." Routledge Handbook on Men, Masculinities and Organizations. Ed. Jeff Hearn, Kadri Aavik, David L. Collinson, and Anika Thym. Routledge, 2024



Framing the preamble of the U.S. Constitution for today's audience

What's the issue?

Written over 200 years ago, the United States Constitution is still a powerful document, and its preamble serves as a guidepost to measure progress towards building a prosperous nation. Leadership experts say it is wise to revisit the framers' original language and intention to fully understand what it means to create "a more perfect union."



What does the research say?

HKS Public Policy Lecturer **DANA BORN** and her coauthor provide historical context to understand the Constitution's creation. They examine the preamble's language about establishing justice, "insuring" domestic tranquility, providing a common "defence," promoting the general welfare, and securing the "Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity."

A more perfect union does not just happen, the authors say. It is the responsibility of leaders to embrace the meaning of the preamble in order to move the country forward.

Source: Dimmock, Aaron; Born, Dana. "A More Perfect Union: Meaning in the Preamble of the United States Constitution," Journal of Character and Leadership Development (Fall 2023): Vol. 10 No. 3.



Check out more research insights

Learn about more HKS faculty research by visiting our website, where you can find publications, research insights and other features, multimedia, and more on a wide range of policy topic areas.



THE HEAT IS ON TO COOL DOWN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

With extensive experience in environmental issues and community development, Jane Gilbert MPA 1994 became the world’s first chief heat officer.

BY NORA DELANEY

THE WORLD IS GETTING HOTTER. And in South Florida, extreme heat is a growing problem. Miami-Dade County, home to around 2.7 million people and the most southerly metropolitan area in the continental United States, experienced record-breaking temperatures in 2023, with more than 130 days hitting 90 degrees Fahrenheit or more.

So it is perhaps no surprise that Miami-Dade County was the first municipal government to create the position of chief heat officer. In 2021, the mayor of Miami-Dade County, Daniella Levine Cava, appointed **JANE GILBERT MPA 1994** to the job. “The role of chief heat officer addresses the increasing health and economic impacts of rising temperatures,” Gilbert says. “That’s not only because of climate change, but also because of how we develop cities with more asphalt, less vegetation and tree canopy, more waste heat from buildings and vehicles. All of that can make cities up to 10 degrees hotter than their surrounding natural areas.”

Combining environment and community

A focus on the environment has been a constant throughout Gilbert’s life. She studied environmental science as an undergraduate at Barnard College in New York. “I was drawn to that field both because of a deep concern for humanity’s impact on the environment and on humanity itself,” Gilbert says. “I loved being able to think across disciplines—science, policy, economics—and to come up with integrated solutions.”

After college, she worked as an environmental management consultant to large national and international corporations and nonprofits. While this work appealed to her, she realized that she wanted to make a difference locally. “I wanted to make an impact on a community in which I lived and worked,” she says.

Gilbert came to Harvard Kennedy School in 1992 to make this pivot. “At HKS, I worked on housing and community organizing, community development, health equity, and education, with the

idea of trying to merge that environmental and urban community development work,” she says.

Miami, where Gilbert has lived for almost three decades, became that community that she was looking for. She started and led nonprofits focused on education, the environment, and community development. A job spearheading a project on sea level rise led to her being appointed Miami’s first chief resilience officer in 2016—her first experience working in local government.

From chief resilience officer to chief heat officer

It was in her role as resilience officer that Gilbert first began to see the importance of heat. “Miami is known internationally for its risks from, and responses to, hurricanes and sea level rise. And in part I got into the role of chief resilience officer to address those risks,” Gilbert says. But when she went out in the community, she found other climate concerns. “Surprisingly, it wasn’t sea level rise. And it wasn’t even hurricanes,” Gilbert says. “Extreme heat was the top concern by far because it’s what they were living day in and day out.”

Heat is a problem for people in low-income communities especially, Gilbert says. Looking for geographic patterns, her team found that some county ZIP codes had over four times the rates of heat-related emergency department visits and hospitalizations

than others, and the top correlating factors were high poverty rates and high land surface temperature.

“We have over 300,000 outdoor workers, who are primarily low income, who are exposed,” she says. And people who rely on public transport and wait at bus stops are at risk. “I’ve had bus drivers talk to me about having to call 911. ER doctors have shared that people were coming in from having to wait at a bus stop too long.” Hearing this feedback, Mayor Levine Cava collaborated with the Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center to help support the creation of the new chief heat officer role.

Addressing extreme heat in Miami-Dade County

Gilbert began by focusing on prevention. “One aspect is to inform and prepare people, so we created a ‘heat-season campaign,’” she says, which was deployed during the hottest times of the year, and targeted high-risk ZIP codes using a variety of marketing tools—ranging from social media to digital advertising in medical offices—and different languages to reach the county’s diverse population. Gilbert has also focused on targeted trainings, including for health care workers. “They are already trained in responding to heat-related illnesses,” Gilbert says. “But we wanted them to be able to identify people who may be particularly sensitive or vulnerable—that outdoor worker; that pregnant woman; that person on certain psychiatric medications that may not realize that they are more sensitive to heat.”

Gilbert’s team is also training citizens representing various community- and faith-based organizations. “We partnered with our emergency management and community-based organizations using a ‘train the trainer’ model so we could deliver the message in Spanish and Haitian Creole as well and target vulnerable communities,” Gilbert says. “Because it’s one thing to see something on a bus, but it’s another thing to hear your neighbor tell you.”

In addition to raising awareness and providing training, Gilbert’s team is promoting measures for people to cool their homes affordably, including weatherization, retrofits, and availability of backup power for cooling in the event of an extended power outage.

Finally, Gilbert is addressing urban heat islands by increasing tree canopy coverage. It’s been difficult to increase coverage beyond its current level of 20%, because of tree loss from hurricanes, urban development, and weakening state laws.

“We’re focusing on those areas with less than 20% tree canopy and a higher than 20% poverty rate. This year we’ve got close to \$4 million for this effort and we just received a \$10 million 5-year federal grant to further these efforts. We’re excited about that initiative because we’ve seen areas where we can bring down the temperature significantly with trees,” Gilbert says. Increasing tree coverage has other benefits—sequestering carbon, managing stormwater, improving air quality, and making urban areas more walkable. “I’m very passionate about that piece of our work,” Gilbert says, “it’s the longest-term, but it’s going to be the most rewarding.”



“Extreme heat was the top concern by far because it’s what they were living day in and day out.” JANE GILBERT

EVA MARIE UZCATEGUI/BLOOMBERG

WILFREDO LEE

POWERING THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Experts agree on two things when it comes to the clean energy transition: it will be hard getting to a net-zero future and failing to get there is not an option.

BY RALPH RANALLI

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GRACE J. KIM

WORKING ON THE WORLDWIDE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION is not for the faint of heart. One moment there's encouraging progress, the next brings reminders of the enormity of the task, looming deadlines, and the dire consequences of failure. The mood swings of faculty and researchers at the Kennedy School and across Harvard may best be summed up in the title of a recent talk at HKS given by the CEO of a clean power industry group: "The Future is Very Bright and Every Day is a Freaking Crisis."

"The sheer scale of it is mind-boggling," Harvard Vice Provost Jim Stock, director of the HKS-based Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability at Harvard University, says of the task of transitioning the global economy from fossil fuels to sustainable sources of energy. In fact, economists say it will require the largest reallocation of capital in human history. While there has been recent good news in areas like economics—with renewable sources now often providing power cheaper than equivalent fossil fuels—major challenges persist on other fronts: geopolitical, technological, political, and more.

Failure, meanwhile, is not an option. To avoid catastrophic consequences, the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says the world community needs to reach its self-imposed goal of keeping global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the target adopted as part of the Paris Climate Agreement in 2015. Crossing that threshold risks unleashing severe climate change impacts, the IPCC says, including frequent and severe droughts, deadly heat waves, flood-inducing rainfall, and rising seas. "We have to get to net zero," Stock says. "So we're going to get there."

To meet the target, the IPCC says greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2025 and decline 43% by 2030, which will require rapidly reducing fossil-fueled power, in favor of carbon-free energy sources like wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal. Across HKS, faculty, researchers, staff, and students are collaborating with others across Harvard, at other institutions, and around the world to understand and embrace the challenges and, hopefully, overcome them while there is still time.

GEOPOLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

With a worldwide infrastructure transition, you get global-sized challenges—but also opportunities.

In fact, the green energy transition may be the greatest opportunity that developing countries will have for foreign investment and for economic growth, says **RICARDO HAUSMANN**, the founder and director of Harvard's Growth Lab and the Rafik Hariri Professor of the Practice of International Political Economy. In an HKS Executive Education class

"Right now we're saying to them: 'We know you were trying to grow, but now you'll have to grow with some constraints—even though you may not have contributed a lot to the problem.' I find that frame unhelpful."

RICARDO HAUSMANN

called "Leading Green Growth," Hausmann and Professor Daniel Schrag like to paraphrase President John F. Kennedy when summing up a key part of their philosophy: "Ask not what to do to decarbonize yourself. Ask what you can do to decarbonize the world." A world that wants to decarbonize will need many things that will enable it to do so. They say policymakers should focus on how their countries can supply these enabling technologies, rather than just focusing on cutting their own emissions. "Right now the discourse to developing countries is: 'We know you were unsuccessfully trying to grow, but now you'll have to try to do it with additional constraints—even though you may not have contributed much to the climate problem,'" Hausmann says. "I find that frame unhelpful."

Hausmann points to Bolivia, South America's second-poorest country. It is counterproductive to focus on lowering Bolivia's emissions, he says, when it has the largest lithium reserves in the world—from which it has yet to extract the first ton. Hausmann says worldwide decarbonization requires everything from batteries, which currently use lithium, to wind turbines to solar panels to fuel cells to EVs and more, so for developing countries the questions should be: "Where in those value chains can you participate?"

He also says that so-called "powershoring"—moving energy-intensive industries closer to where clean power is being generated—is a potential growth boon for developing countries. Since green energy is mostly electricity, which is becoming cheaper but is less transportable, it will be more cost-effective to relocate industries such as steelmaking, chemical processing, and cement manufacturing than to bring power to where they are now.

That opens opportunities for countries with large solar reserves such as Morocco, Namibia, and Chile, he says, and ones with large hydropower reserves like Brazil, Paraguay, and Venezuela. Hausmann says the Growth Lab is now working in Morocco, which has a state-owned fertilizer enterprise called OCP that exploits some of the world's largest phosphate mines. Since, in addition to phosphate, fertilizer also requires ammonia, OCP currently imports it from countries that make it from natural gas, a high-emitting process. But OCP is planning to use Morocco's sun and wind to locally manufacture 1 million tons of ammonia a year—about a third of their production needs.

Yet the success of scenarios like the ones Hausmann has outlined will depend on a favorable geopolitical environment. That is not assured, says **MEGHAN O'SULLIVAN**, the Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs and faculty director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

In the case of Bolivia's lithium reserves, for example, the country last year signed an extraction agreement with a Chinese consortium—one of many international deals China has signed with countries that possess minerals critical to green technology like lithium and cobalt. China's dominance in the mining and processing of those critical metals has exacerbated its great power rivalry with the United States and is a potential bottleneck to adoption of green technology, says O'Sullivan, who also directs the Geopolitics of Energy Project at HKS.

"Right now we see a big effort to recreate those supply chains outside of China so that they're not susceptible to geopolitical hiccups," she said, during a recent talk on the geopolitics of energy. "That of course means that all of those inputs into clean energy are going to be more expensive and that it's going to take longer to do."

O'Sullivan says the green energy transition and geopolitics are closely connected, in a way where each influences the other. Russia, for example, responded to economic sanctions

over its invasion of Ukraine by cutting off gas supplies to European countries, which responded by importing more coal and subsidizing \$1 trillion in fossil energy to consumers. "These are two things you don't want to do if you're trying to make a clean energy transition," she says. Meanwhile, China

"We need to think more about how we can harness great power competition and use that in crafting a strategy that can advance the objective of getting to net zero"

MEGHAN O'SULLIVAN

has also purchased Russian energy as Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping move to create a new geopolitical order that minimizes the power of the United States—undermining global institutions working to promote the clean energy future in the process, she says.

But China, which has had major problems with poor air quality, has also invested heavily in domestic clean power, especially solar, says the Belfer Center's Venkatesh "Venky" Narayanamurti, the Benjamin Peirce Professor of Technology and Public Policy, Engineering and Applied Sciences, and Physics, Emeritus. In a recent paper highlighting successes among emerging economies in transitioning to green power, Narayanamurti and two co-authors said China added 158 gigawatts of solar power—equivalent to the total power generating capacity of Brazil—between 2014 and 2018 alone. Yet it is also sitting on 100 years of coal reserves, he says, "so it is still a question of economic development, because coal is cheap."

Which direction China will go—toward a clean energy future and domestic energy security or a fossil fuel future that maintains its geostrategic alliance with Russia—will have major implications for both the climate crisis and geopolitics, O'Sullivan says. "We need to think more about how we can harness great power competition and use that in crafting a strategy that can advance the objective of getting to net zero," she says.

COMPLEX ECONOMICS

China is also an X-factor in the economics of the clean energy transition. The country was once forecasted to surpass the U.S. economy as the world's largest by 2030, but now many economists say that may never happen, due to its aging workforce, declining population, and recent debt-driven real estate bust. "I think it has a couple of immediate impacts in terms of what the emissions profile looks like in China and then what that means in terms of global impact," says economist **JOE ALDY**, the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of the Practice of Environmental Policy and faculty director of the Regulatory Policy Program at the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government.

Economists see China's slowdown as a double-edged sword. A 2023 report released by the International Energy Agency found that even a 1% further drop in the country's growth rate would reduce 2030 coal demand by an amount equivalent to the coal consumed by all of Europe. At the same time, China dominates the strategic minerals market and produces 60% of the world's electric cars, 45% of its solar technology, and 30% of new nuclear capacity, meaning an economic slowdown could impact international supply chains for clean energy technology, the report states.

Yet China's mass production of solar panels combined with government subsidies for solar projects in countries like the United States has already helped power irreversible change in the economics of energy around the world, Aldy says. "Once you've made solar panels cheap ... they're not going to get expensive again," he said during a recent episode of the HKS PolicyCast podcast.

HKS Assistant Professor **CHARLES TAYLOR**, who researches the environment, agriculture, and climate change, says the relative costs for solar and wind power versus fossil fuels have flipped in half a decade. "From 2018 to 2023, the United States went from coal producing five times the amount of electricity as wind and solar combined, to just this past year wind and solar surpassing coal," Taylor says. "The power projects being developed today are almost all wind and solar—outside of some gas, almost no new fossil projects are getting built."

But even the good news on clean power generation is tempered by another variable: the cost of upgrading the U.S. power grid to handle new electrical capacity, including clean power generation and battery storage. In Washington, the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law added \$23 billion to the \$300 billion already being invested annually in upgrading the grid. But the International Energy Agency estimates that yearly spending will need to rise to \$600 billion per year by 2030 if the U.S. grid is to keep pace.

