State Champions

Hilary Norton MPP 1992 and other alumni are championing California’s most vulnerable
SIX MONTHS ON FROM RUSSIA’S INVASION, and after leading Ukraine’s improbable and unexpected resistance with what some described as Churchillian resolve, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke, live from his office in Kyiv, at a Forum event at the Kennedy School in September with faculty member ASH CARTER, who died suddenly a month later. Wearing his trademark olive green t-shirt, Zelenskyy spoke of the leadership lessons the brutal war has taught: “Focus on your task and move ahead. Never stop. The moment you stop, your enemies start digging in, which makes everything more complex, more challenging, which will require more resources. Be unstoppable, be true to yourself, but be just.”

PHOTO BY MARTHA STEWART
HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL’S MISSION is to improve public policy and leadership so people can live in societies that are more safe, free, just, and sustainably prosperous. Our students and alumni, our faculty, and our staff all strive to advance this mission—whether they are on campus, elsewhere in the United States, or around the world. Creating societies that are more sustainably prosperous involves improving social policy and empowering people and communities that have been left down or left out. In this issue of HKS Magazine, we share stories about alumni tackling economic and social inequality as well as stories about faculty-driven projects that address this crucial set of challenges.

We profile three alumni in California—Scott Hugo MPP/JD 2015, Hilary Norton MPP 1992, and Chuck Flacks MPP 1992—working on issues ranging from environmental and housing justice to homelessness and transportation. In a short Q&A, we hear from Jeremy Ney MPA 2021, who uses data visualization to help policymakers understand trends in American inequality.

We also highlight programs at the School that aim to change the conversation about inequality; improve the quality of life for low-wage workers; develop better job training and access to the workforce; and provide direct support to people in extreme hardship. The featured initiatives include the Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality, and Social Policy; the Reimagining the Economy Project; the Shift Project; the Project on Workforce; and the Taubman Center’s research on Chelsea Eats.

In addition to the stories in this issue focused on economic and social inequality, we include a feature on Tarek Masoud, the Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Governance, and his initiative on Democracy in Hard Places and work focused on democracy in Arab countries. We also showcase a research project to quantify methane emissions and buy valuable time to battle climate change.

In so many ways, members of the Harvard Kennedy School community are tackling the country’s and the world’s most pressing public challenges—and I am delighted we can share some of their stories with you. As always, I hope you find HKS Magazine both inspiring and informative.

Dean Doug Elmendorf
Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
IDEAS

GET TO KNOW SOME MEMBERS OF OUR HKS GLOBAL STUDENT COMMUNITY

**Mauricio Amaya**
MPA/ID candidate
The problem that I am interested in untangling is why inequality and poverty are still so prevalent in my region and why our countries have not been able to catch up with other societies regarding economic development. What inspires me is the blatant suffering and injustice from economic deprivation and disparities.

**Leonardo da Silveira**
MC/MPA candidate
My “why” is to end poverty. I want to interact with the existing poverty-alleviation structures, helping these increase their capacity to overcome intergenerational poverty cycles. Individual choices may explain a certain level of inequality, but I am convinced that poverty is a structural problem, a systemic and cruel policy failure.

**Imogen Hobby**
MPP candidate
Educational inequality is such a complex problem that it can sometimes feel overwhelming, but one thing I’ve learned here at the Kennedy School is that progress is made by those who show up and get to work, even when the task seems insurmountable. I hope to give all children a fair chance to thrive at school, and beyond.

**Adefemi Bucknor-Arigbede**
MC/MPA candidate
I want to untangle the unequal participation and representation of women in political processes, public leadership, and nation building in my society. I want the voices and desires of all women to be heard and relevant in public discourse, policy, and governance. I want to make my mark on the world by leading by example.

**Tess Kelly**
MPA candidate
As an Australian lawyer and policymaker, I am focused on addressing the overlapping health and legal needs of children who come into contact with justice and child protection systems. I am passionate about working to protect the rights of these children, and to prevent the harm these systems continue to perpetuate.

**Nurul Wakhidah**
PhD candidate
I aspire to do research that could inform policies to improve equality of opportunity in Indonesia, so I am pursuing my PhD at HKS, where research is not only academically rigorous but also policy-relevant.

**EL SALVADOR**
**INDONESIA**
**BRAZIL**
**UNITED KINGDOM**

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

1. U.S. states and territories not shown

Roughly half of the Kennedy School’s current student population comes from outside the United States. Our current students represent 98 countries and territories, not including the United States.
IDEAS // Research Briefs

The downsides of negative messaging

WHAT’S THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY to get across a public health message? Use positive wording to emphasize the benefits of certain behaviors or negative framing that might scare people who avoid those safeguards?

A v ast research project surveyed the responses of nearly 16,000 people around the world to contrasting COVID-19 health messages. Some messages focused on potential gains from taking actions such as wearing a mask, and others stressed the potential loss that could result from avoiding those actions. The study found that neither positive nor negative messaging shifted people’s attitudes or behavior related to those choices. However, the negatively framed messages did raise people’s anxiety—an emotion linked to ailments including high blood pressure and increased morbidity. The experimental research project was led by Charles Dorson, a postdoctoral fellow with joint appointments at HKS and Northwestern University. Among the coauthors were JENNIFER LEBNER, the Thornton Bradshaw Professor of Public Policy, Decision Science, and Management at Harvard Kennedy School; and NANCY GIBBS, the Edward R. Murrow Professor of the Practice of the Press, Politics and Public Policy and Lombard Director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy.

The importance of measuring permafrost loss

PERMAFROST, AS THE NAME SUGGESTS, is permanently frozen ground, most famously below large swaths of Arctic tundra. For thousands of years, it has been a carbon sink. But with the Arctic warming more quickly than the rest of the world, the millions of square miles of permafrost are expected to become a carbon source, with enormous implications for climate change—some projections put permafrost carbon emission by century’s end at 550 gigatons, or about the current level of emissions by major fossil-fuel-emitting nations—and for the lives of Indigenous populations. In a new paper in Environmental Research Letters, JOHN HOLDREN, the Teresa and John Heinz Professor of Environmental Policy, and coauthors lay out the gaps in our knowledge: the steps needed to plug them, including better surface-level and satellite monitoring, and the need for effective coalitions of scientists, policymakers, and Indigenous peoples. “Rapid advances in technology, coupled with an opening in the policy window, make this a critical moment to accelerate understanding of thawing permafrost and incorporate that knowledge into responsible global mitigation strategies and just and equitable adaptation measures,” the authors write.

Blueprints for nonviolent resistance strategies

IN A RECENTLY published paper, ERICA CHENOWETH, the Frank Stanton Professor of the First Amendment, and Lecturer in Public Policy ZOE MARKS explore the potential impact on democracy in the United States of the rise of authoritarian forces. Their report draws on numerous historical examples to offer an effective blueprint for implementing pro-democracy nonviolent-resistance strategies in the event of a nationwide authoritarian transition after the 2024 election. Their key recommendations include: building and maintaining a large-scale, multiracial, cross-class, pro-democracy alliance that continues to push for structural and institutional reforms and to contest for power; preventing, deterring, and strengthening resilience to increased threats of state or paramilitary violence through strategic planning, community power-building, and organized and disciplined actions at the grassroots level; and building pressure to induce defections among those loyal to the autocrat or authoritarian alliance, including through widespread economic noncooperation and labor action.

Harvard announces a new president

ON DECEMBER 15, HARVARD UNIVERSITY named CLAUDINE GAY as its 30th president. Gay will succeed President Larry Bacow MPP 1976 when she assumes the role on July 2022. She is the daughter of Haitian immigrants and will make history as the first Black woman and first person of color to lead Harvard University. Gay will succeed President Larry Bacow MPP 1976 when she assumes the role on July 1, 2022. Gay will be the 30th president of Harvard University and the first Black woman to hold the position. Gay has served as the Edgerley Family Dean of Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences since 2018. She is the daughter of Haitian immigrants and will make history as the first Black president of Harvard. Looking ahead to her presidency, Gay said, “With the strength of this extraordinary institution behind us, we enter a moment of possibility, one that calls for deeper collaboration across the University, across all of our remarkable Schools. There is an urgency for Harvard to be engaged with the world and to bring bold, brave, pioneering thinking to our greatest challenges.”

The costs of electronic monitoring

SINCE 2020, THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS awaiting trial in San Francisco County who are required to wear an electronic monitoring (EM) device has increased by 308%. This explosion is the result of a decision in a case regarding defendants’ ability to pay cash bail and nonmonetary release options. While many have applauded the solution as a way to end mass incarceration and reduce jail populations, others have pointed to the costs associated with pretrial monitoring—including psychological, social, and economic ones—and described it as an alternative form of incarceration. In a new research, SANDRA SUSAN SMITH, director of the Wiener Center for Social Policy and faculty chair of the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, followed the experiences of defendants enrolled in the pretrial monitoring program to study the effects of the new system. Smith’s research team found that prior life challenges, especially with housing insecurity and co-occurring disorders, made it more difficult for defendants to meet pretrial program obligations with an EM device; that EM devices made it more difficult for defendants to secure or keep a job and maintain vital social connections because of the stigma of appearing convicted of a crime; and that program compliance was made difficult by technical problems with the EM devices themselves, including inaccuracy, unreliability, and inconsistency.

“DOES HOW A TECHNOLOGY is developed affect who adopts it?” HKS Professor of Public Policy MARCELLA ALSAN and a group of researchers ask this question in the context of drug approval in the United States, where Black patients are consistently underrepresented in clinical trials. The median trial includes 5% Black participants, compared with a Black share of the population of about 12%. The gaps in clinical-trial enrollment have been well documented, but their consequences have not. The researchers surveyed doctors and patients and found that “Black patients, and the physicians who treat them, find trial evidence less relevant for their care, and are less likely to prescribe medications, when experimental samples are not representative.” But those gaps close when the participant base is more racially representative, the researchers find. The research also looks at the reasons for the gaps in representation. It finds that in the case of HIV/AIDS medicines—an outlier in the way it carefully represents populations—research sites have often been selected in “conversation with community partners and thus are not limited to large academic centers.” This highlights the extent to which “active, large-scale investments in inclusive infrastructure, in addition to incentives, can be important for improving health equity.”

Racial representation in clinical trials

The importance of measuring permafrost loss

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PROFILE

JEREMY NEY MPA 2021, who completed a concurrent degree program with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s Sloan School of Management, brings a quantitative storytelling approach to social policy issues—particularly aspects of inequality. While at the Kennedy School, Ney conducted research at the Malcolm Wiener Center’s Data Visualization Lab. To help others see the interconnectedness of inequality, Ney also launched his own newsletter, called American Inequality. He currently works at Google in New York, but he continues to develop the newsletter, which has since grown into a robust, accessible data visualization project that can benefit policymakers, academics, nonprofits, and the public.

Why use data visualization to explore and map inequality in America?

The focus on visualization was born out of an idea of allowing folks to understand what was happening in their own communities in a democratic fashion. These geospatial maps allow people to look at their own regions and understand their own communities. Inequality is messy and can be really challenging for people to talk about. Visualization allows folks to perceive what’s going on in the world. It is also about storytelling, creating a rich format for people to dive into.

What have you learned through this process?

The biggest discovery for me is just how interconnected and interwoven social forces of inequality are. Often the research or political conversation is about income or the minimum wage. But I have realized through this work that inequality is so much more than income. It’s tied up in other social forces, such as health care, taxes, education, gender, race, and location. Trying to pull the lever on income only really misses out on all these other pieces—understanding how air pollution can be connected to internet access, to mental health, to educational outcomes, for example. This interconnectedness has become the central thesis of American Inequality. The other great discovery is that this work really deals with issues of life and death. The first piece published was about life expectancy. The United States is now experiencing the greatest divide in life expectancy across regions in the past 40 years. If you are born in certain parts of the Rockies or the Northeast, you will live to 87, on average, but the South or the Midwest, you will live to 67, on average. A 20-year difference. Talk about inequality.

