

SPECIAL SECTION

China

Temple Law School: At The Forefront Of The Globalization Of Legal Education

The Editor interviews *Joanne A. Epps*, Dean of Temple University Beasley School of Law.

Editor: Dean Epps, would you tell our readers about your professional experience?

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Epps: I am fortunate to have had a wonderful blend of education, practice and professional experience. I am a graduate of Yale Law School and have been in practice now for more than 30 years. After service as a prosecutor at both the state and federal levels, I came to academia in 1985. I have been at Temple Law School since that time. I found teaching to be a very rewarding experience, and I also concluded that the academic side of our profession is a way of pursuing issues in depth, something very difficult to do in private practice. Academia also afforded me the opportunity to devote time to bar and community service.

Editor: What distinguishes Temple Law from its peers?

Epps: Several things make us different. One, we were out front very early in developing an advocacy curriculum for our students. This entails not merely the development of trial skills, but also a recognition that a good practitioner must be grounded in both theory and practice.

Temple was one of the first law schools to recognize the importance of global issues, and we have had a great deal of success in a variety of international initiatives.

In addition, we have a significant focus on public interest law. This is reflected both in our curriculum and in our support for students who wish to pursue careers in this area.

Editor: Your appointment makes you one of only four black women deans in the country. What is the significance of this, from both a personal and professional perspective?

Epps: On a personal level, I feel greatly honored to be in so select a group. Temple University has made a public statement of its confidence in me with this appointment, and for that I feel a great deal of gratitude. The good news is that there are four of us; the not-so-good news is that there are *only* four. Being a member of such a small group means that I am something of a role model – and not just for African American women, but for many people who are trying to achieve their dreams irrespective of gender or race. I am humbled at being in such a position, and I am also conscious of the responsibility I carry in being out in front, so to speak. In the years to come, I am convinced that the number of women deans and the number of deans of color is going to



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increase, and I am honored to be among the pioneers in this development.

Editor: How has your long-standing relationship with Temple Law shaped your vision for the law school?

Epps: It provides me with a valuable grounding for the position I now hold. I did not need the learning curve that a newly appointed dean from the outside would require, so I was able to hit the ground running. I had, in addition, ongoing relationships with the university's administration, the faculty, and the school's alumni, and that constitutes a tremendous advantage in moving forward quickly.

Editor: What do you see as potential areas of growth within the law school to better prepare future lawyers to work in a global environment?

Epps: Looking forward over, say, a ten-year period, it is clear that areas such as intellectual property and technology are going to be important to everyone, not just lawyers. These are areas that inform the way our world will work in the future and will touch virtually every area of legal practice. Our entire cur-

riculum is going to be affected by developments in the technological arena, and one has only to think of the delivery of healthcare, the structure of the global economy and the regulation – or lack thereof – of international trade to realize that young people coming out of law school will need to be prepared in ways that earlier generations of students did not. As an institution, we are part of the internationalization of the law. This is an era of very great change, and we wish to be thought of as an institution at the forefront of innovation in legal education and in the interdisciplinary discussions that are going to shape substantive knowledge.

Editor: Speaking of international law, for many years, the law school has been working to advance global justice and rule of law through its groundbreaking China Rule of Law Program and other initiatives. For starters, would you give us an overview of the China program?

Epps: In partnership with Tsinghua University in Beijing, we offer a graduate degree in American law. Over a 15-

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month period, the degree provides an introduction to the principles of American law. With the accelerated globalization currently underway, understanding these principles is increasingly essential to Chinese lawyers and to their clients. We take particular pride in being the first non-Chinese university to occupy this particular landscape.

We also offer a judicial education program – shorter than the graduate law program – which is meant to introduce judges to the critical analysis of issues that inform the American judicial system.

Editor: Temple is also engaged in international advocacy training for Japanese and Sudanese lawyers. Can you tell us about these programs?

Epps: The Japanese program is a Temple University project. Temple has a full campus in Tokyo, where it offers undergraduate education and degrees. There is also a semester abroad program for law students. The law school's advocacy training was prompted by the re-institution of jury trials in Japanese criminal cases, which is to occur in May of 2009. The Japanese Bar Association, realizing that its members would need training in jury advocacy and persuasion, asked us to make presentations to its membership. To date we have twice addressed an audience in Tokyo, and the second address was then broadcast across the country to about 20,000 lawyers.

With respect to the Sudanese lawyers, I am engaged in a joint American Bar Association-MacArthur Foundation project providing training to Sudanese lawyers who represent victims of the Darfur crisis. The training includes practice before the ICC – the international court established in 1998 to which some 108 countries are now signatories – and on representation of victims of the Darfur atrocities. Working with the lawyers representing the victims of this tragedy is inspiring. They are engaged in this effort at great personal sacrifice and in the face of real danger.

Editor: You have given us a very strong statement of your vision for Temple Law School. How does this extend to the China Rule of Law Program?

Epps: From its earliest days, Temple Law School has understood the need to educate lawyers capable of providing a range of services to a very wide constituency, from wealthy business organizations to impoverished individuals. Notwithstanding the diversity of such a constituency, there are common factors that go into the educational component that we provide to students aspiring to be lawyers. Additionally, we expect them to be bright, thoughtful, committed to the principles of our profession, honorable in their dealings with those they represent and with their adversaries, and conscious of society's expectations of them. We attempt to instill in

our students a commitment to public service that will inform their entire careers.

The China Rule of Law program is entirely consistent with all of the foregoing. We believe that, in contributing to the education of Chinese lawyers, we are building a platform on which thoughtful partnering with American lawyers can take place and, indeed, thrive. We recognize that some of these lawyers may rise to positions of great influence in China. They are going to participate in discussions that determine their country's place in the world, and whether those discussions are confrontational or cooperative is something our graduates may well influence. The China Rule of Law program is meant to enhance the understanding that we have of each other and our perception of what our global society should be. If we are successful, we are going to have a better chance of having a thoughtful partner to help us address the issues of the future. Our China Rule of Law program gives me confidence that we will have that partner.

Editor: What is the future of legal education?

Epps: At the beginning of the 21st century we must ask ourselves whether we are delivering legal education in a meaningful way, in a way that is currently relevant and that provides a foundation sufficient to carry a person through his or her entire career in the law. A generation ago, law schools were turning out practitioners who had very little idea of what technology would mean over the course of their careers. It is difficult to perceive what will have a similar impact, but *something* almost certainly will. I think it is the responsibility of the law schools to prepare today's students for the inevitability of change, to provide them with the ability to adapt to change, and to help them understand the law's connectedness with other disciplines in what is in the process of becoming an interdisciplinary world.

Let me give you an example. As do all law schools, we offer courses on legal ethics, but, as anyone who has been in practice knows, these classes may not prepare you to address the full range of ethical and moral issues that arise in practice. A recent report of the Carnegie Foundation encourages all of us in legal education to take a look at ways we can improve our offerings in this area in a contextual, experiential way. I, for one, have asked my colleagues to look into ways in which we might enhance what our curriculum offers in this area. One possibility might be to have a course of 40 students divide itself into two law firms of 20 and confront a series of integrated contextual challenges that law firms might be expected to face. Our location in a major metropolitan area, our access to visiting faculty, and our relationships with other leading law schools gives us the foundation for some very interesting possibilities in this area. I think an emphasis on legal ethics is very much part of the agenda for legal education going forward.

Please email the interviewee at joanne.epps@temple.edu with questions about this interview.

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