Cost issues also factor into other technologies being touted as potential solutions to the climate crisis. In a recent paper, Mohammed Al-Juaied, a research associate at the Belfer Center's Environment and Natural Resources Program, found that the technology for direct air carbon capture and storage (DACCS) will cost "trillions" of dollars and take several decades to reach the level of removing one gigaton—one billion metric tons—per year, even in the most optimistic scenarios. (Current annual worldwide carbon emissions are just under 37 gigatons.)

"The Inflation Reduction Act will probably cut our emissions to about 40% below 2005 levels by 2030, which is a stunning change in the trajectory of emissions."

JOE ALDY

POLITICAL CHALLENGES

The task of upgrading energy grids also illustrates the political challenges facing the clean energy transition. While it can take anywhere from one to five years to bring a solar or wind energy generation project online, permitting and building new transmission infrastructure can take as long as five to 15 years. Portions of those delays stem from permitting processes that give local residents and governments significant power to block or delay projects, Charles Taylor says. In recent years, tensions have grown even between climate activists

“If you look at any other kind of major technology transition that the world has undergone in the last 100 years, it’s rare one country is able to generate all of the technology it needs on its own.”

GORDON HANSON

and old-school conservationists, who often oppose clean energy projects proposed for natural areas, and Taylor says permitting reform is needed to balance ecological concerns with the need to get projects built quickly.

Climate crisis responses at the national level also hang in the balance. With Democrats controlling the House and Senate, President Joe Biden reaffirmed the United States’ commitment to the Paris Agreement and pushed through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022,

the first major American climate bill. “The Inflation Reduction Act will probably cut our emissions to about 40% below 2005 levels by 2030, which is a stunning change in the trajectory of emissions,” says Aldy. “If you look before 2009, the only times U.S. emissions fell year-on-year was during a major recession.”

The Inflation Reduction Act also includes provisions that much of the clean energy technology it funds must be developed in the United States. That boosted the bill’s popularity among domestic lawmakers, but some scholars say it may not be the best approach. “If you look at any other kind of major technology transition that the world has undergone in the last 100 years, it’s rare one country is able to generate all of the technology it needs on its own,” says GORDON HANSON, the Peter Wertheim Professor in Urban Policy. In a recent paper he co-authored, Hanson makes the case for what he calls a “Green Free Trade” agreement that would be established under the auspices of the World Trade Organization.

Meanwhile, Republicans took control of the House in 2023, and House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana has already pushed a House bill that would cut funding for renewables provided by the Inflation Reduction Act. And ROBERT STAVINS, the A.J. Meyer Professor of Energy and Economic Development and director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program and the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements, says America’s polarized politics make it nearly impossible to adopt more controversial yet vital policies like fuel and carbon taxes. “If one of the ways you increase energy

prices or increase carbon prices is through political action, then politics in the United States is a major barrier,” he says.

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MITIGATING THE EFFECTS

Climate scholars live in a world that alternates between optimism and pessimism. Aldy says he doesn’t know many experts who still think global warming will be held below the key 1.5 degrees Celsius target. Taylor points to the fact that, thanks to advances in worldwide clean energy, experts say “truly terrifying” warming scenarios like 5 degrees are increasingly unlikely.

In between lies an era that climate modelers call “climate overshoot”—where warming exceeds optimal levels for years or even decades but is brought back down again as fossil fuels are phased out in favor of clean energy sources. What virtually everyone agrees on, is that during this period, steps must be taken to mitigate climate change’s impact on humanity. “It’s going to be important for us to think about adaptation, about loss and damage for those most vulnerable around the world, and even other novel interventions on climate like solar geoengineering,” Aldy says.

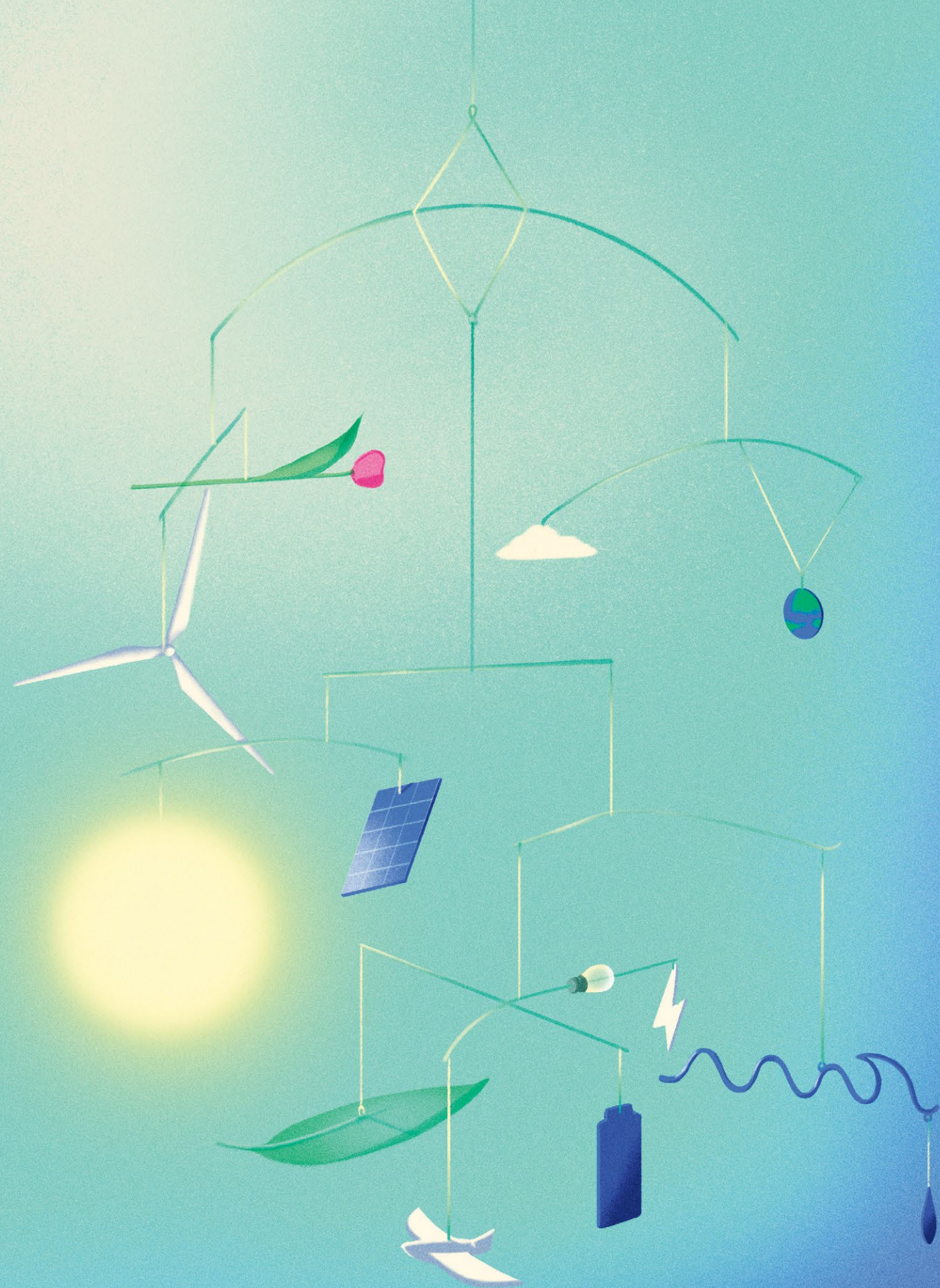
Several initiatives are underway in this area at HKS and Harvard, including research clusters at the Salata Institute that bring together scholars from various disciplines across the University, director Jim Stock says. The Climate Adaptation in South Asia cluster includes Professor Daniel Schrag, director of the Belfer Center’s Science, Technology, and Public Policy Program, as well as scholars and researchers from the T.H. Chan School of Public Health,

Harvard Medical School, Harvard Business School, and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Adaptation is a major issue in countries like India, where health experts say extreme heat events in some regions are now approaching the limits of human survivability, and the Maldives, where the World Bank estimates that sea level rise threatens to make 80% of the country uninhabitable by 2050. A second adaptation research cluster focuses on the Gulf of Guinea, where sea levels are expected to affect millions of coastal residents of eight African countries.

Meanwhile, the Strengthening Communities research cluster works at the community level—in places ranging from traditional energy-rich regions to agricultural communities to fisheries—to help local leaders and citizens understand both the social costs and the benefits of the clean energy transition, Stock says. “They need to know that they have a way to benefit from it, and that benefit really filters down to an individual level, so that people see this as a valid trade,” he says.

“If one of the ways you increase energy prices or increase carbon prices is through political action, then politics in the United States is a major barrier”

ROBERT STAVINS



Gordon Hanson's work also focuses on helping communities successfully navigate the clean energy transition, especially when it comes to jobs and employment, through the Reimagining the Economy project, which he co-directs with **DANI RODRIK**, the Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy. They estimate the clean energy transition will directly affect approximately 1 million workers in core fossil fuel jobs like drilling, mining, refining, and distribution, and as many as 800,000 workers in energy-intensive industries such as metal, paper, and chemical manufacturing that are usually located close to power generation sources. Hanson's policy recommendations include separating climate policy from the efforts to help distressed economic regions and expanding the scale of labor market retraining programs that help displaced workers get re-employed quickly.

"We've learned a lot about what works," Hanson says. "What we haven't done yet is scale those approaches or deploy information about how to implement them nationally."

MOVING FORWARD

One important priority during the climate overshoot era will be buying time for the technological advancements and infrastructure changes necessary for the clean energy transition to move forward. Stavins says one way to achieve that is to reduce the amounts of methane in the atmosphere, which is a major priority for HKS and the Salata Institute, where he is the principal investigator for the Reducing Global Methane Emissions research cluster.

"Methane is a very, very potent greenhouse gas, and if we're thinking about the next 10 years or 15 years ... it stands out as being vastly more important than CO₂," he says. While carbon dioxide can stay in the atmosphere for a century or more, Stavins says, methane breaks down in 12 to 18 years, so efforts to reduce it can have a dramatic short-term effect on slowing temperature rise. "Since the pledges under the Paris Agreement are for the year 2030, which is now just six years off, it's very important to think about the short term."

The Paris Agreement was adopted at the 21st United Nations climate conference (also known as the Conference of the Parties or COP). Stavins, who with Stock led a major Harvard delegation to COP28 in Dubai in December, says many people and media outlets misunderstand what the conference does. "People should not anticipate that there is this global government that makes decisions that then filter down," Stavins says. Instead, national delegations meet to discuss and update their individual country's voluntary plans to cut emissions (known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs).

While NDCs are not enforceable under international law, **KATHRYN SIKKINK**, the Ryan Family Professor of Human Rights Policy at HKS, says they have created a legal path for citizen plaintiffs—especially young climate activists—to turn

the climate crisis into a rights issue in national courts. When they win, the activists can "put some teeth" into their country's climate pledges and hold their own governments accountable, she says. In a case brought by the environmental group Urgenda and 900 citizens who cited the Dutch constitution and various international human rights agreements, for example, the highest court in the Netherlands upheld a decision forcing the government to increase its emissions reduction target from 20% below 1990 levels to 25% by the end of 2020. Similar cases have been brought in Colombia, Germany and by a group of young people in Montana.

"Litigation is one tool that we use together with many, many other tools that we need to bring about climate justice and to have a healthier future," Sikkink says.

Stavins says he considers COP28 a qualified success. While much of the post-event media coverage focused on the language of the closing statement, he said most of the important work at COP meetings now takes place outside the formal negotiations. Recent COP meetings have evolved into what Stavins fondly calls a sort of "climate expo," where people working on climate in various ways meet to exchange ideas and plan collaborations and where the roles of universities, NGOs, and private industry are more important.

The sizable Harvard COP28 delegation hosted a major event showcasing the research and policy work being done at HKS and across Harvard (under the auspices of the Salata Institute) on methane emissions and held more than two dozen bilateral meetings with various country delegations, environmental organizations, industry groups, corporations, and the media, Stavins said. While their current work on methane focuses on the oil and gas sector in the United States, they plan to expand to other sources worldwide including livestock, rice production, and landfills.

Looking to the future, Stavins says he's hopeful, but pragmatic.

"I am cautiously optimistic," he says. "But I do recognize that what's happened up until now has not put the countries of the world, including the European Union and the United States, on the trajectory that many people want. We're not going to be able to limit warming to 1.5 degrees—that's just not happening."

Stavins says that if he does allow himself any "unbridled optimism," it's not from developments in technology, geopolitics, or economics, but from observing today's youth infuse their passion into the clean energy transition. "Young people are so much more engaged in this issue," he says. "When I was their age, it was the Vietnam War. Now it's climate advocacy."

"Litigation is one tool that we use together with many, many other tools that we need to bring about climate justice and to have a healthier future."

KATHRYN SIKKINK

Defining Public Leadership. Championing Public Service.

APPOINTED IN 2015 TO LEAD Harvard Kennedy School, **DOUG ELMENDORF** will step down from this role at the conclusion of the 2023–2024 academic year. “I look forward to playing a different role here—that of a faculty member—and to having much more time to learn and teach about economic policy,” Elmendorf wrote in a message to the community this September.

Elmendorf, who previously served as director of the U.S. Congressional Budget Office, stewarded the Kennedy School through financial downturns and the COVID-19 pandemic. During his tenure, roughly 40 new faculty members came to the Kennedy School, from both the world of practice and the academy. He championed student financial aid and increased unrestricted funds used for this purpose by 50% over the past five years. Elmendorf also focused on diversity and inclusion, leading a range of efforts across the school and strengthening the community’s ability to speak and listen constructively across differences.

We look back at some photographic highlights of Dean Elmendorf’s tenure.

“The mission of HKS often situates it in the middle of some of the most contentious issues facing society today, and Doug has not shied away from this challenge. At the same time, he has worked to extend the academic excellence of HKS, through the disruptions of the pandemic and its aftermath. The School will continue to benefit from the foundation he has laid for years to come.”

Harvard Provost and Interim President Alan Garber



“Doug’s wise stewardship of the School during a global pandemic and his extraordinary efforts to build our faculty have put the School in a much stronger position than before he began as dean. It has been a privilege to work with Doug, and our community is grateful for his dedication and leadership.” David Deming, Academic Dean and Isabelle and Scott Black Professor of Political Economy



“Doug has been a champion for financial aid throughout his tenure as dean. The last few years have brought a global pandemic and changing economic conditions—through it all, Doug focused on ensuring that a broad range of students who are committed to serving their communities can attend the Kennedy School and learn from our world-class faculty.”

Debbie Isaacson, Senior Associate Dean for Degree Programs and Student Affairs



2015

2016

2017

2018

Photos by Martha Stewart (primary), Natalie Montaner, Lydia Rosenberg, Jessica Scranton, Kayana Szymczak, Winston Tang, Paul Clarke, RV Shots Multimedia



“One focus for Doug has been strengthening the ability of people in the Kennedy School to engage constructively in hard conversations. In 2022, Doug asked me to lead the Candid and Constructive Conversations Working Group, and we are currently implementing recommendations that came out of that group’s work. Faculty, staff, and students all contributed, and I am excited about what we are going to achieve as we put measures in place to help people engage across difference.” Erica Chenoweth, Academic Dean for Faculty Engagement and Frank Stanton Professor of the First Amendment

“In the last year, we have significantly expanded the Harvard Kennedy School Project on Indigenous Governance and Development, creating a new professorship, programming initiatives, and a senior fellowship. Doug has been a great supporter of our research and engagement and has worked hard to advance such faculty-led initiatives at the Kennedy School. In our case, he is truly leaving a lasting legacy.”