Who is American Inequality for?

Politicians, policymakers, academics, students, this generally curious—they all make up our reader base. And we have had interesting examples of the impact of our work in action. In Oregon, policymakers knew internet access was a problem but lacked precise data. They were able to use the data we had collected to create a program partnering with a nonprofit to set up internet hotspots in certain areas. I continue to talk with policymakers, politicians, and academics, including colleagues at the Kennedy School.

What is next for the project?

We just launched a new data portal and analysis tool to make all the data open-source and easily available. We want folks to use it to direct resources or to support or highlight issues in certain communities. We would love to build a body of case studies. Data is a powerful tool to help us understand where to direct time, energy, and efforts—not only by location but by issue as well. We are trying to understand how this information is being used. And we are continuing to partner with other organizations. There is no shortage of inequality topics. We’re incredibly excited about the impact we’ve been able to have, but we know that work remains to be done. Individuals, the private sector, and the public sector will all have to work together to enact real change. Opportunity awaits.

If you are born in certain parts of the South or the Midwest, you will live to 67, on average. A 20-year difference. Talk about inequality.

ELIZABETH LINOs, the Emma Bloomberg Associate Professor of Public Policy and Management, is faculty director of The People Lab, which investigates how to recruit and support government workers, improve service delivery, and integrate evidence and data into policymaking. We spoke to her about her work.

How does The People Lab fit into your work? Tell us about some of your findings.

The People Lab works in three big buckets. The first thinks about the people of government. We do a lot of projects around how to recruit, retain, and support people who work in government. The second is around service delivery. How can we make it easier for people to interact with government and how can we reduce the barriers that people face when they have to do so. And the third takes a step back to think about evidence-based policymaking and what it would mean to reimagine that process to bring communities that are most affected by government into the process of producing evidence. And once we have that evidence, how can we get policymakers to adopt it at scale?

We have had surprising findings across each of our buckets of research. For example, on the service delivery side, a lot of our work has focused on the role of stigma as a barrier to accessing social-safety-net benefits. In one experiment, we found that just adjusting how a program is described to use less-stigmatizing language to describe government rental assistance increased applications to the program by 11% compared with the use of status quo language. We are designing studies that will further investigate the role of stigma across the social safety net.

In the workforce bucket, a lot of our work has focused on the burnout of frontline staff, which emerged as one of the biggest public sector challenges during COVID. Our research has demonstrated how much can be done even within the constraints of the public sector. While you cannot always pay people as much as they deserve, we find that even low-cost, light-touch strategies that build support systems through which frontline workers can rely on one another, share their experiences, and exchange advice end up being incredibly useful in coping with burnout. Our findings indicate that these programs have effects on burnout six months down the line, and in some cases even reduce turnover.

What is one of the biggest takeaways from your work?

When you are trying to address some of the big-picture challenges that we all care about, whatever your policy area is, the public sector has a really important role to play. So if we are not moving the needle as much as we would like on some of these big policy challenges, the solution may lie in more concerted investments in government. Now, the important side lesson is that the people who are already working in government are really trying hard to solve these pressing challenges. So if we don’t see the progress we want, it’s not because people are lazy or didn’t think of it or don’t care enough. The challenges are so great, and what we ask of government is so complex, that it’s going to take a much larger investment in using data and evidence in government to move the needle.

“Making inequality visible”

www.hks.harvard.edu

WINTER 2023 | HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL
Allison Agsten MC/MPA 2021 directs the new Center for Climate Journalism and Communication at the University of Southern California

BY RALPH RANALLI

I couldn’t help thinking that it was a visual issue, that the way we have visualized the [Arctic] region is so far off and so embedded in the way we communicate from a media perspective.”

“We cannot rely solely on scientists to communicate about climate change. We have to train journalists across a spectrum of beats and a spectrum of functions to not just tell the story but make it a priority at the highest level in the newsroom.”

“I shouldn’t be greedy unless you supported your neighbors and your neighbors supported you,” she says. “People took care of each other where I grew up in a way that I have yet to experience.”

Agsten moved to Los Angeles for college, and while attending UCLA, she interned at CNN’s bureau there. After graduation, she landed a full-time job as a production assistant. She worked her way up to producer, which gave her a chance to do some arts coverage. “It was something I was really passionate about,” she says. “My father was very into visual art, and we always had art magazines and art books around the house. As I was an only child growing up in the middle of nowhere, it was those books and magazines that kept me company.”

That job launched Agsten on a nearly 20-year career in the arts, which included positions at several Southern California museums as a communications director and curator. Her last stop was at an organization called Arts for LA, where her community-minded spirit and love for the arts intertwined. As a policy research fellow, she surveyed 800 artists for a study of housing affordability. The results shocked her.

“I learned through that research that artists in Los Angeles were experiencing homelessness at a rate that was staggering higher than the general population,” she says. “And that was before COVID. So I proposed some responses, and within a couple of months legislation based on my paper was introduced and passed.”

The legislation passed by the Los Angeles City Council allowed public arts funding for the first time to be used for housing as well as other expenses. Agsten says she was hooked after her initial taste of policy success: “I thought, ‘Oh my god, this is where it’s at.’” A short time later she applied to the Kennedy School and was accepted into the Mid-Career master’s program.

But before the fall term even started, her career direction took another turn. During the summer, she attended a lecture about the climate crisis and the Arctic given by Halla Hrund Logadóttir MC/MPA 2017, a cofounder of the Arctic Initiative at the Kennedy School’s Belfer Center and adjunct lecturer, and now director-general of Iceland’s National Energy Authority.

“Now I’m a master’s student at Harvard focusing on climate policy,” Agsten says. “She emailed me back almost instantly and said, ‘You won’t believe this, but we’ve just received funding to start a climate journalism center. Would you like to talk?’ We did, and we both knew quickly that it was a fit.”

Agsten was hired as the first director of the new Center for Climate Journalism. She was also given a second appointment as the first curator of USC’s Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies and is responsible for organizing climate-related art initiatives at the school’s main campus and at its Catalina Island lab. A chief focus of the center, she says, is to support climate-crisis reporting that focuses on the impact on people and communities as much as on the underlying science. Another key aspect of the center’s work is training professionals and encouraging news organizations to integrate climate reporting into all aspects of their operations. The center is currently working with eight ABC-owned television stations around the United States to embrace climate coverage in a holistic way.

“We can’t rely solely on scientists to communicate about climate change,” Agsten says. “We have to train journalists across a spectrum of beats and a spectrum of functions to not just tell the story but make it a priority at the highest level in the newsroom.”

Profile

FROM THE ARTS TO THE ARCTIC TO CLIMATE JOURNALISM

Allison Agsten MC/MPA 2021 grew up in rural Descanso, California, a tiny, unincorporated town not far from the border with Mexico. Sparsely populated, full of wide-open spaces, and largely untouched by development, it was a place where she would stumble upon pottery shards, arrowheads, and other artifacts of the local Indigenous cultures just lying on the ground as she roamed the countryside as a kid. It was also a place that taught her the value of community.

Agsten is now director of the new Center for Climate Journalism and Communication at the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. It’s a job, she says, that blends her interests in serving community, visual storytelling, and driving positive policy solutions.

At the University of Southern California’s Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism. It’s a job, in all these years in the city, and I will never take that for granted.”
Ash Carter, HKS professor and former defense secretary, dies at 68

Carter helped bridge the disciplines of policy and technology and made the world a safer place.

ASH CARTER was the Belfer Professor of Science and Global Affairs and director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. During a nearly four-decade-long career at HKS, he twice left to serve in government, eventually becoming U.S. secretary of defense from 2015 to 2017.

“Ash Carter was a true patriot,” Harvard University President LARRY Bacow said. “His counsel and service shaped America as we know it today—and made America better for all Americans. Losing him will have profound effects on Harvard Kennedy School and on the University, but it is our nation that has suffered the greater loss. We will do our best to honor Ash by remembering his commitment to democracy and by working together toward a more perfect union.”

As secretary of defense, Carter helped lead the international coalition to destroy ISIS, designed and executed the strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, and launched a defense cyber strategy. He opened all military positions to women, allowing them to serve in combat, and ended a ban on transgender troops serving in the military.

In a previous stint in the Pentagon, from 1993 to 1996, he was responsible for the Nunn-Lugar program, which removed and eliminated nuclear weapons in former Soviet republics, including Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Carter and colleagues at the Belfer Center had helped to lay the groundwork for that denuclearization program, alerting the world to the dangers caused by the fall of the Soviet Union and arguing that fissile material from nuclear warheads could be turned into fuel for nuclear power plants.

During a recent Forum event with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Carter remembered the poignant sight of former enemies who stared each other down across the Iron Curtain for decades, planting sunflowers together in a former Soviet missile field in Ukraine.

“Ash was the best exemplar of what we aspire to for our faculty, fellows, and students,” said GRAHAM ALLISON, the Douglas Dillon Professor of Government and former dean of HKS and director of the Belfer Center. “He was an individual first and foremost committed to public service, to making a difference in making the world a safer place. He fulfilled that commitment by: advancing knowledge about the most important challenges—and what to do about them; serving in government when he had an opportunity; and preparing the next generation of students and fellows for leadership in government.”

Carter began his career in academia. After studying physics and medieval history at Yale University, he received his doctorate in theoretical physics from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He served as a physics instructor at Oxford University, a postdoctoral fellow at Rockefeller University and MIT, and an experimental research associate at Brookhaven and Fermilab National Laboratories before coming to HKS in 1984. He authored or coauthored 11 books and more than 100 articles on physics, technology, national security, and management.

During his time at the Pentagon, Carter was fond of saying how even when reaching the most remote military installation in places like Iraq or Afghanistan he would be greeted by a warm “Hello, Professor Carter!” from former students turned soldiers. It was this long reach that persuaded him to return to the Kennedy School after his years at the Pentagon, said Kennedy School Dean DOUG ELMENDORF.

“I want to offer my gratitude for his insight and wisdom, his unwavering commitment to trying to make the world better, his confidence that the Kennedy School can make an important difference in the world, his generous spirit toward his students and colleagues, and his warm and gracious
friendship with me,” Elendtord said. “I will miss him so much.”

“He was a beloved husband, father, mentor, and friend. His sudden loss will be felt by all who knew him,” Carter’s family said in a statement. “He believed that his most profound legacy would be the thousands of students he taught with the hope that they would make the world a better and safer place.”

“Today we mourn the passing of former Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and celebrate a leader who left America—and the world—safer through his lifetime of service,” former President Barack Obama, in whose administration Carter served, wrote on Twitter. “Michelle and I extend our heartfelt sympathies to Ash’s wife, children, and all those who loved him.”

SAMANTHA POWER, a colleague both at Harvard Kennedy School and in government service, called Carter’s death “an immeasurable loss.” “Devastated by the passing of my friend and close colleague,” Power, the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, wrote on Twitter. “An epic public servant who dedicated his life to making our country safer, he also inspired the next generation...to tackle the world’s hardest problems.”

Those hard problems included making technological change positive for all. The Technology and Public Purpose project that Carter created following his return to the Kennedy School in 2017 set out to address that challenge. “The arc of innovative progress has reached an inflection point,” the project’s mission statement reads. “It is our responsibility to ensure it bends towards public good.”

“Rest in peace Ash Carter—colleague, friend, patriot, national leader,” LARRY SUMMERS, the Charles W. Eliot University Professor and the Frank and Danie Weil Director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, wrote on Twitter. “Along with the national security community, his Kennedy School and Belfer Center colleagues and students, I will miss Ash’s wisdom, dedication and his leadership for our country. This is a very sad day.”

“As his student at the Kennedy School, Ash Carter mentored me for a career in national security,” said ERIC ROSENBACH, MPP 2004, codirector with Carter of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. “A decade later in the Pentagon, as his chief of staff, Ash demonstrated to me why we needed principled, indefatigable leaders who take on the toughest issues to keep America inclusive and strong. Back at the Kennedy School, he made me realize that people who both teach the next generation and lead the current one are truly unique. Ash was one of a kind, and I will miss him dearly.”

