

"WE ALL REJOICE... THAT
UTAH IS A STATE WITH HER WOMEN
FREE AND ENFRANCHISED,"



SUSAN B. ANTHONY

On a recent September morning I walked into the BYU Law building before most of our students and employees had arrived for the day. The sun was still nestled behind Y Mountain, but its muted morning light floated into the Fritz B. Burns Memorial Lounge. My eyes were drawn to the colorful art installation displaying a series of stunning photographs by renowned photographer Steve McCurry and celebrating the Law School's role in creating and promoting the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere. The preamble to this declaration proclaims, "[E]qual human dignity of everyone everywhere is the foundational principle of human rights and reminds us that every person is of value and is worthy of respect."¹

The notion that "every person is of value and is worthy of respect" resonates with us because we know that "the worth of souls is great in the sight of God" (D&C 18:10). Inspired by these ideas, we strive to create a law school that respects human difference. Indeed, we aspire to be a place where differences are welcomed. This aspiration of diversity and inclusion reflects an ancient understanding recognized by the Apostle Paul that difference is an inherent feature of community and that the gathering of diverse gifts elevates all members of the community. He wrote:

[[]ust as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is . . . serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. [Romans 12:4–8 (NIV)]

We desire to create a climate that encourages all members of the Law School community to "seek learning . . . by study and also by faith" (D&C 88:118). We recognize, however, that freedom of thought, belief, inquiry, and expression create the potential for conflict in a diverse community. In dealing with these conflicts, we echo the principles articulated by the Committee on Freedom of Expression at the University of Chicago, which proclaimed that "it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive."²

The Law School recently created another art installation that celebrates freedom of expression. In our library, we are displaying a series of illustrations by Utah artist Brooke Smart to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Utah women becoming the first American women to vote under an equal suffrage law and the 100th anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment, which recognized the right to vote for all U.S. women. The courage of those who advocated for women's suffrage is an example to all of us who believe that the world can be changed for the better through law.

In the introduction to her book *Mr. President, How Long Must We Wait? Alice Paul, Woodrow Wilson, and the Fight for the Right to Vote*, Tina Cassidy reflected on similarities between the 1910s—the time just before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment—and our present day. This passage seems particularly relevant to the work of training leaders in law:

We fight the enemy abroad and battle each other at home. We hold sacred ideals but struggle to meet them ourselves. We forget that progress can be slow and sometimes indirect. But most of all, we fail to remember that it takes just one person—however imperfect—who is utterly committed to change, to make it happen.³

As we embark on a new academic year at the Law School, I invite you to join us in creating a community in which every person is of value and is worthy of respect. As we work together in this community, I sincerely believe that we can change the world for the better.



D. GORDON SMITH

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NOTES

- 1 The Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere: Seventy Years After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Punta del Este, Uruguay, December 2018, dignityforeveryone.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2019/02/Punta-del-Este-Declaration.pdf.
- 2 Geoffrey R. Stone, Marianne Bertrand, Angela Olinto, Mark Siegler, David A. Strauss, Kenneth W. Warren, and Amanda Woodward, Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression, University of Chicago, January 2015, p. 2.
- 3 Tina Cassidy, *Mr. President, How Long Must We Wait? Alice Paul, Woodrow Wilson, and the Fight for the Right to Vote* (New York: 37 Ink, 2019), xii.