Joseph Kalt, Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy, Emeritus



“People are doing the hard work to make the world better. Indeed, good public policy and public leadership are changing our societies in positive ways. Principled and effective policymakers and public leaders are moving the world toward greater peace, prosperity, fairness, democracy, and sustainability. They are working with hope in their minds and hearts, and they are fostering hope across their communities, their countries, and our shared planet.” Dean Doug Elmendorf addressing graduating class of 2023



2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

The Dean's Discussions— a signature HKS conversation series—explore big issues with faculty experts, from climate change to the U.S.-China relationship to the promise and peril of artificial intelligence.

Big Issues. Expert Insights.

BY SUSAN A. HUGHES

IN THE 2016–2017 ACADEMIC YEAR, Dean **DOUG ELMENDORF** launched a signature series of faculty conversations to provide the Kennedy School community with opportunities to gather, learn, and discuss important issues, grounded in expertise. The motivation at that time was that, as a new dean, Elmendorf heard from students that they craved a chance to discuss current pressing issues outside the classroom, and to learn from faculty experts whom they might not have in class. It has been going every semester since. Each event features short presentations from a panel of HKS faculty members, followed by ample time for questions and comments from the Kennedy School community audience.

For the past few years, each semester has featured three or four “Dean’s Discussions” on prominent issues organized around a broad thematic umbrella—from challenges to democracy to the ramifications of COVID-19 to Russia’s war on Ukraine and more. **SARAH WALD**—adjunct lecturer in public policy, senior policy advisor, and chief of staff—moderates the conversations and Elmendorf provides opening remarks.

The fall 2023 Dean’s Discussions, under the theme of “Navigating a Rapidly Changing World,” focused on three topics: climate and energy, China’s role in the world, and artificial intelligence. Here is a snapshot of these conversations.



A few of the HKS faculty who participated in the Dean's Discussions over the past years.

Photos by Martha Stewart, Natalie Montaner, Lydia Rosenberg, Winston Tang, Jessica Scranton, Rose Lincoln



Climate: what to worry about, what to watch, and what's working

THE FIRST DEAN'S DISCUSSION of the 2023 fall term brought together faculty with diverse viewpoints on the climate and energy challenges facing the United States and the world. **MEGHAN O'SULLIVAN**, the Jeane Kirkpatrick Professor of the Practice of International Affairs and director of the Belfer Center, spoke about the intersection of the energy transition and geopolitics. **JOSEPH ALDY**, a professor of the practice of public policy, looked at global interests and the efforts made at U.N. climate conferences. **KATHRYN SIKKINK**, the Ryan Family Professor of Human Rights Policy, spoke on human rights climate litigation. **CHARLES TAYLOR**, an assistant professor of public policy and a climate economist who joined Harvard Kennedy School in 2023, offered optimism about how institutions, companies, and NGOs have responded to the changing climate.

O'Sullivan's academic focus has long been on how the energy transition will remake the global order and on the political implications. "There are many

junctions in the transition that could exacerbate geopolitical tension," she said. "What are the key ingredients to a successful energy transition? Technology and policy are two essential things. But the third pillar in this stool in my mind is geopolitics. If you don't have a geopolitical environment that's conducive to expediting the energy transition, it makes the transition that much harder."

O'Sullivan discussed the U.S.-China relationship and how it is influencing the energy transition. "There's a lot of concern

"If you don't have a geopolitical environment that's conducive to expediting the energy transition, it makes the transition that much harder."

MEGHAN O'SULLIVAN

about the dominance that China has in mostly processing critical minerals that are needed for wind power, for batteries, for solar panels," she said. "And so right now, we see a big effort to recreate those supply chains outside of China so that they're not susceptible to geopolitical hiccups. ... We need to think more about how we can harness the rivalry and the great power competition and use that in crafting a strategy that can advance the objective of getting to net zero."

In his observations, Aldy focused on the efforts of the annual meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change as a venue for governments collectively to address climate change issues. He explained that part of the challenge is commitment: "One thing we've learned over time is that because of the nature of our international system, our significant deference to national sovereigns over any kind of international institutions, we've wound up in a world where we are basically a bunch of volunteers," he said. "No one is going

"We've set ambitious goals because of the lack of progress over the past three decades. And even though we're seeing unprecedented change in a lot of the economics of renewables, it's not at a fast enough pace."

JOE ALDY

to be surprised that we are not doing enough. The challenge though is that insufficiency occurs on several levels. ... We've set ambitious goals because of the lack of progress over the past three decades. And even though we're seeing unprecedented change in a lot of the economics of renewables, it's not at a fast enough pace."

Sikkink considered the ramifications of climate change from her perspective as a human rights expert, focusing on climate justice. "One path that's been taken has been young plaintiffs bringing climate cases before courts, often in order to get voluntary NDCs [Nationally Determined Contributions, individual countries' plans to cut emissions] some legal teeth in their countries," she said, providing examples from the Netherlands, Germany, Colombia, well as the United States. "Litigation is one tool that we use together with many, many other tools that we need to bring about climate justice and to have a healthier future. I don't think this is somehow going to save us, but I think it is one of the arrows of the quiver that needs to be there."

Taylor spoke from his experience with climatological data. He offered a note of measured optimism in the face of daunting prospects: "We've made some real progress when we think

about how institutions, companies, and NGOs have responded to this very real change in climate. The last IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report says there's a very low chance of our worst-case scenario."

At the same time, Taylor expressed worry about the second-order effects of climate change. "That's where we think of things like water scarcity. When we have prolonged periods of drought, there's less water available, farmers can't irrigate as much. There's less water available for municipalities and drinking in cities," he said. "Another risk is flooding from extreme weather events."

He considered, as well, the political challenges. "How do we actually build out the solar and wind projects and the large-scale transmission projects? We need to update some of our institutions or think of ways that we can do permitting reform to overcome

"One path that's been taken has been young plaintiffs bringing climate cases before courts, often in order to get voluntary NDCs [Nationally Determined Contributions, individual countries' plans to cut emissions] some legal teeth."

KATHRYN SIKKINK

opposition and, at the very least, acknowledge the trade-offs," Taylor said. "We have the technology; the constraint is largely going to be figuring out this political solution."



"We have the technology; the constraint is largely going to be figuring out this political solution."

CHARLES TAYLOR



The future of China: global relations, Marx and Confucius, and the role of universities

NAVIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP between the United States and China has become more critical than ever. These countries represent not only the world's two largest economies but also two contrasting political systems, competing interests, and complex historical legacies. The intricate interplay between these superpowers holds far-reaching implications for diplomacy, economics, security, and technology on a global scale.

Faculty experts dug into these issues for the second Dean's Discussion of the semester. **TONY SAICH, JIE BAI,** and **RANA MITTER** explained this rapidly changing landscape.

Mitter, the S.T. Lee Professor of U.S.-Asia Relations, began by evoking a new Chinese television series called *When Marx Met Confucius*. The concept of the show is that, despite living 2,400 years apart, the two philosophers meet and discuss ideas.

The show prompted Mitter to ask if China today embraces two ways of thinking: a Confucian one, which is a Chinese belief system based on order

and tradition, and a Marxist one, with economically based origins. "For today's Chinese Communist Party, Confucian thinking provides order, hierarchy, and ritual—all ways of calming a society that is increasingly turbulent," he said.

"Marxism is a means of explaining many of the contradictions that exist in global society today," Mitter continued. "How can we continue to have economic growth across the world if we need to cut back on fuel usage? That is a contradiction. How can the United States continue to be the dominant power in the world and yet there is an emergence of a multipolar society globally in which China will play a role. Again, it's a contradiction."

The reason that these two ideals might be combined, Mitter said, is because they both speak to different aspects of the Chinese dilemma.

"Why a broadly Marxist framework might have some appeal to the Chinese is that frankly even some of the best minds in the Western world have failed to come up with an alternative single framework to explain the fast-changing world

today," Mitter said. This, he said, explains the extraordinary turbulence and difficult circumstances that the entire world is going through at the moment.

Saich, the Daewoo Professor of International Affairs, picked up on this idea. He noted that the Central Financial Work Conference, which met in Beijing in October, proclaimed that it integrated Marxist financial theory with the specific realities of contemporary China and traditional Chinese culture to create a financially strong country.

"In thinking about our roles and responsibilities, we need to have more rigorous facts and go beyond the hype, go beyond the headlines to understand China."

JIE BAI

"For today's Chinese Communist Party, Confucian thinking provides order, hierarchy, and ritual—all ways of calming a society that is increasingly turbulent."

RANA MITTER

What this does, Saich continued, is confirm Xi Jinping's approach to economic development. "This clearly places party control at the center and his preference for what I've referred to as geopolitical risk management," he said. Xi has clearly doubled down on the view of Chinese exceptionalism, Saich said, but what he's added to it, which Confucius didn't have, is the organizational power of the party.

The effects are far reaching.

"Clearly what China's trying to do," Saich said, "is to seek to diversify relations and ensure that commodities on which it is reliant—gas, oil, soybeans—cannot be weaponized to influence its behavior. In that context, that's why the relationship with Russia becomes very important because that can provide the kind of oil that it needs."

Jie Bai, an assistant professor of public policy, turned the conversation inward, asking what role an institution like HKS can play. "What's our role and responsibility as students, faculty, members of the Kennedy School?" she asked. "What kind of role can we play in this rapidly changing world with rising tensions, this kind of disengagement and these deep misunderstandings and false narratives that run deep, from both sides? Both in the United States and China, there are huge ramifications not just for the two countries but globally."

She pointed to academic research and the need for rigorous evidence to inform policies for discussions. "Maybe we can't really change policy," she said, "but we can be part of that policy negotiation."

Jie identified two main reasons research and evidence can provide the opportunity to reengage and relaunch some of the collaborations and conversations.

"The first is just because we want to generate more knowledge, more truth," she said. "There's not a single paper that can tell you everything about China, but if we can piece together all the evidence, then we can try to have a deeper understanding of what's going on."

"The second is really this point about U.S.-China problems, the global implications. Sometimes I think these global implications were not at the front line of the debate. When we think about the technology war, the chip war, what people talk or debate about these days is whether China will surpass the

"Clearly what China's trying to do is to seek to diversify relations and ensure that commodities on which it is reliant—gas, oil, soybeans—cannot be weaponized to influence its behavior."

TONY SAICH

United States by 2035 or which kind of innovation policy is more effective or superior. But what people often don't talk about and haven't paid enough attention to is the ramifications that a tenuous U.S.-China relationship could have, and is having, on consumers and producers in other parts of the world."

We have a responsibility to elevate these conversations, she said. "In thinking about our roles and responsibilities, we need to have more rigorous facts and go beyond the hype, go beyond the headlines to understand China."





Does artificial intelligence hold promise or peril?

THE FINAL DEAN'S DISCUSSION of the fall semester explored the use of AI across many platforms to understand its impact. This panel, featuring **DAN LEVY**, **SHARAD GOEL**, and **BRUCE SCHNEIER**, embraced that goal with a lively discussion full of collegial disagreements, challenges, and counterpoints. But before the introductions were even made, Levy asked the audience to scan a QR code displayed on the screen in the discussion venue, which led to a one-question poll: Will AI be beneficial to humanity? (More on the poll below.)

Moderator **SARAH WALD** began by asking for a basic definition of artificial intelligence. All three professors agreed there is not a simple answer. "I don't think anybody has a real idea what's going to happen in 10 or 20 years," Goel, a professor of public policy, said. "All this is pure speculation."

Schneier, an adjunct lecturer in public policy, offered a starting point. "When we use the term 'AI,' we're thinking about computers doing cognitive tasks that we normally think of as the exclusive purview of human beings."

The promise of AI, Schneier

continued, is that it can do these human things without the limitations of a person. "When you think about AI, think about speed, scale, scope, sophistication." As an example, he envisioned a mental health crisis and too few human therapists to help. "If AI can do therapy in a manner similar to a human-trained professional," he said, "that difference in scale could have a huge impact."

From homework assignments to lengthy legal briefs, AI-generated content could save time and money.

"I'm not sure all those are positive things," countered Goel. "It is hard to separate the positive and negative," Schneier agreed.

Goel noted that AI had the potential to take human performance to a super-human level. "I do think this is one of the great promises of this technology; a lot of the problems that we think of as basically being unsolvable right now can be addressed."

For his part, Levy, a senior lecturer in public policy, wanted to focus on short-term promises. "I think the potential to strengthen your capacity to learn as a human being is immense,"

"When you think about AI, think about speed, scale, scope, sophistication."

BRUCE SCHNEIER

he said. "You can have what amounts to human-like conversations with a tool that responds to your questions and your comments." The potential is there to personalize learning to meet you where you are, he continued.

Moving to perils, Levy expanded this thinking. "My main concern is that for us to learn, our brain has to engage and process, and I think there's a way of using these tools where our brain doesn't engage and process information in ways that are conducive to real learning." He sees generative AI as a help and a hindrance. "I think the potential for learning is huge, but the potential of using the tool to shortcut learning is also huge."

Goel sees danger in three areas: "off-label" harms such as disinformation, and biological and computer viruses;

"on-label" limitations, like false information and biases; and large-scale social disruptions stemming from an even greater addiction to our devices or children learning to read and write in a whole new way.

However, his biggest concern is an existential one: "People," he said. "It is unclear what is going to happen in this unregulated space."

"It's very much like science fiction here," Schneier replied. "Science fiction uses the future to talk about the present, and we are afraid of the corporations that are controlling AI." He also worries about AI and the effects on democracy, generating policy, political fundraising, messaging, and lobbying. "Again, these are all things humans can do, but at a speed, scale, scope and sophistication that possibly humans can't."

The computer science community, Goel pointed out, is split in half about the existential risks of AI.

"So what about regulation?" Wald asked.

"We are terrible in the United States at regulating technology," admitted Schneier. "We do regulate tech that kills people like pharmaceuticals and airplanes. Computers are going to move into that screening soon."

"My main concern is that, for us to learn, our brain has to engage and process, and I think there's a way of using these tools where our brain doesn't engage and process information in ways that are conducive to real learning."

DAN LEVY

"I think we will have regulation on specific applications of AI," said Goel. "The larger risks—it's unclear to me what can be done."

Levy's concern was that the United States can regulate what it does itself, but not the rest of the world. "It just takes one bad actor to cause a lot of damage."

The perils were not so worrisome to the audience, as seen by the results of the poll taken at the start of the discussion:

Will AI be beneficial to humanity?

- 3% strongly disagreed
- 14% percent disagreed
- 28% were neutral
- 38% agreed
- 17% strongly agreed.

"I think it is interesting that only 3% strongly disagreed with this statement," said Levy. Perhaps encouraged by the trust in the room for computer-aided discussion, Levy made a final request.

"A lot of the problems that we think of as basically being unsolvable right now can be addressed."

SHARAD GOEL

"Can I propose a way of doing the Q&A that I think is better than the old traditional way?"

With that, another QR code appeared on the screen so the audience could open the site and enter questions. Without a real person raising a real hand and saying real words, questions appeared on the screen as if to prove just how comfortable we have become with technology in our usual human spaces.