TRIBUTES TO ASH CARTER FROM HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL AND BEYOND

Following the passing of Ash Carter (1954–2022), the Belfer Professor of Technology and Global Affairs, director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and a former U.S. secretary of defense, hundreds of tributes came in from all over the world. Here is a small sampling from the Kennedy School community and beyond.

“He was a friend, mentor, colleague, mutual dog enthusiast, and a ‘soma walk with me’ ally for 25 years. I will say no more except it was the honor of a lifetime to have been so lucky.”

— JULIETTE KAYYEM, BELFER SENIOR LECTURER IN INTERNATIONAL SECURITY, HKS

“America has lost one of its most dedicated servants with the sudden passing of Ash Carter. His innovative leadership made the Department of Defense stronger and our nation safer as a result.”

— MATTHEW BUNN, JAMES R. SCHLESINGER PROFESSOR OF THE PRACTICE OF ENERGY, NATIONAL SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY, HKS

“With the passing of Ash Carter, the world is immeasurably safer as a result.”

— CONDOLEEZZA RICE, DIRECTOR OF THE ROYALTON INSTITUTION AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

At least for me, he will be remembered as my favorite professor, who taught us that the world is a dangerous place, but what we do can still make a difference.”

— STEVEN MILLER, DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL SECURITY PROGRAM AT THE BELFER CENTER

“My acquaintance with Ash spanned four decades. Over that period, he and I interacted extensively in the context of many of his roles and many of mine, including 15 years in adjacent offices at the Belfer Center...It’s of course impossible, in a short note, to do justice to all that Ash was and did...as scholar, policy analyst, teacher, mentor, builder and leader of institutions, visionary, and pillar of commitment to a better world. Suffice it to say here that he will be sorely missed in all these roles, as well as in the other roles he fulfilled so well—husband, father, and friend.”

— JOHN HOLDREN, TERESA AND JOHN HEINZ RESEARCH PROFESSOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY, HKS

“At least for me, I will be remembered as my favorite professor, who taught us with a rare and enjoyable mix of intellect, wisdom, and humor. I know that many other current and previous students feel the same way.”

— SAV YOON MPP CANDIDATE 2023, HKS STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENT

WINTER 2023 | HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL
Beyond the suffering of individuals, the extreme levels of inequality now evident in the United States and other countries across the globe carry grave systemic risks, many Harvard Kennedy School scholars and researchers say. Hopelessness and lack of economic opportunity breed discontent, which populists and authoritarians can seize upon to exacerbate political polarization, putting democracy at risk.

“We might feel that things are very divided today, but things can get worse,” says Gordon Hanson, the Peter Wartheim Professor in Urban Policy at HKS, who has studied the damaging effects of globalization on workers in the United States and who recently cofounded the Reimagining the Economy Project with Dani Rodrik, the Ford Foundation Professor of International Political Economy. “We’ve seen a significant deterioration in our sense of common purpose and our sense of trust in national unity, and failing to rise to this challenge means that we could slide further down that hill.”

HKS faculty tackle causes and effects of extreme economic inequality

By Ralph Ranalli

Questioning Inequality

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To meet the moment, the Kennedy School has launched a number of projects and initiatives in the past few years to address the underlying drivers of extreme inequality and to propose solutions. In March, Kennedy School Dean DOUGLAS ELMENDORF announced the creation of the new James M. and Cathleen D. Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality, and Social Policy, calling it a “crucial challenge ... to create appropriate public policy to create a fairer economic system that can provide economic opportunity and mobility.”

“Income inequality and concentrated wealth can leave many people at economic and social disadvantage,” Elmendorf, the Don K. Price Professor of Public Policy, wrote in announcing the program. “Moreover, concentrations of income and wealth can concentrate political power in ways that threaten and undermine our democracy.”

The Stone Program, based at the Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy, brings together faculty members, researchers, and students from across Harvard and beyond to study the causes and consequences of wealth inequalities in various populations around the world. Other efforts at the Kennedy School, many of them also based at the Wiener Center, study inequality from a variety of perspectives, including how to make public discourse about inequality more productive; envisioning new economic policies and systems that lift more people out of poverty and dead-end jobs; better understanding the needs of low-wage workers; improving job-training programs to create more widespread mobility; and finding the most effective way to direct financial help to those in need.

That multifaceted and multidisciplinary approach is vital, says HKS Academic Dean DAVID DEMING, a faculty codirector of the center’s Project on Workforce and the Isabelle and Scott Black Professor of Political Economy. Before being named academic dean, Deming taught a class called “The Causes and Consequences of Inequality.” “My overall frame for the class,” he says, “was that with a problem like inequality, there are multiple competing explanations, but only one fact pattern. So whatever your story is for why inequality has increased in the past half century, it has to fit all the facts. But it never does. That teaches students that the problem of inequality has multiple causes and probably multiple solutions.”

THE CONVERSATION

HOW CAN WE CHANGE THE CONVERSATION ABOUT INEQUALITY?

The definition of inclusive prosperity views workers as people rather than economic inputs, Hanson says; progress toward it will be achieved only through a policy debate that is similarly focused. “When we say that people at the 90th percentile earned this many times as much as people at the 10th percentile—it’s hard for people to get their heads around that,” he says. “We’ve been focused too much on the ratios of income ... rather than saying, ‘Look at the [bottom] 20th percentile—life is really rough for them right now.’ The odds of someone in your household having metabolic disease is pretty high. The odds of someone in your household dealing with substance abuse is pretty high. The odds that most of the working-age adults in your house are not working is pretty high.”

The Reimagining the Economy Project, which is based at the Wiener Center, Hanson—who has done extensive work with economists David Autor of MIT and David Dorn of the University of Zurich on the so-called “China shock” effect on workers left behind when corporations moved manufacturing jobs to Asia—focuses mostly on economic fallout in U.S. communities. Rodrik, meanwhile, applies a global perspective, studying local policies in other industrial and developing countries that are aimed at mitigating the effects of global trade on workers. Overall, the project seeks to meld a range of ideas, disciplines, and perspectives to produce multidisciplinary scholarship that will change the conversation about what Hanson calls “inclusive prosperity.”

“Inclusive prosperity is grounded in the idea that we want to be creating jobs that confer dignity on workers,” Hanson says. “And that means jobs that allow you to provide for your family, that let you get your kids the education or the career training that you desire for them, that give you prospects of being a homeowner if that’s what you choose to do, and that offer an upward trajectory that gives you the opportunity to achieve advancement, satisfaction, and engagement over the course of your career.”

The Reimagining the Economy Project is working on a number of strategies to change the conversation, including building a data visualization platform that tries to tell the whole story of inequality’s economic consequences (see page 8). Ultimately, Hanson says, the aim is to go beyond analyzing how the current economic functions to visualize new structures, policies, and forms of market economies. In other ways, however, the challenge will be not coming up with new ideas, he says, but finding new ways to implement ideas that have already been proved effective—especially in the area of training people for better jobs.

“The utterly fascinating thing to us as we’re starting to learn about the experimentation that’s happening is how the right set of things to do seems pretty clear,” Hanson says. “You train disadvantaged workers and the long-term unemployed in skills targeted to specific occupations; you work with local employers for the training; and then you provide these wraparound services that get workers ready to work and the social skills they need to stay on the job. Those things really work. And the shocking thing is, we’ve known they work since the late 1990s.”

The problem, Hanson says, is that adopting and scaling up successful job-training programs requires getting actors in the public and private sectors within communities to work together. “That’s hard to do,” he says. “There are places that are doing it, and they aren’t flagrantly great examples, but they are uncommon. The median place is not doing it.”

Hanson says that successful models they are studying tend to be public-private partnerships driven mostly by the private and nonprofit sectors, with government agencies serving a supporting role. Examples include The Right Place, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, which helped the city stay a vibrant manufacturing hub even after competition from China decimated the local furniture-making industry; and Greater Rochester Enterprise, which took advantage of legacy investments and capability in optic design and manufacturing to build a new sector after the devastating bankruptcy of Kodak.

“We’re trying to learn as much as we can about the nature of experimentation that’s happening right now,” Hanson says.
it in a new way. “I think we all think in terms of inequality, but inequality in what?” he says. “When we say ‘inequality’, that’s often shorthand for income inequality and maybe wealth inequality. But there is a kind of broader inequality in life conditions that are very much shaped by work.”

When you compare workers who are stacking shelves, ringing up purchases, and making coffee for white-collar professionals with those professionals, Schneider says, you find not only monetary inequality between the two groups but also that white-collar workers have more control over their time. Service workers are largely still at the mercy of managers and the ruthless algorithms of scheduling software, and the Shift Project’s research has linked unpredictable schedules and the ruthless algorithms of scheduling software, and the tight labor market over the past year has given these workers some degree of market power.

To solidify that power, workers will need to continue another trend—organizing and unionizing as they have been doing at Starbucks, Amazon, and other prominent service-sector companies. “The movement toward greater voice and union representation suggests one path forward toward equality,” Schneider says. “We know from decades of research on unions and their decline that they are actually a force for reducing inequality, not just because they improve the well-being of their members, but because they have a broader, normative sort of regulatory function in the economy.”

But giving hourly-wage workers more power will require changing the conversation again, this time in the political arena, where support for organized labor has long been on the decline, despite recent shifts in public opinion. Support for unions is actually quite high and bipartisan when pollsters ask about issues such as paid family leave and a higher minimum wage. The problem, Schneider says, has been a disconnect between popular opinion and public policy when it’s filtered through politics. “Policymaking and policymakers’ attitudes are much more closely aligned with those at the extreme high end of the wealth and income distribution than they are with mass public opinion, and that has consequences,” Schneider says.

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<br><br><br>"If you’re fortunate enough to come from a family of means and you go to a good four-year college, a lot of pathways are laid out for you,” Deming says. “Students at selective colleges like Harvard, for example, often don’t know very much about which jobs are going to be good for them in the long run, but they’re living in an environment where it’s very hard to make a bad choice, because all the people around them are guiding them. Most people don’t have access to such resources, and I would like to change that.”

Potentially productive approaches identified by the Project on Workforce include democratizing education by creating more opportunities for learners to hone skills while earning wages and focusing on portable skills that will keep workers from getting stuck in dead-end jobs.

Lipson says that high school vocational programs are often stigmatized for tracking certain students—especially students of color and with lower socioeconomic status—toward lower-wage careers. Yet research has found that programs like Year Up, where young people work for employers in high-demand sectors while earning credentials and paid stipends, have had proven positive impacts.
“The job-fit question really matters,” she says. “The research evidence broadly supports the claim that these early career choices about which occupation or field you’re going to start in can make a big difference in your lifetime earnings. So the question becomes ‘How can we create more guidance, structure, and support?’ This is something I think the United States overall does really badly on, especially in low-income communities.”

Deming, meanwhile, says he would like to see a greater focus on portable skills that can help new members of the workforce transition between jobs, especially two key ones: the ability to work on a team and independent decision-making and problem solving.

Deming says teaching students to work effectively on a team is often neglected in schools, because even when students are asked to work in teams, teachers tend to segment assignments in a way that makes individual grading possible. So he and his colleague Ben Weidmann, director of research at the Skills Lab at HKS, recently published a paper on a method they’ve developed to better identify individual contributions to group performance.

Other tools created by the Project on Workforce include a soon-to-be-launched website that will allow users to view a map of the United States and identity geographic locations where the supply of workers fails to match the demand in key industries.

CHANGING PUBLIC DISCOURSE and creating better job-training systems are important, but they take time, and sometimes the consequences of extreme inequality necessitate getting help to people who need it most as quickly and as effectively as possible. A recent example comes from Chelsea, Massachusetts, which has long been one of the state’s poorest communities: Nearly a quarter of its residents live below the federal poverty level.

