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Recommended Citation

Roger Williams University School of Law, "Dean Logan's Blog: Harvard Law Dean Martha Minow Delivers Thurgood Marshall Memorial Lecture" (2012). *Law School Blogs*. 159.
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Dean Logan's Blog

Harvard Law Dean Martha Minow Delivers Thurgood Marshall Memorial Lecture

Posted by David Logan on 05/17/2012 at 04:25 PM

The Roger Williams Law community was honored and, frankly, dazzled by the Thurgood Marshall Lecture recently delivered by Martha Minow, the 12th Dean of Harvard Law School, who not only served as a law clerk to Justice Marshall, but also has taught in class a future Justice of the SCOTUS, Elena Kagan, and a future President of the United States, Barack Obama.

In a week in which the Trayvon Martin shooting dominated the headlines, and the latest challenge to affirmative action in higher education, *Fisher v. Texas*, was granted certiorari by the Supreme Court, Minow focused her comments on the racial context that produced the *Brown v. Board* case and the almost-mythic status the case has since attained not only within the U.S., but around the world as “the touchstone for what a court can do when it acts with justice.”

Minow recounted that, in the years leading up to *Brown*, racial segregation had become an international embarrassment for the U.S., negatively affecting our national prestige and influence (even ambassadors and diplomats “of color” were frequently insulted by U.S. laws), while providing grist for the Soviet propaganda mill, depicting the U.S. as a hypocritical and oppressive power. *Brown*, Minow said, marked “the coming of awareness in this country that we’re in a global context, and the shame that this country actually experienced when the world looked at how we treated people in our own country.”

She then spoke of how, in later years, both *Brown* and Thurgood Marshall himself helped the U.S. rise above that shame. Marshall, for example, played a vital role in helping Kenya and other emerging post-colonial African nations draft constitutions. And *Brown* has been cited in cases around the globe – notably in Israel, South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Czech Republic, where the Roma (Gypsy) people have found a narrative addressing their own experience of oppression over the centuries.

After the Q & A session, Dean Minow mingled with the attendees, showing a keen interest in speaking with our students. Here are some terrific photos from the lecture and the reception. The Roger Williams Law community was honored and, frankly, dazzled by the Thurgood Marshall Lecture recently delivered by Martha Minow, the 12th Dean of Harvard Law School. Dean Minow not only served as a law clerk to Justice Marshall, but also has taught a future Justice of the SCOTUS, Elena Kagan, and a future President of the United States, Barack Obama.

In a semester in which the Trayvon Martin shooting dominated the headlines, and the latest challenge to affirmative action in higher education, *Fisher v. Texas*, was granted certiorari by the Supreme Court, Minow focused on the racial context that produced the *Brown v. Board* case and the almost-mythic status it has since attained, not only in the U.S., but around the world, as Dean Minow observed, “*Brown* is the touchstone for what a court can do when it acts with justice.”

Minow recounted that, in the years leading up to Brown, racial segregation had become an international embarrassment for the U.S., negatively affecting our national prestige (ambassadors and diplomats “of color” were frequently insulted by U.S. laws), while providing grist for the Soviet propaganda mill, depicting the U.S. as a hypocritical and oppressive power. Brown, Minow said, marked “the coming of awareness in this country that we’re in a global context, and the shame that this country actually experienced when the world looked at how we treated people in our own country.”

She then spoke of how, in later years, both Brown and Thurgood Marshall himself helped the U.S. rise above that shame. Marshall, in addition to conceiving and implementing the brilliant litigation strategy that led to Brown, also played a vital role in helping Kenya and other emerging post-colonial African nations draft constitutions. And Brown has been cited in cases around the globe – notably in Israel, South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Czech Republic, where the Roma (Gypsy) people have found a narrative addressing their own experience of oppression over the centuries.

After an energetic Q & A session with a crowd of law students, faculty, judges and practicing lawyers, Dean Minow mingled with the attendees, showing a keen interest in speaking with our students. Here are some terrific photos from the lecture and the reception.



Martha Minow, Dean of Harvard Law School



Martha Minow and Deborah Johnson, Director of Diversity & Outreach



Kas DeCarvalho of Fontaine, DeCarvalho & Bell , Donald Farish, RWU President,
and Anthony Bastone, Assistant Dean Career Services



Adam Ramos and Mark Crisafulli of Hinckley, Allen & Snyder



Judge Will Smith



1L Edward Colon



2L Kim Chester



Martha Minow and Dean David Logan



Judge Jack McConnell



Martha Minow with RWU School of Law Students





Jim Vincent, President of the Providence NAACP and Martha Minow