To read more Dean's Discussions go to:



Can we talk?

For many at HKS, as in the wider world, it is sometimes easier to avoid difficult subjects than to engage peers in discussion. The Candid & Constructive Conversations initiative is working to teach and model the skills and create spaces for difficult conversations.

BY RALPH RANALLI

NATALIE MONTANER

MARTHA STEWART

POLARIZATION AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DIVISIONS are not unique to Harvard Kennedy School, or universities, or even the United States. Overcoming these deep rifts is a “key challenge of the digital age,” says **ERICA CHENOWETH**, the Stanton Professor of the First Amendment, academic dean for faculty engagement, and chair of the Candid & Constructive Conversations Working Group that Dean **DOUG ELMENDORF** brought together in fall 2022.

The group, composed of faculty, staff, and students, listened to and surveyed the Kennedy School community; reviewed academic literature on the subject; studied the practices and resources already developed at Harvard and peer institutions; and issued recommendations for how the School could proceed. They published a report with findings and recommendations in November 2023.

This important work had been a focus for some time already. But the report has added a new scaffolding with which the School can build the environment of openness, humility, and respect necessary for the free and constructive debate of ideas.

In January, Chenoweth and Associate Professor of Public Policy **JULIA MINSON**, a working group member and expert on conflict resolution, were interviewed on HKS PolicyCast. We include excerpts of their conversation here, edited for clarity and length. To hear the full episode, visit ken.sc/conversations

HKS PolicyCast: The Candid and Constructive Conversations initiative dates to fall 2022, but it’s obviously taken on a greater urgency in our current context. Can you both talk a little bit about that effort—where it started and where we are now?

ERICA CHENOWETH: Julia joined me and a number of other faculty, students, and staff on this effort to study what we knew about what it takes for an organization not only to facilitate and create space for effective conversations around controversial issues across difference, but also understand how we could build those skills for our students to practice outside the Kennedy School, where the rubber meets the road.

I think we came up with a comprehensive, rigorous assessment, and some ambitious recommendations that we’re already putting into practice and seeing the fruits of. I think that the Kennedy School is well positioned to be a world-leading institution on enhancing constructive and candid conversations across difference. It’s just a matter of focused effort and continuing to center it as part of what the culture is and what we are aiming to achieve here.

JULIA MINSON: Every few months, something happens in the world that makes it really hard for people who disagree about that thing to have a productive, thoughtful conversation. And of course, right now there’s a lot of focus on the upcoming U.S. presidential election. There’s the war in Gaza. Closer to home we have the resignation of Harvard President Claudine Gay. But if you look back at the last few years, we had COVID, we had the vaccines, we had the masks, we had the court case that overturned Roe versus Wade, we had the murder of George Floyd. Every few months there is a new set of world events that brings to the forefront the necessity for us to be able to thoughtfully discuss these types of issues. They’re not going away.

HKS PolicyCast: Can you talk about the working group’s findings?

ERICA CHENOWETH: I think that one of the more striking and consistent findings across all the different constituencies of the School is that people are much more comfortable sharing candid views one-on-one and being willing to have a hard conversation with one person than they are to have it in a larger group or a very public setting. People are more intimidated the more public it is. So social media, for example, is potentially the worst place for people to have a productive discourse according to this survey and our listening sessions. I think a big part of that is exactly because the extremes get represented very quickly and in a very polarized way.

I think that being able to self-censor less is one of the most important things for having a full conversation. There’s a sense from our respondents that people felt like a very narrow set of views were often expressed at the School, but

“I think we have a really wide range of views at the School and that we have to create and enable and facilitate the space for us to have a full conversation.” **ERICA CHENOWETH**



I don't think that means that we have a very narrow set of views at the school. I think we have a really wide range of views at the School and that we have to create and enable and facilitate the space for us to have a full conversation.

JULIA MINSON: Yes. The thing that I found surprising was the very obvious tension between what people said they were uncomfortable doing, which is expressing minority views in large groups, and their desire to be able to do so. You could imagine a situation where people say, "Look, these types of views are not welcome, and also this is not something we should be talking about in public, so why are you even asking?" But that's not what we heard. We heard a real eagerness from the community to have authentic conversations where people get to speak from their experience and from their evidence, ideology, whatever the case may be, and have those views heard and respected and debated without getting canceled on social media.

"People aren't afraid of being punished by authorities, they're afraid of being punished by their peers; they're afraid of social consequences from their peers."

ERICA CHENOWETH



Robert Wilkinson (left), a senior lecturer in public policy and leadership, joined Minson and Chenoweth to lead a January workshop for the HKS community on engaging across disagreement.

HKS PolicyCast: So, the desire was there, it's just the ability to execute?

JULIA MINSON: The ability to execute and I think the trust that you're not going to get punished for it. So, you can imagine in any relationship people want to speak authentically about their feelings. They just don't want to be rejected by the other person.

ERICA CHENOWETH: This came across very clearly: People aren't afraid of being punished by authorities, they're afraid of being punished by their peers; they're afraid of social consequences from their peers. It makes a lot of sense at a place like the Kennedy School, where you come in as a student and you're surrounded by your future professional network.

JULIA MINSON: I think another unique feature of the Kennedy School is that we recruit people who are leaders and change makers; we recruit people who are used to having strong opinions that they express loudly, usually in the face of dissent, sometimes at the cost of tremendous personal risk. And when they happen to disagree, if you are the person who expresses an unpopular opinion, you can expect that somebody who feels very strongly in the opposite direction is not going to shy away.

HKS PolicyCast: How do you take the good things that we're learning and modeling here and push them out into the real world?

ERICA CHENOWETH: As somebody who has taught at universities for the last 20 years or so, I think any of us who have been in this position know that the biggest impact we have is through our students. And so giving our students every opportunity to hone these skills while they're here is the way that we're going to have a positive impact out there. Because polarization interferes with all the things that we would otherwise associate with good public policy and the ability to effectively lead in challenging and turbulent times, but it's not permanent.

JULIA MINSON: I think another unique ability we have by virtue of being at a university is that we don't just think up an initiative, roll it out, and cross our fingers. We base it on research, and then usually we measure outcomes. And so to the extent that we can look at the data we have collected last year and then do some things to change the culture and then measure how things are looking next year or the year after that, we can then say with some confidence, "Here you go, world. Here is a tested toolkit; go to town."

NATALIE MONTANER

MARTHA STEWART

"Every few months there is a new set of world events that brings to the forefront the necessity for us to be able to thoughtfully discuss these types of issues. They're not going away." JULIA MINSON



HKS PolicyCast: One recommendation [by the working group] was a wider adoption of the so-called Chatham House rule. Would you mind just explaining what that is and what difference you think it could make?

ERICA CHENOWETH: The Chatham House rule is basically a norm in which people are not identified or associated with an idea. So, for example, if I'm in a class and my classmate says something that I find provocative, that I'm not going to go and say, "Guess who said what?" I'm not going to talk about that outside the classroom with anyone else. Or if I'm at a closed event and there's a speaker who comes, that would basically be not for attribution. So I wouldn't get to go home and tell my family, "Oh, guess who came and spoke today? And guess what they said?" That's not allowed anymore. And the reason why the rule came to be is that we just are more frank when we know that the conversation is confidential.

JULIA MINSON: And I think part of it is that you can discuss the idea—you just can't say who said it. So we can keep debating the idea no matter how provocative it is, and it becomes about debating ideas, which is what we're here to do, and not gossiping about the person.

HKS PolicyCast: When you're trying to foster candid and constructive conversations, how do you account for truth and disinformation in that equation? How do you solve for that?

ERICA CHENOWETH: The most important goal for any conversation is to create a bridge to the next conversation. It is going to be slow work, finding common ground across the

polarized discursive space that exists not just in American politics, but in many other countries as well. And that's what we need. We need people who are motivated and committed to do the slow and steady work of rebuilding that common ground. It can be done, it really can, but it's going to be slow and steady work.

JULIA MINSON: I think rather than worrying about are we giving too much air time to the tiny percent of people who truly think the earth is flat, I think we should be worrying about being more inclusive of the other 30% of the population who might disagree with us, but for reasons that might make perfect sense to them and other people with their experience.

HKS PolicyCast: What are some practical policy changes that can foster more and better candid and constructive dialogue?

JULIA MINSON: My pet project for a few years now has been trying to figure out how we can create a curriculum for teenagers to learn skills of constructive conversation. We have a lot of work that we do in schools for dealing with bullying, for example, which I think is very important. But we don't teach all kids how to use words effectively to engage with disagreement. And I think every parent of teenagers right now is probably cheering me quietly because imagine if all of our teenagers were good at productive disagreement and then could take that skillset into their adult life? That's what I would love to see.

ERICA CHENOWETH: I'll speak more to the systemic side. Much like our finding with regard to small groups and peer-to-peer contacts being the safest spaces for people to engage in difficult conversations, in politics, the local is where much more can be done to create this bridging civil society. And that's because where people live determines so much about the course of their day-to-day lives, and people become really engaged in questions about quality of life, etc. So, I think mayors and city councils and such should really invest in more opportunities for bridging civil society. And then, if there was one thing that could be done at the national level, it would be making election day a national holiday and actually supporting activities that are about participating in the political process and making it feel like something that we all do together.

JULIA MINSON: A national holiday sounds like a great idea. I'm all for it.

Degrees of Freedom

Engineer, consultant, ethicist, whistleblower, poet, humanist. In his barely imaginable rise from a poor South African township, Athol Williams MC/MPA 2013 has always been guided by the idea of freeing his mind, and helping others do the same.

BY JAMES F. SMITH



“This gave me an opportunity to take some of my philosophies of friendship, of love, of tolerance, and build them into our programs.”

ATHOL WILLIAMS



BEFORE HE BECAME an anti-corruption whistleblower in his native South Africa, **ATHOL WILLIAMS** was a mechanical engineer turned high-flying management consultant turned aspiring activist. He was at Harvard Kennedy School pursuing his Mid-Career Master in Public Administration as well as his passion for using poetry to foment social change.

Throughout that 2012–13 academic year, Williams enlisted fellow HKS students to write short poems that could inspire others to service. Just before graduation in May, he published a small book titled *Our World, Better Together*, including poems by more than 30 fellow student-authors.

The student poetry volume opens with lines of verse from the school's namesake, the late President John F. Kennedy: “when power corrupts, poetry cleanses.” To his classmates, Williams read from his own prophetic poem:

“...These few,
Their voices will be the voices of the voiceless,
They will stand as a wall against the armies of the crooked....”

Eight years later, Williams would stand up to the leaders of Bain & Co.—the global consulting agency where he had been a partner; he testified as a whistleblower in South Africa's sweeping

anti-corruption inquiry into what was called “state capture.” In his testimony and submissions, he disclosed documents showing how, he contended, his longtime employer had taken part in the systematic weakening of the country's tax authority to enable corruption to go undetected.

That ethical choice cost him more than just his lucrative salary and benefits as a partner. Not long after his testimony in 2021, he felt so threatened that he decided he had no other choice but to leave the country. He now lives in Britain, estranged from the homeland he loves, just getting by financially and uncertain when and even if he can go home again.

But even in exile, he has not slowed his voracious appetite for learning—and acquiring advanced degrees. In October he completed his doctoral dissertation at Oxford University. That would earn him a seventh university degree.

No small achievement for a man who grew up in violent, gang-riddled Mitchell's Plain, a township that under apartheid was set aside for Coloureds (the South African legal category of people of mixed-race), in the Cape Flats district east of Cape Town. Born in 1970, Williams came of age in the 1980s when the uprising against South Africa's system of racial segregation and white-minority rule left public schools shuttered and the streets filled with tear gas.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ATHOL WILLIAMS

After some forays into those rock-throwing battles in high school, Williams opted to pour himself into education, believing that was his best chance to thrive personally—and to contribute to meaningful change in South Africa.

“Somehow it just clicked for me: I must focus on education,” Williams says. “And I set these goals for myself, I wrote them down at the age of 15: I was going to study at MIT, I was going to study at Oxford. Now for a kid in Mitchell’s Plain, that wasn’t a dream, it was a fantasy.”

“And I got criticized by many of my contemporaries that I chose to study while they were fighting the fight. They fought for freedom and ‘Athol was a wuss, a wimp, he went and picked up books.’ But for me it was about the Frantz Fanon idea that we’ve got to liberate our minds first,” Williams added, referring to the Francophone Caribbean philosopher and critic of imperialism.

He read nonstop, whatever books he could lay his hands on. He was encouraged by his parents, neither of whom finished high



school, and his father’s voracious reading set a lifelong example. (Williams counts his personal library at 10,000 books). Despite the school boycotts and unrest, he got through high school and earned a full scholarship to the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He studied engineering there during the day and spent his evenings across campus in workshops indulging his other passion, poetry.

In those final years of apartheid, before Nelson Mandela’s release from prison and ascendancy to the presidency in 1994,

Williams felt the sting of racial discrimination personally. Security police burst into his apartment one night, evidently to scare him away from student activism. After graduating, he worked as a junior engineer for a subsidiary of the mining giant Anglo American. But he hated it. He knew what he wanted: a graduate degree in America, and not just from any school. From the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Without knowing how he would afford it, Williams made his first trip abroad for what was to be a life-changing journey. A last-minute South African scholarship covered his tuition at MIT’s Sloan School of Management, but when he first arrived he barely had enough money to live and eat. He grew to love Boston, and got to see his beloved Bruce Springsteen perform live. A summer internship at Bain & Co.’s Boston headquarters gave him his first taste of business consulting, another recurring thread in his life. He joined Bain full time after graduating but soon left for a mining industry job based in London, where he earned a master’s degree from London Business School in corporate finance; then he rejoined Bain and moved back to Boston.

In 2001 he returned to South Africa for another corporate role, but soon went out on his own, building a highly successful consulting firm helping Black corporate executives rise through the fast-changing business landscape in post-apartheid South Africa. Williams recalls that halfway through the first decade of the 21st century he owned six cars and three houses. But he and his wife Taryn began to question that lifestyle. They decided together to live more simply and find ways to help others while they were relatively young.

And Williams kept learning and writing poetry even as he strode through the corporate world of South Africa. He wrote children’s books and published poetry volumes. In 2012 he came to Cambridge again, this time for the MC/MPA at Harvard Kennedy School. He graduated a month after the Boston Marathon bombing in April 2013.

Williams says that one of his favorite HKS professors, Senior Lecturer **MARSHALL GANZ**, attended an event one evening that spring where all the student authors read their poems aloud to the gathered graduating class. As Williams recalls it in his memoir, Ganz, a long-time social activist turned academic, said afterwards that he had been seeking the soul of Harvard for 20 years—and that night he found it.

Ganz still recalls that joyful evening of student poetry vividly, saying, “it really did bring some much needed music—of the heart—to this place.”

It was while studying at HKS, and inspired in part by Ganz’s class on social activism, that Williams says he and his wife came up with an idea for a nonprofit in South Africa that would let his passion for books help him meet one of his country’s deepest

needs: building literacy in the poorest communities of color.

When he got back to his hometown of Mitchell’s Plain, he and Taryn launched Read to Rise, designed to give out books and hold readings and workshops in the hardscrabble townships east of Cape Town. Over the past decade, Read to Rise, which has also expanded to Soweto—the huge, poor township outside Johannesburg—has given out 300,000 books, Williams says.