Professor JEFFREY LIEBMAN, the Robert W. Scrivner Professor of Social Policy and faculty director of the Kennedy School’s Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston, says the COVID-19 pandemic caused “extreme hardship” among the city’s 40,000 residents, of whom a significant number are undocumented immigrants and thus were ineligible for unemployment insurance, stimulus checks, and SNAP.

“In most communities, more people were eligible for the social safety net, and that protected them from the kind of extreme hardship that Chelsea went through,” Liebman says. “Chelsea was facing a massive hunger problem because the community was hit harder from a health standpoint and from an economic standpoint by COVID-19 than just about any other community in the country.”

Chelsea launched a massive food-distribution program, but in September 2020, City Manager Thomas Ambroso and other officials decided to pivot to direct financial aid so that residents could buy their own food with cash cards issued through a program called Chelsea Eats. The city also partnered with the Rappaport Institute to study the program and its effects.

“I think the fundamental insight that Tom Ambroso had,” Liebman says, “was ‘let’s give people income and let them make their own decisions so that they can buy the kinds of food they want and also meet other essential needs—whether that ends up being diapers, clothing, or cooking oil.’”

Data showed that around 65% of the money distributed through Chelsea Eats was spent on food, contrary to the fears of skeptics. “Comparing those who got the cash cards and those who didn’t, the people who received the cards consumed more food, were more satisfied with what they had available to eat, and were more likely to say their financial situation had improved,” Liebman says.

“It is unusual to have data on such a large sample of economically vulnerable families who were ineligible for most federal benefits,” Liebman says. “One of the things the Chelsea experience demonstrates is just how important the U.S. safety net is.”
“Working in partnership with community-based organizations in support of tenants who themselves are directly in the fight was something I was passionate about and could run with.” SCOTT HUGO

When you consider Scott Hugo’s trajectory since high school, he comes across as an overachiever: a dual degree from the University of California, Los Angeles, in political science and history; a Rhodes Scholarship and an MPhil in international relations from Oxford University; a joint Juris Doctor/Master in Public Policy from Harvard Law School and Harvard Kennedy School. But Hugo is disarmingly modest about his accomplishments. “The way I look at it,” he explains, “is that when you’ve had the opportunities that I’ve had, when you’ve had supportive family and teachers, when you’ve had the privilege that I have, there’s a responsibility that comes with that. I wouldn’t call it overachieving; I would call it doing my best to live up to that responsibility.”

That responsibility to give back to the community, to others struggling to get by, and to often-ignored populations led Hugo, who is now a housing-justice attorney for the Oakland City Attorney’s Office, to a life of public service not far from where he grew up. He attended De La Salle High School in Concord, California, just outside San Francisco. The school’s motto, “Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve,” made a lasting impression on him. But it was a horrific incident that started him thinking about a life of service focused on justice and injustice. “A couple of weeks before my senior year, one of my football teammates was murdered,” Hugo says. “Terrance Kelly. He was a year ahead of me, had a full ride to the University of Oregon on a football scholarship. He was murdered over a basketball court dispute.” His friend’s death left Hugo confused and made a deep impact. “I knew about injustice in the world, and I knew about some of the injustices here in the Bay Area,” he says. “But to have a friend and teammate who was my same age, 18 years old, have his life end in that way, with no justification for why his path should be any different than mine, really underscored for me that people were living fundamentally
different lives in different Americas based on their ZIP code, their race, and their socioeconomic status.”

After college—first close to home, at UCLA, and then further afeld, as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford—Hugo knew he wanted to go to law school but was also still searching for a way to give back to his community in the East Bay area. “The question for me at Oxford—an extraordinary opportunity to spend two years of my life abroad and meet people from around the world and ask what values are central to my life—was where do I contribute to fighting the world’s fight?”

The answer came to him when he returned to the United States and enrolled at Harvard, pursuing an ambitious joint degree at the Kennedy School and Harvard Law School.

“I was always really fascinated with the intersection of law and public policy,” Hugo says. “And in particular, the ways in which the systems, the laws, and the policies that we build as a society set up the conditions for justice. They either set people up to flourish, or they amplify the injustices within society. I knew a legal career would enable me to fight for changes in the laws and to enforce them. But that public-policy element was always a key passion and frame and perspective for me. What drew me so much to the Kennedy School, to be honest, was the idea of being part of this community.”

“Hugo evidenced his commitment to environmental policies and impact in his final Integrated Work Project required for the joint Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Law School students in the MPH/JD program,” says HKS Senior Policy Advisor and Chief of Staff SARAH WALD, who teaches a seminar with ARCHON FUNG, the Winthrop Laflin McCormack Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government, in which the students complete intensive projects. “It is the only time we have had a paper about the policy and legal aspects of illegal dumping, and it was a great project.”

Hugo feels that the students at the Kennedy School, as much as anything else, contributed to his growth: “I learned so much from the people around me.” Also key were the opportunities available outside the classroom. He received a Dubin Program Summer Fellowship, perhaps the most instrumental push to his career. It supported him in undertaking a summer internship with the Neighborhood Law Corps, a unit within the Oakland City Attorney’s Office.

“The Dubin Fellowship allowed me to spend time with attorneys who were doing the work I envisioned.” he says. “It really affirmed that this is where I want to be.” After leaving Harvard, Hugo joined the staff of the Neighborhood Law Corps. He’s been with the attorney’s office ever since. “Working in partnership with community-based organizations in support of tenants who themselves are directly in the fight was something I was passionate about and could run with,” he says.

“The tenants immediately assumed that if the government was going to get involved, it would get involved on the side of the wealthy.”

Hugo filed a successful suit against the owners to stop the debris. “This company chose a mixed-use commercial/residential building’s owners. ‘This is where I want to be,” Hugo explains. “Because of the neighborhood’s predominantly Black community and its long history of experiencing environmental racism, the company believed, wrongly, that it could operate with impunity there.” The residents, including Johnson and Dyer, said they were having trouble breathing because of the construction debris. Hugo filed a successful suit against the owners to stop the operation, fueled by the sheer will and dedication of the neighborhood’s residents.

“This case, being able to fight alongside the community members, will always be one of the greatest privileges in my life,” hugo says. The declaration Dyer provided in support of the case has stayed with him throughout his career. She wrote:

“For me, this lawsuit is about generations—specifically, the next generation. My kids witnessed the injustice of what [the owner] was doing to their community, and they saw their parent and grandparents standing up against that wrong. (This company) could have been here for years, continuing to contaminate the neighborhood. Instead, this has sent a different message that what they were trying to do in our neighborhood won’t be tolerated. The next generation now knows that message and will take it with them in the years to come.”

Return for the community, stay for the justice

Hugo has now been with the Oakland City Attorney’s Office for seven years. “It is a privilege to work for someone like City Attorney Barbara J. Parker, who leads with her values front and center and who fights for justice,” he says. He was named the first lawyer of a newly formed affirmative litigation unit, the Housing Justice Initiative. It focuses on protecting the rights of Oakland tenants and helping preserve affordable housing—part of the “three Ps of housing justice”: protection, preservation, and production.

“The Housing Justice Initiative is a recognition that at this very moment in time we have a unique role to play in protecting tenants’ rights and helping them stay in their homes,” Hugo explains. “What we do is not going to solve the housing crisis; no individual or government can do that on its own. But we all have different roles that we can play. And by helping keep people, particularly low-income tenants of color, in their homes, we can limit the harm and help buy time for some of those additional solutions to come into play.”

Some of those solutions may well result from his own work. “I chose to begin my career locally,” he says, “to be grounded in community and to recognize that I can be part of this fight and contribute right here in my own backyard. The more that we build out this work and show what local government or government more generally can do when it comes to enforcing housing rights—that is something that can be scaled everywhere.”

As Hugo looks back on his Kennedy School experiences: the community of students; the Center for Public Leadership (“that conversation with [acclaimed civil rights activist and lawyer and HKS alumna] Bryan Stevenson!”); the Zuckerman, Ash Center, and Dubin Summer fellows he was fortunate to receive, Hugo appreciates the power of his Harvard law and public policy degrees in preparing him for a career fighting in behalf of East Bay residents. “I am incredibly indebted to the opportunities HKS gave me and the investment they made in me,” he says. “I am honored to spend my career trying to make good on that investment.”
Empowering people through housing and transportation

FOR HILARY NORTON MPP 1992, transportation is about more than moving people from one location to another. It is about community, access, and democracy.

Norton has spent three decades focused on community development and transportation, working for state and City of Los Angeles elected officials, business associations, and nonprofits over the course of her career. As an undergraduate at Wellesley College, she became interested in affordable housing, transportation, and building healthy communities. She further cultivated her public policy goals at the Kennedy School, where she did her Policy Analysis Exercise on eradicating racism-based redlining in South Los Angeles. And over the course of her career, she has been driven by a desire to make California a state where affordable housing, sustainable transportation, and career-making jobs are accessible to all.

Appointed to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) by Governor Gavin Newsom in 2019, Norton was elected chair in 2020 and served for the maximum two terms. “For me and my colleagues, serving on the CTC is not a job—it’s a calling,” she says, adding that two of those colleagues are also HK5 graduates: Darnell Grisby MPP 2003 and Michele Martinez HKSEE 2018.

Each year, the CTC allocates $5 billion to $7 billion, raised from gas taxes, to state transportation projects managed by the California Department of Transportation. “While often known for funding highway and bridge projects,” Norton says, “the CTC is very proud that Governor Newsom and the state legislature have funded an additional $1 billion for CTC’s highly popular active transportation projects to encourage biking, walking, and traveling in wheelchairs and strollers. CTC’s additional programs support projects to create affordable housing near transit, support more-efficient and zero-emission travel by bus or car, and improve the sustainable...”
movement of goods. You cannot have economic empowerment without intentionally linking housing, transportation, jobs, and improved air quality."

“I am also grateful that CTC is engaging in deep work on equity,” Norton says. “We are listening to people throughout the state about ways that transportation infrastructure has harmed and divided communities so that we can work with regional leaders, transit agencies, local nonprofits, and community members to identify remedies to those harms.”

Equity is inextricably linked to housing affordability, which Norton says is one of the biggest issues the state faces right now. A primary way in which people create wealth is by owning a home, but in California, home ownership is simply out of reach for many. “The state needs to look at how we can expand opportunities for wealth creation,” she says. “In what ways can we create better opportunities for shelter, affordable housing, wealth creation, so that people can start building more-stable lives together and enjoying the fruits of California as it becomes the world’s fourth-largest economy?”

Norton says that California’s size and overall wealth make it not only possible but incumbent on policymakers to ask: “How is the state growing? How can we make life more affordable and equitable? How can we uplift everyone rather than see increased homelessness?”

Norton’s role at the CTC is the product of a long career working at the nexus between housing and transportation in Los Angeles. In 2008, she became the founding executive director of FAST (Fixing Angelenos Stuck in Traffic), focusing on strategies such as express toll lanes, rapid-transit bus systems, and microbus pilot programs to reduce traffic congestion, expand access to low-income communities, and incentivize environmentally friendly transportation alternatives in Los Angeles. “We helped create new paradigms to move people better,” Norton says.

She loves her work and lives her paradigm. As the mother of two grown children, Xavier and Eva, Norton has seen how transportation has affected their ability to get to school and to jobs and is envisioning a future that should belong to everyone. She now leads the nonprofit transportation-management organization FASTLinkDTLA, which aims to reduce gridlock; create new commuter programs to link people to jobs through expanded rail service, new routes for scheduled buses, vanpools, carpools, and rideshare vehicles; and promote safe, zero-emission, and innovative alternatives to driving alone.

Norton is grateful for the ability to convene and connect people to achieve equitable community outcomes through her work at the CTC and FASTLinkDTLA. She credits her Kennedy School experience with refining her ability to “deliver an ‘elevator speech’ to summarize complex issues while finding joy in collaboration, which is crucial to reaching beyond yourself while continuously learning from others.”

“We need to rebuild a very frayed society and a very unequal economy,” Norton says. Deeper communication and collaboration, she believes, are essential to restoring the fabric of society and a well-functioning democracy. They are also her personal keys to maintaining the discipline and the “fire in the belly” that are necessary for tackling seemingly intractable problems while savoring the community outcomes and infrastructure projects that result from cocreation.

“Real collaboration, real trust, and radical transparency,” she says, are needed to confront and address past harms and create a new mobility infrastructure that improves the quality of life for everyone. Whenever she is in the midst of challenges, Norton adds with a laugh, “I remind myself that I chose this, and I would not change my career or my life to work on anything else. Public policy is a passion that the Kennedy School really stokes for life. Every day is exciting.”
“There is not enough housing for people— from the very rich to the very poor.”

CHUCK FLACKS

Homelessness: The stupid problem

BY NORA DELANEY

The solution should be simple. “If you put someone in housing, you have ended their homelessness experience,” Flacks says. But of course it isn’t that easy. “Then the task is, how can we help someone stay housed? How can we help them to improve their life? It is a crime that in a country as well-off as ours, anybody should have to face homelessness.”

Flacks hasn’t always focused on homelessness. He started his career in community development in California, building on experience as a Kennedy School student working with the Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation. He saw the power of the ways in which business, workforce, and housing development interacted with skills creation and youth programs to strengthen entire communities. Flacks took those ideas back to California with him. For 20 years, he concentrated on workforce development and housing in San Diego and San Francisco.

Moving back to his hometown of Santa Barbara in 2015, however, Flacks found himself drawn to the issue of homelessness, which he knew was a significant problem. “It brings together a lot of different components of what I’ve been working on,” he says. “There’s obviously a poverty component. There’s a housing component, because the best way to end homelessness is to provide housing.” Flacks holds a master’s degree in counseling psychology from San Diego State University, and he recognizes that there is often a mental health component to homelessness as well. “I have spent a significant amount of time doing mental health work directly with homeless people,” he says. “That training and experience serve me well in the policy arena.”

Over the past few years, Flacks has held positions in a number of organizations focused on homelessness, including serving as the executive director of the Central Coast Collaborative for Homelessness—an organization focused on minimizing the impacts of homelessness in Santa Barbara County—and as director of programs for People Assisting the Homeless (PATH)—a group serving
cities in five regions throughout California. Currently Flacks manages data products on the performance of the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), the largest homeless services provider in the country. The organization is sustained through various funding sources, the largest of which is Measure H, a Los Angeles County sales tax approved to fund homeless services and prevention. LAHSA has a staff of 600 people, including 300 community-outreach workers who connect people experiencing homelessness with housing services. Roughly 69,000 people in LA County sleep on the streets. “We have enough homeless people in LA on any given night to fill Dodger Stadium,” Flacks says.

Flacks also runs Flacks Seed Consulting, a firm that partners with funders, nonprofits, and governments tackling poverty and homelessness. In that work, he uses both his policy and his clinical knowledge. “One of my contracts is with the city of Goleta, which is a small city in Santa Barbara County,” he says, “and part of my role is to go out into the community and meet with homeless people and see how our programs are working.” He periodically goes on ride-alongs with police officers and visits encampments to talk to people experiencing homelessness. “It is nice to work at different levels,” he says, “to have the 30,000-foot view and also the direct one-to-one human interaction.”

Flacks recognizes the scale of the problem not just in LA or Santa Barbara but throughout California—a problem driven by a shortage of affordable housing. “We are suffering the pains of our own success as a state,” he says. “We love to brag about the size of our economy, but what we haven’t done is build enough housing and infrastructure to meet demand.”

He describes the housing problem as a strange market failure: “How could we possibly be literally millions of units short across all income levels?” A boom in single-family suburban development followed World War II, and the reaction to that development in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in denser cities. But, Flacks says, “what California didn’t do for the 21st century was to think about the next wave of community building. Now we are suffering the impacts at every economic level. There is not enough housing for people—from the very rich to the very poor.” One result, Flacks says, is “brain drain” and “youth drain”: Young people are leaving the state, unable to afford homes. Another result of this failed housing market? Homelessness.

Until the housing crisis is remedied in a meaningful way and with enough funding, Flacks believes, homelessness will continue to be a byproduct. The COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps surprisingly, brought a brief respite due to financial support from governments. “You had rental-assistance funds,” Flack says. “One of the concerns is that those funds are stopping. We are going to see homelessness ramp up again.”

For Flacks, solving “the stupid problem” requires not only financial support but also a well-constructed “pipeline out of homelessness”: outreach, shelters and interim housing, and, ultimately, permanent housing, made possible through rental assistance or the creation of housing units. Flacks cites Bakersfield as one California city that has succeeded in creating such a pipeline. The Housing Authority of Kern County, where Bakersfield is located, committed significant time and resources to the problem, resulting in both interim and permanent housing. Flacks is interested in researching small communities in New England that have demographics similar to those of the California cities he works with, but far less homelessness and more housing available for those who need it. Despite the seriousness and complexity of the problem, Flacks feels a measure of optimism. He believes in the promise of community-based solutions and is heartened by the enthusiasm he sees from some local leaders.

“I really do look at this problem through the lens of community development,” he says. “Maybe we are waiting for a new generation of community leaders. How can we give them the economic tools to start pulling some of these levers to address homelessness?”
As others study how democracy dies, HKS Professor Tarek Masoud studies how it can survive against all odds

By James F. Smith

Professor Tarek Masoud’s central obsession is to figure out how countries that lack democracy can get it and keep it. And few groups of countries are more bereft of democracy than those he studies most closely—the Arabic-speaking, Muslim-majority countries of the Middle East.

Masoud, the Ford Foundation Professor of Public Policy at Harvard Kennedy School and faculty director of the Belfer Center’s Middle East Initiative, knows the conventional explanation for the lack of democracy in the Middle East: The countries there are underdeveloped and divided in ways that have kept democracy from emerging and thriving. But when the Arab Spring happened, in 2011, Masoud—then an assistant professor—was hopeful that the Arab people would beat the odds and manage to replace their dictatorships with democracies. Around that time, he established the Initiative on Democracy in Hard Places at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, which was focused on figuring out how to build democracy in authoritarian countries that, like the Arab countries, were poor, often ethnically divided, and with little history of participatory government. But when the Arab Spring ended in civil war and renewed dictatorship, Masoud felt the air drain out of the endeavor. “The outcomes of the Arab Spring were exactly what political scientists would have expected them to be,” he said. “After that abject failure, it was hard to be optimistic about getting democracy in hard places.”

In 2016, the arrival at HKS of Professor Scott Mainwaring, a leading scholar of democracy and someone Masoud describes as “a scholarly soulmate,” gave new life to the effort. Together, Masoud and Mainwaring forged an HKS course

“Scholars bring logic, rigor, and evidence. Practitioners bring experience and an understanding of the real world. We learn a lot when they are in dialogue.”

Tarek Masoud
students who had been activists and practitioners around the world—or who wanted to be. Among them was Hainer Sibrian MPP 2020, a first-generation American born to Latin American immigrant parents, who gravitated toward Masoud. Sibrian, who studied for a year in Egypt, to Egyptian parents who had immigrated in the 1970s, to the Arab world of his upbringing, and it drove him to major in political science and to pursue a career writing about and studying politics.

When Masoud became faculty director, in 2018, he became involved in the Middle East Initiative, which was then part of the School’s Executive Education program. He also is chair of the Democracy, Institutions and Organizations area at the Kennedy School. Masoud’s other initiative, the Project on Democracy in Hard Places—which he describes as a labor of love—is smaller, but it follows a similar model of emphasizing the possibilities for learning that come from an ongoing dialogue between fellows who are hands-on players and visiting academicians. He also is chair of the Democracy, Politics, and Institutions area at the Kennedy School.

“A Foot in Each World”

Masoud traces his passion for democracy, and particularly for democracy in the Arab countries, to a childhood spent between two worlds. He was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, to Egyptian parents who had immigrated in the 1970s. But he grew up in Saudi Arabia, where his parents had gone to work, and spent summers in their native Egypt. He came back to the United States at the age of 16 to finish high school in New Hampshire and then earned his undergraduate degree at Brown University. He has always grappled with the contrast between the open, democratic United States of his birth and the closed, authoritarian Arab world of his upbringing, and it drove him to major in political science and to pursue a career writing about and studying politics.

After graduation, Masoud interned at Foreign Affairs magazine under Fareed Zakaria, then the managing editor, and was later a segment producer for the PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer before seeking a doctorate from Yale University. Once he landed at the Kennedy School, he quickly became involved in the Middle East Initiative, which was then part of the School’s Executive Education program. When Masoud became faculty director, in 2018, he began to bring in an array of visiting scholars and senior fellows who remain the backbone of the initiative today. “I like to force scholars and practitioners to talk with each other rather than just talking amongst themselves,” says Masoud. “Scholars bring logic, rigor, and evidence. Practitioners bring experience and an understanding of the real world. We learn a lot when they are in dialogue.”

Masoud’s work asks whether we can learn from the few democracies that emerged against great odds. Hainer Sibrian MPP 2020 (above, left), now serving as a U.S. diplomat in Togo, said that work helped him get closer to understanding what helped democracy survive and what undermined it.
DEMOCRACY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

One of the Hard Places visiting fellows this year is Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, who was the first democratically elected president of Tunisia after the Arab Spring. Tunisia has experienced a backslide, with the elected president suspending parliament and taking an authoritarian turn—similar to what happened in Egypt after its brief democratic stint.

The other Hard Places visiting fellow this year is Freddy Guevara, a prominent Venezuelan opposition leader who came to the Kennedy School in August 2022 after hiding between three years in the Chilean embassy in Caracas, the Venezuelan capital. Guevara has been on the front lines of opposition to President Nicolas Maduro, whom the United States and many other countries regard as a dictator. Venezuela has suffered from years of relentless economic decline and emigration—while democratic foundations in neighboring Colombia and Brazil have held up.

Guevara says that after the exhaustion and stress of surviving amid turmoil and violence, often in hiding, and then living in exile for a year, coming to Cambridge for the Kennedy School fellowship afforded him a time of “reflection and regeneration.” He is auditing courses and joining study groups as he focuses in part on how civil resistance and democratic transition theories might be adapted in light of the everyday experiences of people like him in pro-democracy campaigns.

“The opportunity that Tarek gave me is invaluable,” he says. “It’s not an exaggeration to say that the months I’ve spent here have already changed my mind about many things. I am trying to use the resources here to reflect on not only the Venezuelan situation but also the struggle for democracy worldwide, and on what small ways I can contribute.”

TAREK MASOUD

Masoud’s approach emphasizes the value of dialogue between fellows who are hands-on players and academics. Prominent Venezuelan opposition leader Freddy Guevara (above, at the microphones) and Mohamed Masoud (opposite page at bottom), the first democratically elected president of Tunisia after the Arab Spring, are both visiting fellows with the Initiative on Democracy in Hard Places this year.

“Tarek knows the Middle East extremely well, but he’s also a hands-on player and a scholar,” says the director of the Initiative on Democracy in Hard Places, Matthew Mainwaring. “His unique value proposition is that he understands democracies, and he understands authoritarianism. I think one of the silver linings of the great catastrophe of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could be that Ukrainians are becoming more committed to democracy, and part of the reason for that seems to be that their great tormentor, Russia, is fundamentally nondemocratic. I think one of the silver linings of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine could be the galvanizing of a democratic identity in much of that region.”

Although Masoud’s work with the Journal of Democracy forces him to think beyond the borders of the Middle East, he still travels to that region four or five times a year. He serves on the governing board of the American University of Cairo, a 100-year-old institution that he views as a rare beacon of liberal education in a region sorely in need of it. “By training leaders who understand and value freedom and popular participation in governance, institutions like the American University in Cairo and the Kennedy School can help bring democracy to hard places,” he says.

About the Arab countries—which he describes as some of the “hardest” places for democracy—he remains cautiously optimistic. His sense is that while many regard the Arab Spring as a failure, “we’ve got to remember that the average citizen still does want a more participatory form of government.”