“Literacy is one of the big challenges in South Africa. We’ve got four out of five children who can’t read with comprehension,” Williams said. “This gave me an opportunity to take some of my philosophies of friendship, of love, of tolerance, and build them into our programs. We keep saying our program is far more about the rise than about the read. For me it’s a long-term social movement. This is really my theory of change, that when we are inspired to do something, we’ll figure it out. So let’s get kids excited about reading and learning and they will figure out the rest for themselves.”

Among the books Williams gives out are those of his own children’s book series, *Oaky*, which his wife has illustrated. He has also published six books of poetry.

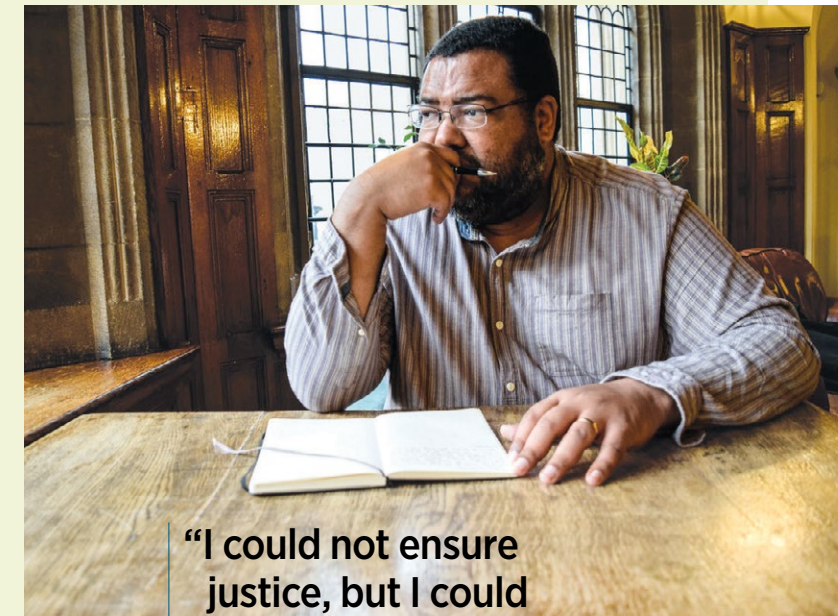
“If you ask me what it is I do, I’d say I am a poet. I lecture at a business school in accounting and strategy, but what I am at heart is a poet,” he says. “It’s a form of expression, but I use it as a form of experimentation. It’s where I like to experiment with hopeful ideas.”

For example, his poetry volume called *Bumper Cars* plays on the theme of cars wrapped in rubber bands so they can collide without violence. “Poetry became that space for me to experiment with ideas of social justice ... and to experiment with what humanity can be.”

That’s what prompted him to persuade fellow Kennedy School students, including military officers and politicians, to write poems and share them with classmates. “If my hypothesis has got any merit—that poetry has some innate magic—then if we just express what is in our hearts in a way that others can appreciate, something will manifest. There’ll be some connection.”

After he wound down his management consultancy, Williams focused more on business ethics, founding a nonprofit called the Institute of Social and Corporate Ethics.

Then it was time for him to make his own ethical choices, which Williams describes in his book, *Deep Collusion: Bain and the Capture of South Africa*. He wrote that Bain had become embroiled in the investigation in South Africa into “state capture,” where many government institutions were corrupted. Bain was accused of undermining the tax collection system, in league with then-President Jacob Zuma. Bain brought Williams back in as a senior partner in 2018, ostensibly to help uncover the truth about what had happened in the preceding years. But Williams sensed that the firm was using him for credibility while evading full disclosure of its role. By 2019, he broke with Bain and volunteered to testify



“I could not ensure justice, but I could contribute to truth. And truth is the first step toward justice.”

ATHOL WILLIAMS

before the official inquiry into state capture, known as the Zondo Commission—a senior partner turned whistleblower.

“I offered to do what I could to support the commission’s pursuit of truth and justice,” Williams wrote in the book. “I could not ensure justice, but I could contribute to truth. And truth is the first step toward justice.” But it came at a personal price, and “the fact that I was in danger became very real.”

Legal cases are still pending and Williams avoids going further than he did in his book. And he says, “I was a diehard Bain consultant. They were the ones who gave me my big break and I was very successful at Bain.” So testifying against them “was a massive moment for me. It traumatized me.”

At Oxford, he teaches a course called “Strategy and Ethics,” which combines competitive and hard-nosed strategic thinking with ethical considerations. “And I think we’ve got to put them in tension with each other,” Williams says. “I teach accounting to MBAs and I help them consider how we account for human rights abuses, for costs to the environment.”

Williams is mindful of his own losses: He still feels hurt by friends who turned away from him after his testimony and has spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on legal fees in recent years, funded in part by online campaigns.

But he hasn’t given up on the idea of going home. “I have this view, and this might be a romantic view, of saying, ‘Just let me carry on with my life here, build skill, build perspective, and then at the right time, hopefully I can go back, when we are ready to rebuild and do things the right way.’”

Rising to the Challenge

In the drive toward greater wealth, some Americans were simply bypassed. Debra-Ellen Glickstein MC/MPA 2014 has spent decades partnering with excluded communities to build on-ramps. Her organization NYC Kids Rise has helped hundreds of thousands of New York City students prepare for their futures.

BY ROBERT O'NEILL



PHOTOS BY JONATHAN PATKOWSKI, COURTESY OF NYC KIDS RISE

“Some of the best advice I ever got was to find a neighborhood and stick with it.”

DEBRA-ELLEN GLICKSTEIN



THE CONCERT FOR COLLEGE, a community concert organized by two New York City churches, raised \$18.86 for Faith Marcus's college savings. That same \$18.86 also went into the college savings funds of hundreds more children who, like Faith, live in the New York City Housing Authority's Queensbridge Houses and attended elementary school nearby. Maybe it wasn't much. But it was the beginning of something.

Faith, now an 11-year-old sixth-grader, was part of a New York City pilot program, begun in 2017, to set up educational savings accounts for public school children. In 2021, the program was expanded to include all incoming kindergartners and now serves more than 200,000 students across the city.

DEBRA-ELLEN GLICKSTEIN MC/MPA 2014 remembers when, in neighborhoods like Long Island City or Jackson Heights, you'd find maybe one kid out of five classes that had a college savings account. “Now, every kid has these accounts,” she says.

Glickstein helped launch the city program and then founded the nonprofit that works alongside it, NYC Kids RISE. Perhaps more importantly, she has worked tirelessly to build a sense of shared, communal responsibility for the city's children. Families can save money for their children's education, but communities, philanthropies, businesses, can all help too, donating to individuals, specific schools, or across the entire school system.

“Systems have been created, a social infrastructure has been created across this entire city, so that now there is a way to add more money for kids,” Glickstein says. “But also a message is being sent about what is possible for my kid, your kid, and our kids. This is what we do in New York City, in Long Island City, in Jackson Heights, in East Flatbush—we work together to support our kids.”

The program not only addresses the specific issue of saving for and encouraging education—just hundreds of dollars saved for college is enough to more than triple a student's likelihood of moving on to post-secondary education. It also helps build intergenerational wealth across communities where it has never existed. And it may also help build a shared sense of community and of responsibility for young people.

Glickstein grew up in the suburbs of New York. She is hard pressed to identify a specific thing that pushed her into a life of public service. It was just in the air that she breathed. “From my family, from my community, from what I had growing up,” she says, “it was just something I've always known in my heart that I wanted to contribute.”

(Opposite) Debra-Ellen Glickstein MC/MPA 2014; (middle) P.S. 194M Kindergarten Graduation in June 2023; (Top) At P.S. 276K, school officials and first graders from East Flatbush and Canarsie celebrated a \$1.2 million dollar investment through the NYC Kids RISE Save for College Program.

“I’ve been very lucky in some ways in knowing what I wanted to do from really very early on in my life,” Glickstein says. “And really the through-line has been working with communities to expand economic opportunities with and for the people that live there.”

After high school, Glickstein deferred college for a year and joined City Year, a national service program founded in 1988 to allow young volunteers to help in disadvantaged communities. She worked as a teacher’s aide in a school in East Boston, seeing up close the challenges faced by young children in a diverse, low-income neighborhood. After graduating from Wesleyan University, she went straight to work for a New York City mayoral campaign (her candidate, the Democrat Mark Green, lost to Michael Bloomberg) and then joined the staff of a newly elected Queens councilman, Eric Gioia.

Glickstein has been based in the same area of Queens ever since. “Some of the best advice I ever got was to find a neighborhood and stick with it,” she says. She was “a young person very eager to figure out how to make government work for folks,” Glickstein says. There was hardly a better place for her to start than Long Island City’s Queensbridge Houses, the largest public housing development in the country.

She eventually connected with a local leader, Bishop Mitchell Taylor, the pastor at the Church Center of Hope International, and a lifelong resident of Queensbridge. Together they created the East River Development Alliance, now called Urban Upbound. The nonprofit has become a community pillar that provided critical services: financial counseling, workforce programs, even a credit union.

Glickstein and Taylor’s work caught the attention of the city’s public housing authority, who brought Glickstein on to try to create similar changes across the entire city. Glickstein was there for several years, leading the effort to transition their work to network-based service delivery, leveraging the assets of the Housing Authority, as well as the rich assets of stakeholders and partners through the city. She was always aware of the dense ecosystems of institutions and people—in government but also in the private and nonprofit sectors, and in civil society—within neighborhoods and communities. And she constantly thought about how to support people to take advantage of them.

That was when she came to the Kennedy School for the Mid-Career Master in Public Administration program. The time at HKS allowed her to take a step back. She took a doctoral-level sociology seminar with **WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON**, now the Geysler University Professor, Emeritus, whose work deeply influenced her thinking on urban poverty. She was also a teaching assistant in “Entrepreneurship and Innovation in the Private and Social Sectors” (MLD-830), taught by Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy **RICHARD CAVANAGH**, an experience she found transformative.

After graduating, she returned to the public sector, running New York City’s Office of Financial Empowerment, focusing on providing better access to financial services in the city’s low-income neighborhoods. “I wanted to do that because of this idea of community wealth-building and this concept of the way structural systems and whole neighborhoods impact people’s access to financial health and financial opportunities,” Glickstein says.

That is where the city’s Save for College program was born. Launched in 2017 as a pilot program in seven neighborhoods (Astoria, Long Island City, East Elmhurst, Corona, Jackson Heights, Sunnyside, and Woodside), it was an exercise in collaboration. Like all of Glickstein’s professional endeavors, the Save for College program reflected a clear and consistent throughline: the power of place-based community economic development, and the way change happens when different sectors, institutions, and others come together.

“The program very much draws upon public-private partnerships, neighborhoods, and communities,” Glickstein says. “The story is really about how so many different institutions and people have come together to create this infrastructure. And what we’ve done here is we’ve created, basically, a universal wealth-building platform for New York City neighborhoods.”

With the leadership and support of the Jon and Mindy Gray of the Gray Foundation which provided an initial \$10 million in catalytic funding,

“The magic of this whole thing is that, again, the platform has been created and there’s all these different ways people can plug in. And it goes back to kind of the way I view the world—that neighborhoods matter.”

DEBRA-ELLEN GLICKSTEIN



(Opposite, bottom) Debra-Ellen Glickstein at P.S. 196 in Brooklyn; (middle) Rachel Marcus with her daughter Faith, who is now a sixth grade student at P.S. 111Q in the NYC Kids RISE Save for College Program; (above) Debra-Ellen Glickstein with P.S. 111Q 6th Graders who are among the 3,200 public school students in the inaugural Save for College Program class.



NYC Kids RISE, a nonprofit, was created to manage the public-private-community program. The idea behind establishing a parallel nonprofit was to create more resiliency: an organization that would stand the test of time and that was separate from the oscillations of government. Other philanthropies have jumped in, as have community groups, local businesses, and more.

But also, Glickstein says, “this should never just be a government program. ... city officials, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State comptroller, but also principals of schools, faith leaders, community leaders, business leaders—everyone has a role to play in creating this infrastructure.”

After the successful pilot, the program was launched citywide.

“The magic of this whole thing is that, again, the platform has been created and there’s all these different ways people can plug in,” Glickstein says. “And it goes back to kind of the way I view the world—that neighborhoods matter.”

Rachel Marcus, a resident of Queensbridge and Faith’s mother, who was enrolled in the pilot, and whose two younger sons are now also in the program, says the program is an important building block in her children’s success. Some businesses and community groups are adding small amounts to the children’s accounts each month, and Rachel will log on with them to see the small piles of savings growing.

“It’s been really helpful for them. Sometimes we’ll log on and look at their accounts and I’ll explain to them that this is just the beginning,” she says. An immigrant from Suriname, Marcus was worried about her ability to ever provide opportunities to her children to go to college, given the financial burden. But the program helps. “It’ll be a little less heavy for her and also for us,” she says. And Faith is daring to dream—talking about her ambition to one day become a doctor and working hard to get good grades.

“There’s probably nothing I’m prouder of than knowing that nearly every kid in elementary school who lives in Queensbridge Houses now has these accounts,” Glickstein says. “Because back in the day with Bishop Taylor, when I was 25 years old and we were building the East River Development Alliance, the question was, ‘How does public housing become a springboard for economic opportunity?’ These are complex questions. It’s not going to be necessarily solved by a college savings account. But now if you go to public school and you live in Queensbridge Houses, you are going to have something for your future. There is now a mechanism for both the government and the private sector and other folks in other systems to drive more money into those accounts. And they don’t have to be places that people have to run away from.”

“The story is really about how so many different institutions and people have come together to create this infrastructure. And what we’ve done here is we’ve created, basically, a universal wealth-building platform for New York City neighborhoods.”

DEBRA-ELLEN GLICKSTEIN





Jacinda Ardern (in the foreground) at a Forum in November with moderator Hannah Riley Bowles, the Roy E. Larsen Senior Lecturer in Public Policy and Management, to the right.

EVENT

Politics is a place for positive change

THE BUZZ



“Government is always a trailing indicator, not a leading indicator. The reason Washington looks like it does is [because] the country looks like it does.”

Mick Mulvaney, former White House chief of staff, at a Forum in November



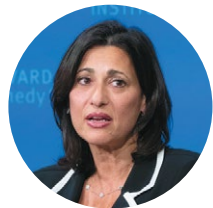
“We are the epilogue of that story. We were held down for generations, but now we are a reformed nation exercising our sovereignty.”

Hepsi Barnett MPA 2000, former chief of staff of Osage Nation, at a screening of “Killers of the Flower Moon” at the Forum in December



“The only thing that candidates fear is a challenge from the right or the left, the most extreme voices in each party.”

David Axelrod, former chief strategist and senior adviser to President Obama, at a Forum in October



“It was perceived as bold [declaring racism a public health threat]. I’m really proud to say that over 200 departments of public health have followed suit since that time.”

Rochelle Walensky, former Center for Disease Control and Prevention director, at a Forum in November



“It is not part of our national story or the founders’ vision that people can’t sit on their porches in neighborhoods all over this country without being afraid of being shot.”

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Director **Steve Dettelbach** at a Forum in October



“Explanation is not justification. If we don’t explain, then we are doomed.”