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VENEZUELA: JIMMY VILLALTA /VWPICS VIA AP IMAGES | BENIN: PIUS UTOMI EKPEI/AFP | TIMOR-LESTE: PAULA BRONSTEIN | BOTH VIA GETTY IMAGES

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Reducing methane emissions—which are very bad for global warming but with a much shorter lifespan than carbon dioxide—can buy the world time to avoid catastrophic and irreversible global warming.

A Harvard team is building the tools to help policymakers do just that.
CARBON DIOXIDE IS THE USUAL VILLAIN in the climate change story. Emitted largely through the use of fossil fuels, it not only warms the planet now, but will continue to do so for more than a century while it remains in the atmosphere.

Less well known is the role that another greenhouse gas—methane—plays. About one third of global methane emissions occur naturally, mostly from wetlands. But two-thirds are caused by human activity, including from oil and gas operations, coal mining, livestock, plus livestock and rice paddies. And because of its chemical composition, methane has a much higher global-warming potential than carbon dioxide does—up to 80 times as much—and is responsible for about a third of current global warming. But crucially, methane lingers in the atmosphere for much less time than carbon dioxide does—only about 10–20 years.

“What that means is that methane is responsible more for near-term climate change, but it also means that acting on methane can give us a short-term climate response,” says Daniel Jacob, the Vasco McCoy Family Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Environmental Engineering at Harvard University. “So, if we are trying to address climate change over the next decade or two, methane is a very powerful lever.”

Jacob and Robert Stavins, the A.J. Meyer Professor of Energy and Economic Development at Harvard Kennedy School and director of the Harvard Environmental Economics Program and the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements, are combining their respective natural sciences and public policy expertise on a project designed to help policymakers use that lever. For countries currently working to address climate change through a variety of international agreements, the Harvard team’s efforts will help policymakers more precisely determine their existing emissions and, from there, their proposed cuts.

“There is increasing recognition that in the shorter term, methane is exceptionally important,” Stavins says. “Now, if you look over a 100-year time horizon, which has been the traditional convention, then methane doesn’t look nearly as important. But you have to recognize that the emissions targets being used and considered right now are not for the year 2100 or 2050, they’re for 2030. And if you’re talking about from now until 2030, methane is incredibly important. That’s why there’s increasing recognition from so many participants in the process of the exceptional importance of methane.”

Funded by the Harvard Climate Change Solutions Fund, which was started by the University in 2014 to support research and policy initiatives battling climate change, the project is using observations from recently deployed satellites to create a clearer picture of precisely where and how methane is being emitted.

Countries have agreed to help reduce global methane emissions by nearly a third from 2020 levels by 2030.

These countries could reduce warming by 0.2 degrees Celsius by 2050 if they follow their pledge.

An estimated 3% of methane traveling through oil and gas wells and pipelines escapes into the atmosphere.

Above: A gas pipeline constructed through sand dunes has been exposed by wind and movement of the desert sands in Gumdag, Turkmenistan. Below: The Sinai Peninsula dominates this north-looking, oblique view from space.

Robert Stavins moderating the panel session, “Using Satellite Observations of Atmospheric Methane to Advance Global Climate Change Policy,” at COP 27.
“If we are trying to address climate change over the next decade or two, methane is a very powerful lever.”

DANIEL JACOB, Vasco McCoy Family Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry and Environmental Engineering at Harvard University

than on actual atmospheric data. So a country would count the head of cattle it has or the number of gas wells or coal mines, and estimate their methane emissions from there. Jacob’s laboratory at Harvard’s John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences adds an invaluable layer of top-down information. His team takes data collected by satellites—the two most important ones were launched by Europe and Japan—that orbit the earth and collect data on methane concentrations in the atmosphere. Then, using inventories of methane emissions that countries provide, they calculate backwards to correct those inventories and understand where the emissions actually originated, yielding a near real-time and spatially accurate map of the emissions.

“What we can do uniquely from satellite is look at recent changes in emissions, because the emission inventories that are coming out of individual countries are based on statistics that are typically two or three years old,” Jacob says. “But if we’re going to try to change the emissions rapidly, and to verify those changes in emissions, the only way that I can think of is to do it from satellites.”

Stavins, whose work through the Harvard Project on Climate Agreements has made him an invaluable resource both to the United Nations body overseeing the Paris Agreement and to individual countries’ negotiating teams and NGOs, is working to help disseminate the new data and also receiving input from policymakers and relating that back to Jacob’s team—indicating what data would be most helpful to particular countries, whether in terms of emissions by sector or geographic region or time scale.

The new, more accurate emissions information comes at a crucial moment as countries work to calculate their greenhouse gas reduction targets in accordance with international agreements and national policies, and as industry groups also work to reduce emissions. Under the Paris Agreement, signatories produce nationally determined contributions (NDCs), which are reduction pledges for greenhouse gas reductions by sector or geographic region or time scale.

Jacob and Stavins hope the satellite observations research will continue to have substantive impacts on climate policy in the years ahead. “We plan to contribute to continuous monitoring of emissions, detect changes in emissions, and point to the need for action,” Jacob says. “For example, if you have a flare that goes out, we should be able to see it from space, and then take action.”

Stavins says he is seeing enormous interest in the new data, and in methane emissions reductions, from both policymakers and industry groups. In fact, the current project is a precursor to a much larger and more ambitious University-wide initiative, funded by the Salata Institute for Climate and Sustainability. With Stavins as the principal investigator and Jacob as a co-principal investigator, the initiative will bring together 17 faculty members from across the University to collaborate on what Stavins characterizes as a “soup to nuts” methane research and outreach effort. “An End-to-End, Collaborative Strategic to Reduce Global Methane Emissions.”

“We used to think about climate change as something that’s way off in the future. But now we think of climate change as associated with the floods in Pakistan, droughts in Africa, and forest fires in California. In other words, it’s here now and increasing over future years,” Stavins says. “And that means that a focus on the next few years is exceptionally important, and in the next 20 years, methane is incredibly important.”
“Prevention is the basis for lasting peace, the measure to cut short any aggression, the measure to save many more lives than you would save by reacting.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at a Forum in September

“The fundamental problem democracy is trying to solve is how to be a pluralist society.”

Maya Wiley, president of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, at a Forum in September

“Our democracy is at stake. I’m going to stand up, whether my fellow Republicans like it or not. I’m going to tell it like it is.”

Maryland Governor Larry Hogan, speaking at a Forum in October

“Our institutions don’t defend themselves. January 6 could’ve been far worse if people in positions of authority hadn’t stood up.”

U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney, speaking at a Forum in October

“Public service needs the public, not just the professional politicians.”

Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker, giving the 2022 Godkin Lecture in November

“It’s not about accusing people. This is about telling the truth, because that’s the only way to move forward.”


“SEVERAL DECADES AGO, when people asked me what my worst nightmare was, I said it would be an outbreak of a respiratory illness that’s brand new, that’s easily spread, has a high degree of morbidity and mortality, and jumps from the animal reservoir to a human,” said Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, when he spoke at a John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum in November. “Right now, we are living through my worst nightmare.”

In the three years since the COVID-19 pandemic first gripped the world, Fauci has become a household name in the United States and beyond. He was frequently the face—often masked—of the scientific community as it struggled to guide the nation through the unprecedented health care crisis, which affected every facet of people’s lives. He defended the sometimes zigzagging path that public health officials laid out. “Science, which I’m sure most people in this audience know, is a self-correcting process,” Fauci explained. “You make a decision at a time X based on the data that you have. If the data changes, you have an obligation as a scientist to change what you’re saying.”

As for the gray area between public health and government, Fauci, who has served the past seven presidents, is very clear: “As a public health official, you absolutely have to stay out of the political realm. You can be involved in policy, but you have to be out of anything that’s political.”
SUSTAINABLY BUILT AND FUNDED INFRASTRUCTURE is vital to making societies more resilient, equitable, and livable. The trillions of public dollars being poured into infrastructure, especially in the wake of the pandemic, are testimony to that. In this edited volume, José Gómez-Itábez, the Derek C. Bok Research Professor of Urban Planning and Public Policy and an expert in transportation, infrastructure, and development, and Zhi Liu, director of the China Program at the Lincoln Institute, present case studies and essays with a global and cross-sectoral perspective. Chapters cover land value capture and other funding mechanisms; the role of infrastructure in urban form, economic performance, and quality of life, especially for disinvested communities; and other essential concepts, economic theories, and policy considerations. Several Harvard and Harvard Kennedy School scholars contribute, including Henry Lee, Akash Deep, and Edward Glaser. The book offers an invaluable tool set for understanding infrastructure at a critical time.

Holding Together
The Hijacking of Rights in America and How to Claim Them for Everyone
Sushma Raman, former executive director of the Carr Center; Mathias Risse, Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights, Global Affairs and Philosophy and director of the Carr Center; John Shattuck, former senator fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy

In A TIMELY EXPLORATION OF DEMOCRACY and disenfranchisement in the United States, the authors chronicize voting rights as they exist today, how the machinery of democracy has been used against itself, and what policies can be put into effect to ensure equal access to democracy for all. The book is written with data from a two-year study of voting rights in the United States conducted by the Carr Center and directed by Shattuck, a former U.S. assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights, and labor. Differently blending history, politics, and current polling data, the volume is written for policymakers as well as the general public.

Various sections focus on the battle for voting rights, equal protection (a chapter on LGBTQ rights was written by the HKS faculty affiliate Timothy Patrick McCarthy), legal protection, the media, and privacy. Although each section outlines attacks on voting rights—including the influence of “dark money,” the lack of civic education, the use of intimidation, and the misuse of redistricting—each chapter ends with concrete policy recommendations to address those concerns. For example, following “The Corrupting Influence of Money in Politics” is a call to authorize citizen funding of elections: “clean election laws.”

Reducing Racial Inequality in Crime and Justice
Science, Practice, and Policy
Khaliq Ibraham Muhammad, Ford Foundation Professor of History, Justice, and Public Policy; Bruce Western, Columbia University; Yamnet Negussie; Emily Backes

IN THIS BOOK-LENGTH CONSENSUS STUDY REPORT from the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine—building on experts from past years—the authoring committee, including cochair Khaliq Muhammad, presents research and recommendations to address the fact that people of color, especially Black, Latinx, and indigenous people, are disproportionately harmed by the criminal justice system in the United States. The committee’s mandate is to “review research to explain why there are such large racial inequalities in crime, victimization, and criminal justice involvement, and to offer evidence-based advice on reducing inequality.”

The comprehensive report considers both policy reforms to the criminal justice system itself and interventions outside the system to address racial inequality. In gathering information, the committee reviewed the existing academic literature and held listening sessions with people from historically marginalized groups who have had contact with the police, courts, and prisons to understand their firsthand experience. “Reducing racial inequality can reduce crime and improve safety,” the report finds. “Minimizing the overall harms from crime, including harms that result from society’s responses to crime, expands the toolkit of criminal justice responses beyond retribution, deterrence, and incapacitation to include victim restoration, prevention through improved community relations, addressing unmet needs, and cross-system coordination beyond criminal justice agencies.”

On Revolutions
Unruly Politics in the Contemporary World
Erica Chenoweth, Frank Stanton Professor of the First Amendment; Colin J. Beck, Pomona College; Mlada Bukovansky, Smith College; George Lawson, Australian National University; Sharon Erickson Nepstad, University of New Mexico; Daniel P. Ritter, Stockholm University

In this edited volume, the Kennedy School’s Erica Chenoweth and five other scholars outline an approach to revolutionary theory for the 21st century, both building on and departing from prior generations of thought. They consider how scholars look at— and theorize, research, and advise on—revolutions. The authors explain that 21st-century revolutions are different from their forebears and thus require new methods of study. For instance, contemporary struggles are less likely to be armed and more likely to rely on civil resistance techniques, to involve cross-class collaborations, and to form around urban centers (such as Cairo’s Tahrir Square during the 2011 Egyptian revolution). They are also likely to have more-modest goals than earlier revolutions did—to be “small r” revolutions.”

Yet even as the model of practice for many revolutions has shifted, the researchers write, “the model of revolutionary theory for social scientists has not.” To address this concern, they consider new approaches, drawing on insights from fields including resistance studies, international relations, and the study of social movements. The authors also break down dichotomies that have traditionally defined research on this topic: whether revolutions are primarily political or social, violent or nonviolent, successful or failed, domestic or international. To advance revolutionary studies, they write, “we need to recognize the multifaceted nature of contemporary revolutions.” Their book provides fresh insights on how to think about revolutions around the world today.

Democracy in Hard Places
Tarek Masoud, Ford Foundation Professor of Democracy and Governance and director of the Middle East Institute; Scott Mainwaring, University of Notre Dame

THE TIDE OF DEMOCRACY that seemed to sweep over so much of the world after the end of the Cold War has been ebbing for some time—not only from places where democracy had never been deeply ingrained in the political culture, but also from places where it seemed well established and, most frighteningly, from places where it was part of society’s genetic code. The hard populism in Poland and Hungary is an example, as is the worrying challenge to the smooth transition of power in the United States. The process—the expansion and then recession of democracy—has challenged scholars, causing them to rethink how democracy might take hold but also offering new opportunities to understand what “democracy” means and where it can survive. Tarek Masoud has long focused on this phenomenon; he established the Democracy in Hard Places program at HKS with Scott Mainwaring (who was on the HKS faculty for some years before returning to the University of Notre Dame). In this edited volume, the two bring together a number of experts to look at places where democracy has managed to survive under sometimes difficult conditions—places such as Indonesia and East Timor, South Africa, Argentina, and the former Soviet republics Moldova and Georgia. Those examples, the authors contend, will help readers understand how democracy has been maintained and how it can perhaps be built elsewhere.
Michael Amore MPA recently produced a program on preventive health titled “Más Vale Prevenir – An Ounce of Prevention.” In his program, Amore interviews subjects about Americans of different backgrounds and their experiences with healthcare. One of the segments features a documentary about Americans of Mexican, Puerto Rican, the Dominican Republic, and other Hispanic nationalities. The program is part of a larger series of documentaries about Americans of different political views, religions, ethnicities, and national origins who break with each other respect, all within one family. His own.

1979

Dean Pinelis MC/MPA, after a lengthy legal and judicial career both at home and abroad, has written a memoir titled A Judge’s Odyssey, From Vermont to Russia.

1981

Donald O’Brien MC/MPA writes, “In retirement in New Hampshire’s Monadnock region, I served three years on the town planning board, ran for selectman, was defeated, ran again, and was elected. Subsequently as an ex-officio member of the planning board and the Conservation Commission, I was able to get things done I spent my career as a broadcast journalist, but as an ex-official I had a good deal of empathy for the politicians: I had covered somewhat cynically in my working life.”

1982

Jim Laramore MPP writes, “SPF 1982 classmates Linda Nissen, Poopy Smith, Monica Priar, David Hoffman, and Jim Laramore had a mini-reunion in Indianapolis. Linda is dean of Kansas City University’s College of Dental Medicine in Joplin, Missouri; Poopy is retired in North Carolina; Monica teaches math in Wayne, Massachusetts; David is consulting and semi-retired in Alaska; and Jim is executive director of a civil legal aid program in Indianapolis.”

1983

Evon Katz MCRP, assistant baseball coach at Manchester Essex Regional High School, fulfilled an early season promise to the team that if they made it to the semifinals of the championship he would write a 5,000-word story about the 2022 season on baseball’s social media website “Baseball by the Sea.” The Hornets won the Division 4 championship and “No Umbrellas in the Outfield” tells the impossible championship tale.

1985

Jim Gruber MC/MPA writes, “I still did realize back in 1984-85, at HKS, that my future would include working to counter attacks on the foundation of our democracy in the United States. Had an opportunity to lead democracy-building work in Eastern Europe in the 90s by applying Ron Heifetz’s leadership model. Today my wife, Palencia, and I are committed to supporting and preserving our democratic norms and institutions through our work on our Democratic town and state committees. I am fortunate to have the inspiration of HKS in undertaking this calling.”

1987

Nadine Hackett MC/MPA recently received the Catalyst for Change Award from the Shirley Chisholm Cultural Institute (SCI). Nadine has delivered keynote speeches at FPFA Global Leaders, Business & Professional Women, and Barclay’s Bank. Her articles have appeared in many publications, including Acquisitio International and New York magazine. She has also facilitated a leadership program for women at AMD.

1989

Barbara Davises MC/MPA is working part time at her business, Life Management Associates. Barbara married her longtime partner, Stewart, five years ago and is doing lots of traveling—New Guinea, Suazwezi, Bali, a safari in Tanzania, Egypt, Hungary, Israel, Portugal, and the list goes on. Barbara reports that a recent highlight was rafting down the Colorado River in May, and she is enjoying spending time with grandchildren.

1990

Peter Holmes MC/MPA came out of retirement to join the New York State (NYS) Department of Financial Services in the Virtual Currency Unit (VCU) as director of financial services programs. The VCU licenses, supervises, and examines entities wishing to engage NY residents in crypto-currency transactions. The team is expanding as both commercial interest and space.

1991

Julie Ames MC/MPA was named one of 50 top leaders of influence in life science in San Diego, California, by the San Diego Business Journal. Julie currently serves as vice president of Biocom California.

1992

Jim (Dennie) Kales MPP is the recently named CEO of Biome Institute in Los Angeles. It is the seventh person to lead the 10-year-old organization, Biome Institute helps more than 20,000 children and adults annually, through a broad range of educational and social services.

1993

John Rakis MC/MPA writes, “I am happy to announce my marriage to Sally Findley, which took place in Manhattan on October 15. Both of us lost our prior spouses to cancer and we were very fortunate to have found each other nearly four years ago. Sally is a professor emerita at Columbia University, where she taught at the School of Public Health for more than 30 years. Aside from her many academic achievements, she has sung in Carnegie Hall, is an expert cross-country skier and kayaker, and a very talented chef. We look forward to sharing many adventures in the years to come!”

1994


Sally Taylor MC/MPA writes, “My book, The Durian Chronicles, Reflections on the US and Southeast Asia in the Trump Era, was published in October. Check out the South- east Asia Globe story (southeastasiaglobe.com/the-durian-chronicles-explains-political-dissidents-as-a-chile-between-the-us-and-southeast-asia). Still in D.C., but happy to talk about the work with groups elsewhere via Zoom or otherwise. Looking forward to seeing classmates in LIR in 2023!”


Sally Taylor MC/MPA 1994.

Sally Taylor MC/MPA 1994.

1995

Patsy Welsh MPA writes, “In June I will celebrate 25 years with the U.S. Small Business Administration, where I serve as a public affairs specialist. For many years I worked out of the SBA Cleveland, Ohio, district office, but during the pandemic my role was expanded with an additional detail to the SBA Columbus district office. I have recently relocated to Columbus, where I have family, and continue to do public affairs for all of SBA’s Ohio offices. I would welcome hearing from other KSG alumni.”

1997

25th REUNION

Mami Terai MC/MPA writes, “(It started to practice law in 2006). My main practice areas are immigration and general corporate law. I am an active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, where I have served on the Board of Publications for nine years and been a member of the Distance Learning Committee. Given how controversial immigration has become in the United States, it is fascinating to be involved in this policy area. Both my background and my time at HKS have shaped my approach to immigration law. — Mami Tera MC/MPA 1997”

2000

Christine Cassatelli MPP is a lecturer in MIT’s Comparative Media Studies department, teaching in its Writing, Rhetoric, and Professional Communication program. Prior to her role at MIT, she was editorial project director and chief editor for Explore GB, which is the monthly member magazine for GBM public media in Boston. Cynthia Gillis MPA recently published Next Generation Compliance: Environmental Regulation for the Modern Era (Oxford University Press, 2020). The book debuts two myths: that compliance with environmental rules is good and that enforcement is responsible for making compliance happen. The book explains how to build better compliance into regulations—particularly rules to address climate change—and avoid the compliance claque that plagued many environmental rules today.

Jeron Holmes MC/MPA assumed the position of chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit on October 1, 2022, for a seven-year term.

Karen Kallich MC/MPA has moved to Seattle! She writes, “I’m healthy (at 77?) and want to spend my next chapter in a cooler state with water and mountains. I love being near nephews and favorite cousins and friends, including Adai Dammann MC/MPA. I have a condo near the Space Needle, Chihuly Museum, and the Olympic Sculpture Park. I see Mount Rainier (when it’s out) as I open my eyes every morning and sunsets from my office. Glorious, and I have a guest room and bath overlooking Puget Sound. Come visit!”

Jeff Katz MC/MPA writes, “Greetings, Kennedy School Friends. After 20 years of various consulting roles with nonprofit organizations, including serving 13 times as an interim executive director, I have shifted my consulting exclusively to doing executive searches. I recently led the search for the CEO of the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate and am now leading the search for the head of the museum at the National Baseball Hall of Fame. I live in Cambridge, within walking distance of the Kennedy School. If you are ever in the area, reach out and let me know. Happy to organize a get-together with our local alumni!”

Tim Mathern MC/MPA, now the longest-serving state senator in North Dakota, is on the ballot again. First elected in 1986, Tim says he went to Harvard after his first 4 years in the Senate in order to do a better job for the remainder of his career. He recalls Frank Hartmann’s course, “Management of Self,” as the most consequential in his public service career. Tim notes he has experienced a worldwide move toward individualism in people’s philosophy coupled with ascendency in governments. His basic work is ensuring the common good.

2001

Joshua Brown MPP writes, “It’s been three years since I 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 already serving the two largest child-protection courts in the state.

Advancing Equitable Development

Jesse Leon MPP 2001

His recently published memoir, I’m Not Broken (No Estoy Roto), begins and ends in Harvard Yard on a humid June day more than 20 years ago, when Jesse Leon MPP 2001 graduated from the Kennedy School. Commencement serves as an apt metaphor for a story about resilience and rebirth, opening and later chapters in a life that at times feels too full—of both tragedy and promise—to belong to a single person.

The summer before I was to attend Harvard, while on a research fellowship in China, I met a Yoruba priestess who told him, “You were supposed to be the priest of your family…but a trauma took place that changed your life’s course.”

The studious middle child of indigenous working-class Mexican immigrants, Leon’s path was changed irrevocably when he was 14 by a terrifying encounter in which a giftshop owner molested him in the back room of his shop, which led to years of sexual abuse, child prostitution, drug addiction, and homelessness. But he survived. He graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard, and went on to oversee multimillion-dollar grant-making portfolios for several foundations; manage $1 billion in public-sector investments, including for the first LGBT senior housing development in Florida; build thousands of affordable housing units; and establish his own social-impact consulting firm, Alliance Way. Established during the pandemic, Alliance Way helps foundations and impact investors maximize positive community impact and provides equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI) training and coaching. One of Leon’s current projects is advising the Walton Family Foundation on a grant-making and investment strategy for regional workplace housing in northwest Arkansas. His improbable path from the streets to high-impact consulting work, Leon says, should not be read as the tale of “an individual pulling himself up by his bootstraps.” He writes that his success was “the product of a network, of the efforts of many people,” including family and friends who never gave up on him; Narcotics Anonymous sponsors; admissions and financial aid officers who, he felt, “were all complicit so that students of color would succeed”; Kennedy School classmates who took him under their wing; and professors who gave him opportunities to apply his studies to real-world projects.

In particular, he credits a Policy Analysis Exercise with Joseph Kalt for introducing him to corporate social responsibility work. During that project, he worked with the Hei?i Nation to design a holistic land-use strategy to test wireless satellite technology. Leon created a telemedicine, tele-education, and environmental cleanup and remediation plan for the Hei?i community. “I didn’t know at the time that the Kennedy School was training me to do a type of development work that didn’t exist,” he says.