Shibley Telhami, Middle East expert and professor at the University of Maryland, at a Forum in October

“MANY PEOPLE ARE CYNICAL about politics, and I can see why,” **Jacinda Ardern**, the former prime minister of New Zealand, told a packed John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum last November. “I was in politics for 15 years and I came out with a strong belief that politics is a place for positive change.” Ardern, the 2023 Angelopoulos Global Public Leaders Fellow and a Hauser Leader in the School’s Center for Public Leadership, was at Harvard for the fall semester after six years helping New Zealand’s government. Ardern was the youngest female head of government in the world when she was elected in 2017. She gained international recognition for her leadership following the Christchurch Mosque shootings in March 2019—she gained broad political support for legislation to ban semi-automatic weapons in just 10 days. “Some things we just carry with us for life,” Ardern said, speaking of the shootings by a white supremacist, which left 51 dead. “It was something that fundamentally changed who we were as a nation and also how we see ourselves.” Ardern also gained plaudits for her handling of the COVID pandemic in New Zealand, which took a disproportionate toll on the country’s Maori population. But it was her last message of the evening that was perhaps most inspiring. “I have been very open about the fact that I suffer from imposter syndrome, otherwise called a confidence gap,” she explained. “People ask me, ‘How did you overcome that?’ Well, I never did. And yet I was prime minister for five years in spite of that. ... What I would say to you is that you never know what you are capable of until you are doing it.”

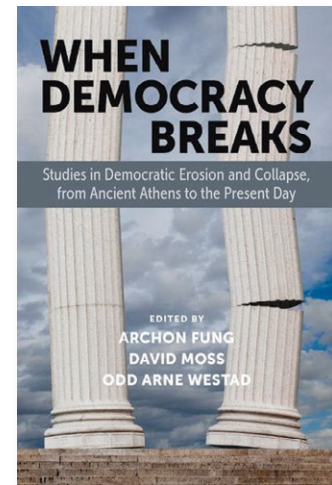
TOP: MARTHA STEWART | PORTRAITS: MARTHA STEWART

When Democracy Breaks

Studies in Democratic Erosion and Collapse, From Ancient Athens to the Present Day

Archon Fung, Winthrop Laflin McCormack Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government; David Moss, Harvard Business School; and Odd Arne Westad, Yale University

THIS EDITED VOLUME EXAMINES 11 historical and modern examples of democratic breakdown in societies around the world—from ancient Athens to contemporary Venezuela. Editors Archon Fung, David Moss, and Odd Arne Westad consider “what separates democratic resilience from democratic fragility,” with a particular interest in the latter.



In their introduction they write, “We will see, in graphic detail, just how far society can descend, into chaos or even madness, when this sentiment supporting a common commitment to democratic process and values breaks down.” Although democratic breakdown is often due to a collection of factors, the book draws together common themes, including political polarization, anti-democratic political actors, and political violence.

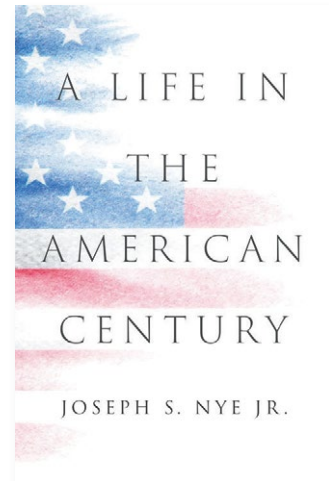
“Throughout the volume, we see again and again that the written rules of democracy are insufficient to protect against tyranny,” the editors write. “They are mere ‘parchment barriers,’ as James Madison once put it, unless embedded within a strong culture of democracy, which itself embraces and gives life not only to the written rules themselves but to the essential democratic values that underlie them.”

A Life in the American Century

Joseph S. Nye Jr., University Distinguished Service Professor, Emeritus; Harvard Kennedy School Dean, Emeritus

JOSEPH NYE’S WORK AS A LEADING international relations expert has shaped the way governments and scholars have thought about questions ranging from nuclear arsenals to great power

rivalry. And the concept of “soft power” that he developed has allowed us to see a different dimension of a country’s international influence, beyond its balance of trade or army divisions. In this



autobiographical book, Nye reflects in a more personal way on a life lived “through the American century,” as an academic, a public servant, and a public intellectual. “Our mental maps of the world have changed dramatically over my lifetime,” Nye writes. Those maps are not only those that charted the movements of armies across Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan, or those that saw the decline of empires, not least the rise and fall of the Soviet Union. They also include

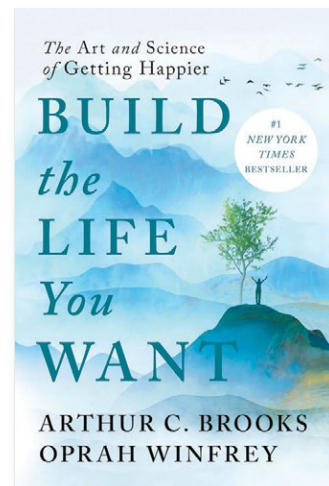
societal changes—acceptance of religious diversity, new social mores and freedoms, and the explosion of technological change. “The story I am telling is personal, but I hope it helps historians to look back, and our children to look forward,” Nye writes.

Build the Life You Want

The Art and Science of Getting Happier

Arthur Brooks, Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership; Oprah Winfrey

DON’T FOCUS ON BECOMING HAPPY; work to become happier. That is the lesson at the heart of the new book by Arthur Brooks, who



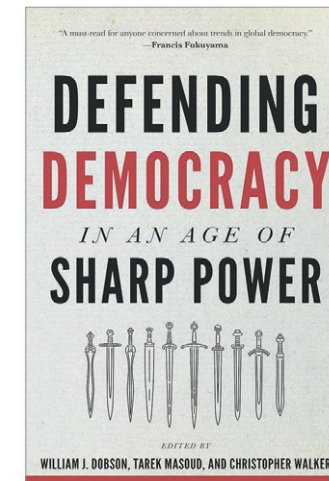
directs the Leadership and Happiness Laboratory at HKS, and media executive Oprah Winfrey. *Build the Life You Want* shares insights based on social science evidence, as well as examples from philosophical traditions, to back up the premise that “happiness is not a destination—happiness is a direction.” The coauthors provide suggestions and practices to move in that direction, concentrating on family, friends, work, and faith.

According to Brooks and Winfrey, three key factors contribute to happiness: enjoyment, satisfaction, and purpose. They argue that the pursuit of happiness can exist even when situations are hard. “You can learn to choose how you react to negative circumstances and select emotions that make you happier even when you get a bad hand,” the authors write. “You can focus your energy not on trivial distractions, but on the basic pillars of happiness that bring enduring satisfaction and meaning.”

Defending Democracy in an Age of Sharp Power

Tarek Masoud, Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Governance; William Dobson; Christopher Walker

MORE THAN 30 YEARS AGO, Professor Emeritus Joseph Nye coined the term “soft power” to describe how states use subtle moral and cultural suasion to exert influence over other states. In this new



volume, Masoud and his co-editors identify a different, less benign kind of power—“sharp power”—which they define as authoritarian regimes’ manipulation of democracies’ openness to weaken them from within. By penetrating popular media, the entertainment industry, tech companies, universities, and even political institutions, countries such as Russia and China spread disinformation, sow discord, and weaken democratic accountability. This collection

of analytical essays brings together some of the finest thinkers on the dangers of sharp power to offer their collective responses to the challenge. The editors note that rather than gradually and peacefully transforming to democracy, authoritative political systems like Russia and China are devising “new ways of waging war on freedom.” This book is divided into two parts—the first records how the world’s autocracies are deploying sharp power, and the second identifies how the world’s democrats can fight back. According to the editors, the book is intended to be both an exploration of a formidable new challenge to democracy and a call to action to scholars, practitioners, and concerned citizens.

Writing for Busy Readers

Communicate More Effectively in the Real World

Todd Rogers, Weatherhead Professor of Public Policy; Jessica Lasky-Fink, Research Director, The People Lab

MANY BOOKS ON WRITING EXIST. What sets apart *Writing for Busy Readers* is its foundation in behavioral science and its focus on optimizing messages for action with the understanding that



readers’ time is precious. Todd Rogers and Jessica Lasky-Fink lay out six fundamental principles of effective writing: less is more; make reading easy; design for easy navigation; use enough formatting but no more; tell readers why they should care; make responding easy.

Rogers and Lasky-Fink write, “Today we know what goes on inside a busy reader’s brain. We know how a reader’s eyes move as they respond to different stimuli. We know why

certain types of writing draw a reader’s focus while others tend to get lost in the fog of distraction and competition for attention. We wrote this book to share these important, potentially life-changing insights. It is a guide to the science of writing so busy people read and respond.”



If you want to dive deeper into books written by Harvard Kennedy School faculty, visit *Behind the Book*. Every episode in this video series distills one book’s critical insights for a worldwide audience.

CLASSNOTES



Alumni gather in the Forum during Reunion 2023

PHOTOS BY JESSICA SCRANTON

1973

Bob Rhodes MC/MPA recently completed an appointment as acting general counsel for the city of Jacksonville, Florida. The general counsel’s office serves the entire consolidated city government, including the mayor, city council, executive departments, constitutional officers, and independent authorities. According to Bob, the appointment was an interesting and illuminating community service for an octogenarian lawyer. “Ask not what the city can do for you...”

1983

Ken Hughes MPA has earned the distinction of becoming the 99th Canadian to win a Worldloppet gold medal. Worldloppet is a ski federation that recognizes the best loppets—or long distance cross-country ski races—around the world. Ken, who is asthmatic and in his late sixties, said of his win, “If you had asked me 10 years ago if I would be doing five world loppet races in one calendar year, I would have never believed it. I’m in as good of shape as I’ve ever been and that’s a great gift.”

Roy Watson MPA was recently appointed as a commissioner to work with the Massachusetts Bar Counsel. Roy just completed a required mediation program, and is now looking to work with Boston-based ADR/mediation groups. He welcomes any assistance. Roy has an extensive background in federal employment-based immigration. Since leaving a full-time role with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS), Roy has been doing private immigration work. He is always available to catch up with fellow alums!

1985

Michael Pocalyko MC/MPA was elected president of the Cosmos Club. Founded in 1878, the club brings

together men and women distinguished in science, literature, the arts, the learned professions, and public service. Michael is CEO of SI, a Washington-based professional services firm and government contractor in the investigations, intelligence, and cyber sectors.

—
“Over three decades ago, I attended HKS to improve my research skills, and HKS delivered. Plus, being an alum gave me access to Harvard’s incredible historical resources, notably the horticultural library.”

Joanne Butler Sadler MPA 1991

1988

Alan Loeb MC/MPA is finalizing a law review article critiquing the Supreme Court’s opinion in *West Virginia v. EPA*, the case that struck down the EPA’s new rules controlling greenhouse gas emissions from power plants. Alan writes, “A major error the court made was in applying a historically invalid account of the ‘administrative state.’ Based on extensive historical research, the article finds that there is an administrative state applicable to modern environmental problems, just not the one the court was thinking of. If the correct history had been used the court could not have reached the conclusion it did.”

1991

Joanne Butler Sadler MPA writes, “Late in 2022, I had an academic research paper published for the Gregor Mendel museum’s journal. The museum is located in Brno, Czech Republic, and the journal was commemorating the bicentennial of Mendel’s birth (Mendel discovered the theory of genetics in the 1860s). The paper discussed how

Mendelian genetic techniques led to the development of the first American hop plant cultivar (Cascade), and how Cascade led to the launch of the craft beer industry. Over three decades ago, I attended HKS to improve my research skills, and HKS delivered. Plus, being an alum gave me access to Harvard’s incredible historical resources, notably the horticultural library. My paper’s title: ‘Building a Better Hop.’”

1992

Neal J.Z. Schwartz MPP writes, “Thirty-five years ago, HKS and GSD took a chance on me as I applied to be the first joint-degree student between the schools. Today I divide my time between my design studio S^A | Schwartz and Architecture (*saasf.com*), teaching as a professor at the California College of the Arts, and community and policy work on the side. Although I am now an architect through and through, my time at HKS created the foundation for everything I do. I get teased that my every email reads like a three-page bullet-pointed memo, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. If anyone needs an architect who also can tell you how to run the world, please let me know :)!”

1993

Rudy Ruiz MPP received the 2023 Texas Institute of Letters Jesse H. Jones Award for Best Book of Fiction for his novel *Valley of Shadows*. The novel was also recommended by the *New York Times Book Review*. Lit Hub writes, “A neo-Western blend of magical realism, mystery, and horror, *Valley of Shadows* sheds light on the dark past of injustice, isolation, and suffering along the U.S.-Mexico border.” The novel is Rudy’s sixth book combining social advocacy and culturally driven writing. Rudy also continues to serve as CEO of Interlex Communications, the advocacy marketing firm he co-founded with his wife, Heather, in 1995.

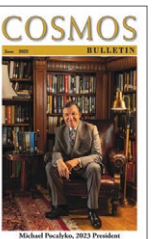
Alumni Talk Policy



The Climate Crisis
 November 30, 2023

“Until we can make sure that the investments are lucrative enough for the private sector, we will not be able to scale up the investments that we need. And that’s why you see in some areas, we’re able to align the policies and the public sector incentives to make sure that the private sector is investing in those parts. But it’s not yet enough.”

—
Judy Chang MPP 1996,
 Adjunct Lecturer, HKS,
 and former Undersecretary
 of Energy and Climate
 Solutions, Massachusetts



—
Michael Pocalyko MC/MPA 1985



—
Rudy Ruiz MPP 1993

WIENER CONFERENCE CALLS

Wiener Conference Calls feature Harvard Kennedy School faculty members who share their expertise and respond to callers' questions. Visit the online archive at hks.harvard.edu/wiener-conference-calls.

Gwen Young MPP is the CEO of Women Business Collaborative, a unique alliance of over 83 organizations, 60 companies, and 300 individuals fighting for equal position, pay, and power for all women in business. Gwen works in the D.C. area, where she ensures equity for all in business and continues to work on global equity for women and girls.

1995

Mike Walker MPA is VP of product management at RESurety, based in Boston. RESurety provides software and services to support the financial and sustainability goals of clean energy buyers, sellers, and investors.

1997

Christopher Hartwell MPP writes, "My book on the institutional development of Kazakhstan, *Kazakhstan: Snow Leopard at the Crossroads*, was published by Routledge over the summer. Combined with my policy work in Ukraine on post-war economic reconstruction and my academic work on Russian economic history, I'm carving out a nice niche for myself in the region. And I'm happily based in Switzerland these days, so close enough to travel back there regularly!"

Paul Michael Klein MC/MPA writes, "I am still enjoying Washington, D.C., and am currently serving as the senior director, creative, for HIAS, the world's oldest refugee agency operating in over 20 countries. If you're in D.C., I'd love to catch up over a coffee."

1998

Charles Hokanson MPP, after nine-plus years as an SVP at the Helios Education Foundation, recently launched a Tampa-based consulting firm to advise nonprofit, philanthropic, and education clients on strategic management, policy and advocacy, and community engagement issues. In addition to serving on the HKS Alumni Association board, he serves as board chair of Hostelling International USA, immediate past chair of the Florida Education Foundation, and co-chair of Leadership Florida's statewide education committee. He spent a month this summer hiking in 12 U.S. and Canadian national parks with his brother.