That work in equitable development connects the environmental and racial-justice movements to create growth that addresses climates change, benefits vulnerable local communities, and builds inclusive economies. “Issues of race and inequality must be addressed up front rather than as add-ons in policy making,” he says.

What Harvard taught Leon was how to use numbers to tell a story—in order to marshal resources for the communities that need them—and to tell it in a way that includes the communities in need, in ways that are gender-affirming and inclusive.

In telling his own story, Leon has realized the unimaginable: As the priestess foresaw so many years ago, he has become a “priest” of sorts, mediating between different worlds—the public and the private sector, underserved communities and elite institutions, the past and the present—and bringing his many lived experiences to bear.

FROM THE FIELD
Championing Equity and Inclusion in the Coffee Industry
Phyllis Johnson MC/MPA 2015

After more than 10 years in corporate America as a scientist and then a buyer, Phyllis Johnson MC/MPA 2015 felt a gnawing emptiness. “I had a nice home, everything I needed,” she says. “Yet I thought there had to be more to life—to work—than that.”


It was while speaking at HBS that Johnson was encouraged to apply to the Kennedy School. Her experience there has “helped me look at my past as well as the future,” she says. “Just as many people who produced it. Every cup connects her—many people who produced it. Every cup connects her—

Connecticut CASA is applying the proven CASA approach to improve outcomes for young people who have experienced abuse/neglect. Our aim: safer, permanent homes—family members whenever possible—where youth are more likely to thrive. Our funding is a blend of public dollars, foundation grants, and individual donations.”

José Rosenberg MC/MPA 2013 recently moved to Muscat, Oman, as the UNICEF representative and is keen to connect with alumni in the region.

Andrew Leigh MP 2015 has been an Australian parliamentarian since 2010. Following the election of the Labor Government in May 2022, he was appointed assistant minister for competition, charities and treasury. Andrew’s latest books are What’s the Worst That Could Happen? Existential Risk and Extreme Politics and For Game: Lessons from Sport for a Fairer Society and a Stronger Economy. A keen runner, he recently completed all six World Marathon Majors in under three hours. Andrew lives in Canberra with his wife, Gwenneth, and their three boys, Sebastian (15), Theodore (13), and Zachary (10).

Edie Rubinstein MC/MPA 2015 was promoted to full professor at Northeastern Illinois University, a Hispanic Serving Institution in Chicago. She spent a recent sabbatical researching solutions jornalism stories for Chicago Public Radio, WBEZ. She and her husband, Scott, have a 12-year-old son, Max.

Sean Carberry MC/MPA 2006 writes, “I recently retired from a 14-month hiatus from D.C. that I spent writing a memoir of my journey to become a war correspondent. Passport: Swearing the World for a War to Call Home will be released by Madison Media Publishing in 2023. In the meantime, I am now managing editor of National Defense Magazine and busy reconnecting with classmates and colleagues in the city while continuing to write about foreign policy and international affairs on Substack.”

Paula Castillo MP 2007 is a certified mindfulness coach focused on helping professionals increase work-life balance, manage work-related stress, change careers, and increase happiness at work. Paula offers a free 30-minute discovery call via her website, paulacastillo.co.

2008 15th REUNION

Moushumi Khan MC/MPA 2006 writes, “I am humbled and thrilled to share that I have just joined as the U.S. alternate executive director at the Asian Development Bank working with the inspiring fellow HKS alum, U.S. Executive Director Ambassador Chantale Wong MC/MPA 1998, and her team! It will be an amazing opportunity to support the Biden administration’s priorities in Asia as the ADB tackles some of Asia’s most pressing issues.”

Emilian Papadopoulos MP 2007 and Natalie Colbert MP 2006 moved back to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in summer 2021 when Natalie became executive director of the Better Center. Emilian continues to advise CEOs on how to protect critical infrastructure from cyber attacks, and is taking a hiatus from teaching cybersecurity at Georgetown while in Boston. Most importantly, the couple welcomed their first baby boy, Rémyaux (Rémy) Apolis Papadopoulos, in August 2022. “See you at Reunion, and please let us know if you come through Boston in the meantime!”

Ben Renda MP 2006 worked for 15 years at Google/YouTube building out the trust and safety teams at YouTube as well as the customer service organization, running operations for Google’s phone service as CEO, Google Fi, and leading Google’s

ANDREW THOMAS LEE

About Dobbs: The Future of Women’s Health
December 11, 2022

“We already have a maternal mortality crisis in the United States. An American today is 59% more likely to die in childbirth than her own mother was...if you’re Black, you’re twice or four times more likely to die...” (The Dobbs decision alone may increase maternal mortality by as much as 20 percent.)

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Sharad Goel
HKS Professor of Public Policy

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Powering More Effective and Accountable Government

Zachary Bookman MPA 2007

In 2012, Zac Bookman MPA 2007 was serving as an advisor on the International Security Assistance Forces’ Anti-Corruption Task Force, living in a shipping container in Kabul, when he cofounded OpenGov. Bookman was working with U.S. Army Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster and regional government officials to build Afghanistan’s institutional foundations for democracy and reverse systemic corruption.

“It was an intense time,” says Bookman. “We’d work all day to help build transparent institutions, and I’d spend nights reading about the history, politics, and cultures at play. It underscored the importance of ensuring effective and accountable government at home.”

Upon returning to the United States later that year, Bookman left a promising career in law and foreign policy to focus on building OpenGov. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008–2009, three California cities had declared bankruptcy (12 were on the verge). Bookman and his cofounders were curious: “With taxes and other revenues still flowing, how is it possible for a city for three cities—to go bankrupt?”

The team discovered that in addition to political, incentive, and other problems, local governments were hamstrung by antiquated and costly “green screen” technology that kept departments siloed and staffsiburied in paperwork. “They were using 30-year-old systems delivered on 20 disks that cost millions of dollars,” Bookman says. The State of California was using an accounting system that ran on COBOL, a programming language popular in the 1960s.

The OpenGov team reasoned that the oldest and most important government—would benefit from modern, cloud-based software built specifically for its needs. “It was a tremendous market opportunity, but also we saw a threat to the health and functioning of our communities,” says Bookman.

When the City of Cupertino, California, adopted OpenGov to streamline workflows and increase the accuracy of budget planning, officials went from being unable to answer basic questions posed by their council and residents to enabling the public to see and engage with 10 years of budget data in real time. In the process, the city also unexpectedly uncovered an $800,000 embellishment scheme.

Over the past decade, OpenGov has grown to nearly 700 employees and a “unicorn” valuation. As one of the leading enterprise software providers to state and local governments, it offers budgeting, permitting and licensing, procurement, asset and inspectional services (including the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts, which uses the software to run all its building and inspectional services).

From the start, OpenGov has had an ambitious vision: to bring the cloud to government and ensure that public leaders and administrators have the best solutions to meet their needs and serve their communities.

Bookman’s blend of entrepreneurship, innovation, and public service embodies the lessons and ethos of his time at the Kennedy School. Part of the inaugural class of Zuckerman Fellows, he pursued a JD at Yale Law School and an MPA at HKS. Harvard offered exposure to campus speakers such as Jack Welch, Barack Obama, and David Petreus and the space and inspiration to “dream and think big,” he says. “It was not just learning specific skills through courses but setting high expectations and [discovering] the art of the possible.”

Bookman’s leadership at OpenGov, along with his experience on a Fulbright fellowship studying corruption in Mexico and serving as a law clerk for a federal judge, has taught him that it is “the small, everyday interactions that can erode or build trust in government.” Thus modernizing government can help achieve a truly great possibility: it can renew trust in our democracy.
Advancing a Sustainable Ocean Economy

Torsten Thiele MPA 1987

According to Torsten Thiele MPA 1987, ocean sustainability may be the defining challenge of our time. “Human survival and wellness” are inextricable from the health of the ocean, he says. “Over 95% of life takes place underwater. Our total earth system is reliant on it.”

The ocean is a powerful climate regulator, buffering much of the negative impact of climate change. It generates more than half of the world’s oxygen, absorbs the most carbon and excess heat, regulates temperature, produces rain and wind, and is a rich source of new medicines. But marine areas today face unprecedented threats from overfishing, acidification, pollution (there will be more plastic than fish in the ocean by 2050), deoxygenation, and climate change—all of which has led to sometimes irreversible habitat and biodiversity loss.

For Thiele, creating effective public-private partnerships is crucial. Achieving a sustainable ocean economy is a trillion-dollar problem that will require significant private-sector investment to supplement taxpayer funds. “Reconciling conservation with profit is not just possible but necessary,” Thiele said in a recent podcast. “It’s even more necessary for the financial folks, because they need to reconcile their investments with their long-term impact on the planet.”

Working at the intersection of academia, public policy, and finance, Thiele credits the Kennedy School for providing him with “the analytical tools to look at things from different perspectives.” A game theory course with the late HKS Professor Thomas Schelling helped him define the ocean problem as one that was difficult but solvable, giving him the courage to tackle its complexity. (Thiele returned to Harvard in 2014 as an Advanced Leadership Initiative Fellow.)

Despite the challenges facing the ocean, Thiele is optimistic: “If we engage carefully right now, we can shift the trajectory.” Several irreversible tipping points, such as the melting of the polar ice caps, have already been passed, but we can prevent others from following suit and chart a different course—if we act now.

“We can’t leave this to the next generation,” Thiele says. “There is no time.”
WAYS AND MEANS

BEFORE COMING TO HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL, BETHANY KIRKPATRICK MPP 2022 taught English at a middle school in North Carolina. Wanting to learn more about how race, poverty, education, and health care affect the quality of public education and individual student outcomes, she set her sights on attending HKS.

“I have been teaching for the past few years—not a lucrative position—and I received a scholarship to cover all of my tuition,” she says of the financial aid she received from the School. “There’s no question that I would not be here without it.”

This support—and its effect on students like Kirkpatrick and the people she will go on to serve—is made possible by the alumni and friends who give generously to the HKS Fund. As the single most powerful tool for attracting the best students to enroll who could otherwise not afford to do so while enabling the School to invest significantly in financial aid—but even so, HKS can cover only one-third of the need. The School now aims to expand financial aid to reach many additional public leaders each year—leaders who show great promise but cannot afford to attend the School without a major expansion of financial aid. “We are helping a lot of students,” says Santacroce. “With additional support from alumni and friends, we can enable more students to enroll who could otherwise not afford to do so while giving more students the chance to enter public service without the burden of student loans.”

Increasing access to the School will generate positive impacts around the globe for generations to come. This is what motivates GREG ROSENBAUM MPP/JD 1977 to invest in the education of these leaders. “When I think about how we’re going to solve the problems that the world has today and in the future, the place where these leaders are going to be minted is right here at HKS.”

AN OUTSIZED IMPACT

The HKS Fund provides crucial aid to the next generation of changemakers.

“...The HKS Fund provides crucial aid to the next generation of changemakers...”

“...The Kennedy School admits extraordinary students...”

One hundred percent of gifts to the HKS Fund directly benefit students like Ahmed, paving the way for them to create positive change in their communities and the world. “Our supporters are united by their commitment to empowering the Kennedy School to help create better communities, better nations, and a better world,” says Dean Douglas Elmendorf. Through their philanthropy, HKS is able to educate people who will go on to improve the world through principled and effective public leadership.

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17% Curriculum Transformations

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70% Student Activities

KAYANA SZYMCZAK

GREG ROSENBAUM MPP/JD 1977

NAVEED AHMED MPA/ID 2024

Harvard Kennedy School
“This document does help to hold people together,” former Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer said, holding up a copy of the U.S. Constitution, at a Forum in October. Breyer, who served for 28 years on the nation’s highest court, is now the Byrne Professor of Administrative Law at Harvard Law School. At the event, moderated by Shorenstein Center Director and HKS Professor Nancy Gibbs, Breyer responded to questions about the court’s, and the country’s, resilience: “We’ve gone through a lot of difficult periods, and despite the difficulties, the country has emerged.”

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