Jenny Korn MPP reports that Karen Bonadio (Harvard Kennedy School director of alumni relations), Kristen Messervy (Harvard Kennedy School

senior associate director, alumni relations), and Jenny Korn MPP met for the first time in person in October 2023!

1999 25TH REUNION

Al Kyle MC/MPA writes, "My book *Courageous Dissent* was recently published. It tells the story of how five U.S. Marine generals dissented decisions by President Johnson, Secretary McNamara, and General Westmoreland during the Vietnam War. Not surprisingly, they were ignored 80% of the time. The decisions were so bad, the outcome of the war may have changed if the war managers had listened to them. The four authors of *Courageous Dissent* served together in Vietnam as U.S. Marine officers. Their second careers were university professor, federal magistrate judge, a career Marine officer, and a medical device entrepreneur."



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Explore The Public Leadership Credential at Harvard



For Every Mother, A Good Childbirth

Janhavi Nilekani PhD 2018

Janhavi Nilekani PhD 2018 wanted the childbirth of her dreams. That meant returning in 2016 to her home country of India where the then-fifth-year PhD student in public policy could be closer to family, ensure her forthcoming baby's citizenship, and get away from the cold New England winter. It also meant finding a health care provider committed to evidence-based medicine—and to treating expectant mothers with respect. Nilekani particularly wanted to avoid delivery by cesarean section, which is performed in India much more frequently than in high-income countries. She was frustrated in her search until she connected with a U.S.-trained midwife and a local Indian obstetrician dedicated to giving her the birthing experience she was determined to have. To get it, however, Nilekani says she needed to leverage all the research and analytical skills she acquired as a PhD student.

"My work at Harvard gave me the training I needed to study childbirth in an evidence-based way," she says. "It gave me the ability to do a cost-benefit analysis and make decisions. And, maybe above all, the concept of smart policy design and implementation that I learned while a student at Harvard taught me that if I wanted a respectful, evidence-based childbirth, the incentives of all the actors had to be aligned."

Today, as the founder and chairperson of the Bangalore-based Aastrika Foundation, Nilekani leverages her graduate education and personal experience to advance an audacious vision: "a future in which every woman is treated with respect and dignity during childbirth, and the right treatment is provided at the right time." If she's successful, Indian mothers won't need a Harvard PhD to receive the same high-quality maternal care that she did.

By the time Nilekani graduated in 2018, she knew her path would lead her not to academia but back to India, where she could have a direct impact on her home community. "Aastar is the Sanskrit word for expansion," she says. "Urmika means wave. So, the contraction *Aastrika* represents the foundation's mission to create a sea change in maternal care that will ripple out and transform the birthing experience for mothers across India."

Challenges in maternal care in India include physical and verbal abuse of birthing mothers, a lack of accessible health care, as well as over-intervention—particularly excessive surgery. At the center of the Aastrika Foundation's efforts to address these issues is midwifery, an affordable way to improve rates of infant and maternal mortality. The foundation's two-pronged strategy aims to dramatically upskill 200,000 health professionals and to train 1,000 new midwives to meet the need for those providers across the country, as well as to create demand for high-quality care among expectant mothers.

"We want our programs to touch thousands of existing professionals to make them better at their work," Nilekani says. "We also want our efforts to lead to scores of new midwives in India, either by training them directly or by training faculty who teach others."

Aastrika is well positioned to realize its goals, says Dr. Evita Fernandez, chairperson of the Fernandez Foundation, an NGO that works to "humanize childbirth" in India. Calling the foundation's approach "long term and sustainable," Fernandez says that Aastrika's work makes it possible to envision a more humane world—for mothers, their children, and nearly 1.4 billion of the world's people.

"Imagine a world where no woman is disrespected during birth or is plied with unnecessary medical interventions," she says. "What Aastrika is doing will change the face of maternity care in India. Isn't that going to improve everybody's lives?"

Editor's note: A version of this article, by Paul Massari, originally appeared in Harvard's Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences' *Colloquy* magazine.

PHOTOS BY AASTRIKA MIDWIFERY CENTRE



Building cities, building movements

Catherine Neill PLC 2021, MC/MPA 2023

Catherine Neill has been interested in city systems and how people relate to their environment practically her entire life.

“Growing up in Ireland, my family moved around quite a bit,” she says. “From a very young age, I realized how much where you live affects your opportunities—everything from where you work to where you send your kids to school is dependent on your housing situation.”

Today, Neill works as a senior planner at the Boston Planning and Development Agency. Before that she was an urban planner in Vancouver, Canada, working on that city’s first comprehensive plan resulting in transformative change. And while she has always had a deep appreciation for the importance of equitable housing, it was Harvard’s Public Leadership Credential (PLC) that really inspired her to take action and help make that happen.

“The opportunity the PLC gave me was to engage with changemakers from all over the world who were impacting areas like public education, health, and government affairs at all levels,” Neill says. “That encouraged me to step up and co-found an organization called Peer City Convening: an online forum of urban planning practitioners who meet to generate new approaches to improving affordable housing access for vulnerable communities across North America.”

Of course, Neill didn’t enroll in her first PLC course with that goal in mind. She found the convenient, self-paced format of each course and the opportunity to learn online at the renowned Harvard Kennedy School of Government an amazing opportunity for self-development.

“The great thing about the program is the way it challenges you to think about how you can enhance your effectiveness as a leader from a number of different angles. You can register, try out one or two courses, decide if you like it, and keep going from there,” she says.

Harvard’s Public Leadership Credential consists of six six-week courses in three curricular areas, plus a capstone project. Since it was first introduced in 2018, the program has welcomed thousands of learners from over 121 countries and continues to grow.

“I’m always looking for ways to improve myself, be more effective and ensure the public sector can operate more effectively, too,” says Neill, who after completing the PLC program also worked as a research assistant with the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative. “The policy analysis, group facilitation, and leadership skills I acquired in the program had an immediate impact on my ability to scale the Peer City Convening organization from three cities to 14 over the course of two years and move the dial on affordable housing policies nationally.”

The PLC was a huge reason behind Neill’s decision to apply to the Mid-Career Master in Public Administration, from which she graduated last year. She often tells people “Because of my time at Harvard, I’m not just building cities. I’m building movements.”

PHOTO PROVIDED BY CATHERINE NEILL

Cynthia Tinoo MC/MPA writes, “My life was totally changed from peacefulness to heartbroken after a 2021 military coup in my country. I have been back to full-time unpaid work for internally displaced people inside Burma, providing humanitarian aid through fundraising and delivering cross-border aid from Thailand. If you would like to help, please donate to Partners Asia, the nonprofit organization that I serve as a board member. In war, the greatest sufferers are the innocent children and women. Let’s make the world free from any types of war!!!”

2000

Jennifer Martin Janis MPP recently took on a new role at UnitedHealthcare, leading the Medicare Regulatory Affairs team. After 18 years with UHC focused on Medicare, the Affordable Care Act, state legislation, and the COVID-19 response, Jennifer continues to enjoy

working on health care policy issues and finding opportunities to strengthen relationships between business and government stakeholders. While health care was not Jennifer’s initial focus area at HKS, the MPP Spring Exercise focused on Medicare sparked an interest in the topic.

Kendra Perkins Norwood MPP has joined Reed Smith’s global regulatory and investigations practice as a partner based in the firm’s Washington, D.C., office. Kendra represents clients, ranging from global aerospace and defense contractors to technology and R&D startups, who do business with federal and state governments. She founded, and was the inaugural chair of, the National Bar Association’s (NBA) Government Procurement Law Section.

2001

Josiah Brown MPP writes, “It’s been four years since we launched Connecticut Court Appointed Special Advocates, a new affiliate of the national CASA movement for children. Working with those in foster care and at the prior, preventative stage of protective supervision, we are now serving three of the four largest child-protection courts in the state. Connecticut CASA applies the proven CASA approach to improve outcomes for young people who have experienced abuse/neglect. Our aim: safe, permanent homes—with family members whenever possible—where youth are more likely to thrive. Our funding is a blend of public dollars, foundation grants, and individual donations.”

2002

Stephanie Oestreich MPA continues to be based in Boston and is incredibly excited to have assumed the position of managing director of the Myeloma Investment Fund in September 2023!

2004 20TH REUNION

Ken Biberaj MPP writes, “Our boys, Hudson and Grant Biberaj, have written a book called *No More Minutes*, which documents their daily efforts to secure more time before bed. The book is available for purchase on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Archway Publishing.”

Michelle Blair MPA completed 14 years of service in the U.S. federal government, where she worked as a lead researcher at the National Assessment Governing Board, which oversees the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as The Nation’s Report Card. Extending her career as a researcher, Michelle is now a doctoral student at Stanford University, with interests in labor economics, public economics, and the economics of

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Alumni Talk Policy



Women in Technology
October 30, 2023

“As a woman or as anyone who is an unrepresented voice in a space related to technology or national security or underrepresented fields, you have to always question why people are trying to block you or your voice from that space. And some of them go back decades and centuries and millennia. But it’s really important to challenge those roadblocks.”

— **Sarah Spencer MPP 2006**
Director and Founder, DoveTail



— **Ken Biberaj MPP 2004**



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Empowering the Public Sector

“The production of evidence does not necessarily mean that that evidence is being used and adopted in government. And even when good ideas are taken to scale or we’re trying to do this, if we actually measure it properly, sometimes the effects are much smaller than we expected.”

Elizabeth Linos
Emma Bloomberg Associate Professor of Public Policy and Management

education. She is launching a research agenda examining certification industries, focusing on standardized tests and higher education credentials. She welcomes collaboration opportunities in the United States or in other countries: visit michelleblair.com.

Andrew Leigh PHD switched from being an economics professor to a member of the Australian Parliament in 2010. Following the Labor Party’s win in last year’s election, Andrew is now serving as the assistant minister for competition, charities, treasury and employment. His new book *The Shortest History of Economics* hits the shelves in 2024. Andrew and his wife, Gweneth, live in Canberra with their three boys (now aged 11, 14, and 16).

Diana Samarasan Hoover MC/MPA writes, “In early 2022, after 14 years, I left the organization I founded—the Disability Rights Fund (DRF)—in excellent hands, and it continues to grow. I am working as an independent consultant now, building on the model and work of DRF to increase participation of people with lived experience within philanthropy and

more broadly. My co-conspirator, Katy Love, and I recently published our Advancing Participation in Philanthropy Tool available at advancingparticipation.com. I am also part of the founding board of a new Harvard alumni student interest group I urge you to join—the Harvard Alumni Disability Alliance. Finally, I am teaching my daughter to drive—she’s 17 and a junior!!”

2007

Kai Lee MPP left his post as the CEO of Vanke US at the end of 2022 after building a USD \$6.3 billion portfolio over his decade-long tenure there. Kai managed to complete his goal of running at least one half-marathon in all 50 states and D.C. by mid-2023, which was a four-year plan interrupted by the pandemic. He is now the regional CEO of Europe, Americas, and the Middle East for JD Property, the logistics real estate subsidiary of the Global Fortune 100 conglomerate JD. He continues to be based in New York City and runs regularly along the Hudson.

2008

Jose Luis Romo MPP reports that Oxford Business Group (OBG) highlighted the Mexican state of Hidalgo as its foreign investment case study of the year. OBG emphasized that under Jose Luis’s leadership, Hidalgo transitioned its economy to high value-added sectors, securing a record amount of FDI. This strategic transformation led to an impressive 8% GDP growth in Q1 2023, marking Hidalgo as a standout success in economic policy and innovation.

2009 15TH REUNION

Dan Björkegren MPP has a new job as a professor at Columbia’s School of International and Public Affairs in New York, where he will continue working on AI/machine learning in developing economies.

2010

Allison Shapira MC/MPA writes, “Having studied leadership communication for the past 20 years, I’ve been researching ways AI will change how we communicate. I am launching a new project and new keynote titled, ‘AI & Authenticity: The Future of Human Connection.’ Would love to connect with alumni working in the AI space!”

Josh Stephens MPP published *Planners Across America* (Planetizen Press, 2022), a collection of interviews with big-city urban planners nationwide.

2011

Jonathan Gensler MPA has recently published six short stories in venues such as *Cosmic Horror Monthly*, *CreepyPod*, and *Soul Scream Anthology*, with his first novel in the works. After a career in the military and clean tech, he is now writing horror and dark sci-fi rooted in the fears of technological and societal collapse he spent years trying to fight. Find his stories and other updates at jonathangensler.com.

—
“I am also part of the founding board of a new Harvard alumni student interest group I urge you to join—the Harvard Alumni Disability Alliance.”

Diana Samarasan Hoover MC/MPA 2004

2013

Mike McMahon MPP and his wife, Megan, welcomed their daughter Grace Ellen into the world in July 2023 in Chicago. Mike writes, “Megan was an inspiration. Grace’s favorite hobbies include drooling, coo-ing, chewing on her hands, and filling her diaper. She is single and ready to mingle with babies who share her interests.”

Applying HKS lessons to municipal climate resilience

Julie Wormser MC/MPA 2008

In 2018, record coastal flooding offered pedestrians an unexpected sight: a dumpster floating down the middle of the street in Boston’s new Seaport District. While perhaps comical, the much-shared video helped sharpen public concern around climate change-driven sea level rise and extreme weather.

Just north of downtown Boston is the Mystic River watershed, a 76-square-mile area that comprises 21 separate cities and towns. The watershed is home to a high concentration of life-critical infrastructure (e.g., transportation, energy, health care, and communications) and the largest number of residents in environmental justice communities (i.e., neighborhoods composed predominantly of people of color and those with low incomes) between the North Pole and New York City. Inhabitants of the Mystic River watershed are particularly at risk from extreme storms, heat, and coastal flooding.

“All of the countries that do really good climate resilience work are either social democracies like the Netherlands or Germany or have highly centralized governments like South Korea or Singapore,” says Julie Wormser, MC/MPA 2008. “They have a regional ability to regulate, to raise funds, and to do big construction projects in a way that we don’t.”

As the senior policy advisor for the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), Wormser helped found and continues to co-facilitate the Resilient Mystic Collaborative (RMC), a voluntary partnership that works across municipal borders to plan, finance, and implement equitable remedies. “When we started in 2018, our executive director and I went out to about 50 different people and said, ‘Help us understand what climate challenges you can’t manage within your municipal boundary and how a collaborative regional nonprofit could help.’”

In its five short years, the RMC—which last year served as a client for two MPP students’ Policy Analysis Exercise—has raised over \$111 million from both state and federal sources for everything from constructed wetlands and shady parks to major regional coastal resilience projects. Wormser is thankful for the resources, noting that the collaborative aspect of the work has been really exciting to funders. “What we’re doing together is so much more compelling and sophisticated than what we would be doing solo,” she says.

Wormser says that what she learned at HKS helps her navigate difficult challenges, such as the skills she developed in her negotiation class: “How do we change things to succeed? If



there’s a regulation that makes climate resilience harder, how can we fix that? If there’s not enough funding, how can we fix that? Negotiations as a practice and as a head space makes you think about the world as not immutable. That’s been incredibly helpful.”

She says that successful collaborations are not to-do lists but rather exercises in building trust and understanding people’s needs and aspirations. This approach continues to serve the RMC well. “We’ve built relationships among municipal and nonprofit staff who might not have a chance otherwise to work with each other,” Wormser says. “This is a classic good governance effort that pools technical, financial, and community resources together to create something that’s really making a difference in people’s lives.”

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY JULIE WORMSER



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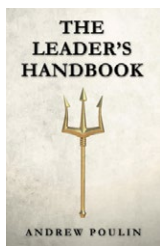
Diversifying Society's Leaders?

"If you are from the top 1% of the family income distribution, you are 77 times more likely to attend an Ivy Plus college than if you're from the bottom 20%. So we have highly unequal distribution of family income across colleges. And again, these are the colleges that are spending \$100,000 per student per year."

David Deming

Isabelle and Scott Black Professor of Political Economy and Academic Dean

Sushma Raman MC/MPA was appointed the president and CEO of the Heising-Simons Foundation, a family foundation headquartered in the Bay Area that supports early childhood education, human rights, climate and clean energy, and scientific research. Sushma joined the foundation in February 2023 and was invited to serve on the foundation's board this fall. Previously, she served as the executive director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, a position she held since 2015.



— **Andrew Poulin MC/MPA 2018**

2014 10TH REUNION

Frank Kuzminski MC/MPA recently defended his doctoral dissertation at the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle. His dissertation, *A Certain Idea of Space: How Leaders Shape Military Space Posture in Europe*, dives into three of Europe's most important space actors, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, to explore the role of leaders and human agency in shaping the use

of space technologies in international security affairs. Next, Frank heads to Washington, D.C., to serve as a special assistant to the secretary of the Army.

2015

Kimberly Dowdell MC/MPA was inaugurated as the 100th president of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) on December 15th, 2023, in Washington, D.C. She serves as the organization's first Black female president. She is the first AIA president of the millennial generation. Founded in 1857, the AIA advocates for the value of architecture and gives architects the resources they need to do their best work. Kimberly will continue in her role as global design firm HOK's director of strategic relationships for the duration of her one-year term as AIA president.

Robert Reynolds MPP and Simran Gambhir were recently engaged. Robert is the founder and executive director of Vote Rev, a progressive political nonprofit. Simran is on the clinical faculty at UCLA's medical school, where she works and teaches as a pediatric hospitalist. They live in Los Angeles.

—
"One year in Cambridge went too fast, and I am already missing the vibrancy of campus life."

Jorge Galvez Mendez MC/MPA 2023

2018

Andrew Poulin MC/MPA has published his first book, *The Leader's Handbook*. Andrew writes, "The book is comprised of various ancient quotes, excerpts, and wisdom organized into 10 key leadership traits. It is meant for people to read, reflect, and then lead, and come back to any time you need inspiration. The book is available on Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and Archway

Publishing. If you're interested in following *The Leader's Handbook*, check out @theleadershandbook1 on Instagram and 'The Leader's Handbook' on Facebook."

2019 5TH REUNION

Joe James MC/MPA is doing a one-year secondment at Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade before starting a new role as an energy and climate officer at the U.S. Embassy in Canberra.

2020

Laurent Boinot MC/MPA, Jaime Diaz MC/MPA, Steffen Feuerpeil MC/MPA, David Manoury MC/MPA, and Gayatri Rao MC/MPA are the authors of "Algorithms smarter than experts? AI methods applied to assessment of environmental risk of World Bank projects," published in the *International Journal of Sustainable Development* (Vol. 26, No. 2).

2023

Jorge Galvez Mendez MC/MPA writes, "One year in Cambridge went too fast, and I am already missing the vibrancy of campus life. I am back at the OECD applying what I learned from the MC/MPA for LatAm and MENA. I also acquired new interests such as improving the effectiveness of public institutions for better services for citizens and the opportunities and challenges of the unavoidable green transition for emerging countries. If you have worked on those areas and, in particular, if you have experience in applying top management practices (HR, digitalization, transparency, etc.) from all types of entities, private and non-governmental to public institutions, please give me a ring."

PHOTO BY MARTHA STEWART

PHOTO BY BRENT SKEEN

Leading through collaboration in the U.S. government

LaFonda Sutton-Burke HKSEE 2017

The U.S. Custom and Border Protection's LaFonda Sutton-Burke HKSEE 2017, director of field operations for the Chicago field office, exemplifies what it means to be a leader daily. The more than 1,200 employees she oversees processed 6.2 million passengers, \$542 billion in imports, and \$151 billion in exports last year. Highly skilled in operating on an incredibly large scale, Sutton-Burke was nonetheless eager to immerse herself in a collaborative environment that would allow her to expand her leadership prowess even further, which brought her to Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Education program, "Senior Managers in Government."

"I wanted to overcome leading, thinking, and operating within a silo," Sutton-Burke says. "I wanted to transform my leadership style to have the ability to manage from a range-of-an-enterprise approach, to a whole-of-government approach, to a private enterprise approach. The value of 'Senior Managers in Government' is that it opens the aperture of not only knowledge, but it also allows you to understand partner government agencies, community organizations, foreign trade organizations, etc. I appreciate collaborative relationships, and I value the give and take of negotiations to accomplish a win-win solution that benefits everyone."

Her time in "Senior Managers in Government" not only had an invaluable impact on her abilities as a leader, but it also allowed her to take a step back and examine her current role through a larger lens, particularly when it comes to collaboration, and strengthened her ties to fellow government communities. "I was able to utilize the case studies, discussions, and networking opportunities to understand that my role is beyond the Custom and Border Protection (CBP) mission. It allowed me to understand the whole-of-government approach to global supply chains, and it allowed me to establish and seek relationships with international and national trade communities, air carriers, airport authorities, congressional staff delegations, community organizations, and more."

This deepened understanding and appreciation for how her work at the CBP has a ripple effect to other departments has led Sutton-Burke to an exciting new project involving many different facets of the government, where successful collaboration will be key. "I am currently working on an enterprise problem set within CBP that is impacting not only internal CBP stakeholders but also external stakeholders that include the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the White House, Homeland Security Investigations, the Drug Enforcement Agency, Border 5, and e-commerce stakeholders," she says. "The knowledge gained during the executive education experience is assisting me to bring all stakeholders together to address this challenging problem set."

Above: On May 18, 2023, Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security John Tien hosted the Secretary's Awards with LaFonda Sutton-Burke, director of field operations at Border Protection Chicago, in Louisville at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Headquarters.



Dreaming of equality for LGBTQ+ people in the Middle East

Tarek Zeidan MPA 2018

Founded more than two decades ago, Helem, based in Beirut, works to make the dream of equality for LGBTQ+ people in the Middle East a reality.

“The organization is really a landmark in the region,” says Helem Executive Director Tarek Zeidan MPA 2018, “and in fact in the global south in general.” It was the first to raise a rainbow flag on Arab soil; the first to protest for LGBTQ+ rights on Arab soil; it forced the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people into Lebanon’s national AIDS program; it won the first-ever legal victory in the Arab world against the criminalization of same-sex relations and successfully challenged the Lebanese Interior Ministry’s ban on all LGBTQ+ public gatherings. Crucially, it was also the first to push for LGBTQ+ conversations in the media in Lebanon and in the region, and all other LGBTQ+ NGOs were either incubated or started by Helem alumni, particularly inside Lebanon.

Helem’s most important work, though, takes place in its community space, Zeidan says. “It’s a place where we build our own power in order to oppose power. Our role isn’t necessarily

to lead the charge, but to support and to mobilize different actors and institutions to become catalysts for change.” One way the center does this is to give voice to its members through an open-mic night. Says Zeidan, “People show up and get up on the mic and tell their life stories, whether they’re refugees from Syria or they just escaped the carnage in Sudan or in Yemen, or they’re from rural areas in Lebanon. And these stories are a testimony of what it’s actually like in a still largely hidden world.”

Zeidan’s journey to the LGBTQ+ movement wasn’t direct. As a college student in 2005, he helped organize peaceful protests after Lebanon’s Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated—protests that led to the collapse of his nation’s pro-Syrian government and the withdrawal of 14,000 Syrian troops. Deciding to dedicate his life to helping his country and region, he went to Tufts University for a master’s in international relations and then worked for the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Endowment.

“It took me eight years of working with think tanks to realize that that’s not how change happens,” he says. “It’s very cosmetic. And even if change does happen, it’s not immediate or tangible enough for me to derive any sense of accomplishment or satisfaction or vindication.”

That is when he began working with Helem, which at the time was on the verge of closing down. It took him four years of hard work to rebuild the organization, but he knew he needed to fill gaps in his knowledge. “What I was really missing was a knowledge of human rights advocacy.” The Kennedy School not only accepted him as a student, but offered him full support through the Emirates Leadership Initiative Fellowship at the Center for Public Leadership.

At HKS, Zeidan loved his time studying with **KATHRYN SIKKINK**, the Ryan Family Professor of Human Rights Policy. “She reinforced my faith in truth and data, and showed that even if the entire world is against you, that you know what you’re doing is right because you’ve done your homework and you have the evidence to counter the emotional backlash.” He also notes his studies helped him see how his work fits into the global fight for justice, which made him feel much less alone. “You feel so much isolation as a member of a minority, as a member of a vulnerable group who’s working on a fundamentally unpopular cause in one of the most difficult places in the world to do so,” he says.

Despite the many challenges of advocating for a highly discriminated-against population, Zeidan remains optimistic he has the tools to advance justice. “We’re still afloat and we’re still fighting. There’s a reason for that. It’s not luck—you learn how to diagnose and negotiate with your reality and live to fight another day.”



PHOTO PROVIDED BY TAREK ZEIDAN | PHOTOS BY JESSICA SCRANTON

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HKS ON THE ROAD



HKS on the Road features Dean Doug Elmendorf discussing public issues with expert faculty, alumni, and friends in cities around the world. For more photos and the schedule of upcoming events, visit <https://ken.sc/HKSOTR>



Top: Manila (December) | Anthony Saich, director of the Rajawali Foundation Institute for Asia and Daewoo Professor of International Affairs, Gianna Montinola MC/MPA 2013, Carol Dominguez, Dean Douglas Elmendorf, and Geraldine Acuña-Sunshine MPP 1996. **Left: Chicago (October)** | Reine Rambert MPP 2020, Crystal Bush HKSEE 2023, and Maude Toussaint-Comeau HKSEE 2023. **Right: Boston (September)** | Kate Mullally MC/MPA 1998, Paul Wingle MC/MPA 1998, and his wife Ileana Jimenez Garcia.



Clockwise from top: **Singapore (December)** | Neha Thakkar MC/MPA 2018, Martin Häcki, Frances Tan MPA 2019, Dee Senaratne MC/MPA 2018, and Bahaa El-Taweal MC/MPA 2019; **Taipei (December)** | Director of the China Public Policy Program and Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy Edward Cunningham; **Hong Kong (December)** | Shunde Tu MPA/ID 2013, MBA 2013.



EDUCATION FOR A BETTER WORLD

Hazem Ben-Gacem AB 1992 and Karen Frank MBA 1997 are devoted to helping the next generation of public leaders from Tunisia and beyond.

SITUATED AT AFRICA'S NORTHERNMOST POINT, Tunisia has a rich heritage that goes back to the beginning of recorded history. From its indigenous Berber tribes to the influential Phoenician city of Carthage, a metropolis founded during the Iron Age whose ruins today are a popular tourist attraction, Tunisia is a cultural treasure. Until 1956, it was under the rule of other powers, including the Roman Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and France.

Since independence, Tunisia's leaders have moved the nation in contradictory directions. Policies veered from the nationalization of agriculture to social and economic liberalization to authoritarianism characterized by the repression of speech. Public corruption, long a problem, was compounded by challenges such as high inflation and unemployment.

Those issues came to a head in 2010, when demonstrations against unscrupulous officials led Tunisia's autocratic president of 23 years to flee the country. The protests also ignited the movement known as the Arab Spring, during which uprisings across much of the Arab world toppled several regimes, including those in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen.

More than a decade later, Tunisia is still experiencing many of the obstacles it knew for so long. A 2020 poll by the International Republican Institute, a U.S. nonprofit focused on the expansion of democracy, revealed widespread public discontent: An overwhelming number of Tunisians—87%—said they believed their country was headed in the wrong direction, and 78% felt that corruption had a negative impact on their lives.

“Investing in the education of future generations of public leaders will make the region—and the world—a better place for all people for years to come.”

HAZEM BEN-GACEM AB 1992

Harvard College graduate **HAZEM BEN-GACEM AB 1992** and his wife **KAREN FRANK MBA 1997**, an alumna of Harvard Business School, are determined to advance good government in Tunisia and in the Arab world through their significant philanthropy to Harvard. In recent years, their generosity has helped Harvard to establish its Tunisia Office, which was the first overseas branch of the University's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. They also created fellowships for student financial aid at Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Medical School.

The fellowship at HKS is named in honor of Ben-Gacem's father, **HAMIDA BEN-GACEM**, who was the first Tunisian to graduate from the Kennedy School. After earning his Mid-Career MPA degree, in 1974, he returned to his home country and worked in various public service jobs until his retirement.

Says Hazem Ben-Gacem, “Through this fellowship, exceptional leaders from Tunisia and beyond are able to attend the Kennedy School, learn essential skills, and go on to effect positive change



Hamida Ben-Gacem MC/MPA 1974 (top left) in Cambridge with his family.

in their regions. There is no shortage of problems—and helping leaders receive the benefit of an HKS education will in turn help achieve solutions to so many problems.”

Tunisia's challenges are not unique but part of a complex and interconnected set of issues facing the diverse nations that compose the Arabic region. Those challenges, which include war, political instability, economic and social inequality, and authoritarianism, have stymied progress for generations, making it even more important to cultivate leaders who apply evidence to solve problems. To open more doors for future Kennedy School students, Frank and Ben-Gacem commit not only their resources but also their time to HKS: Frank is chair of the Kennedy School's Dean's Council and both she and Ben-Gacem are on the Dean's Executive Board.

“The Kennedy School is the best place in the world for people to learn the skills needed to solve complex public problems,” she says, “and receiving financial aid is an important factor in determining whether students can enroll.”

Despite the intense and historic challenges facing politics and policy in the Middle East, the couple remain optimistic about the power of education to change lives. Says Ben-Gacem, “Investing in the education of future generations of public leaders will make the region—and the world—a better place for all people for years to come.”



A man casts his ballot Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023, in Tunis.

POURTRAIT BY MARTHA STEWART | IMAGE BY AP PHOTO/HASSENE DRIDI



ARTHUR BROOKS, the Parker Gilbert Montgomery Professor of the Practice of Public and Nonprofit Leadership, and Oprah Winfrey discuss their book, *Build the Life You Want: The Art and Science of Getting Happier*, at a Harvard Business School event in September 2023.

PHOTO BY HENSLEY CARRASCO



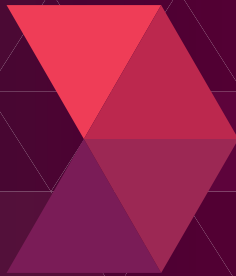
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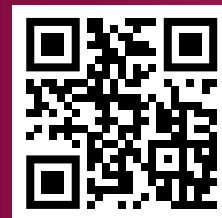
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