"The Need for More Chris Stevenses"

Presented by:
The Honorable Doug Wilson
Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

Discussants:
The Honorable Michael McFaul
Former United States Ambassador to Russia

The Honorable Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley
Former United States Ambassador to Malta

Audience Participation Moderated by Professor Chimène Keitner

Wednesday, April 14, 2021
3:40 - 5:10 pm PDT
Online Via Zoom
"The Need for More Chris Stevenses"
Lecture in Memory of Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens ’89

American international engagement is at a crossroads. A significant amount of attention and debate is now being given to the structures and processes needed to recruit, retain and motivate a new generation of American women and men to pursue public service careers in the national security civilian workforce. As the Biden Administration considers how best to revive the foreign service, reinvigorate the State Department and other national security agencies and institutions, and recalibrate US foreign policy for the intertwined domestic and international challenges we now face, the human elements of international engagement remain of fundamental importance.

UC Hastings is honored to host Former Assistant Secretary Wilson and Ambassadors McFaul and Abercrombie-Winstanley as they draw upon their own extensive experiences in foreign policy – and on initiatives in which they are currently involved – to address these issues, as they reflect how Chris Stevens’ life and service exemplified both the challenges and the imperative of personal relationships in international engagement.

The Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens Lecture Series was established in 2013 by UC Hastings and the Stevens family to honor the memory, life, and work of Chris Stevens, a member of the UC Hastings class of 1989. Chris spent his career in the foreign service building bridges of understanding and mutual respect between the people of the United States and the people of the Middle East. This lecture series brings foreign policy thought leaders to campus to explore how law and public policy are used in practice to advance global understanding and peace. “Gathering experts to discuss law and foreign policy in the promotion of global understanding presents a fitting opportunity to further the legacy of Chris’s style of diplomacy and his life’s work,” said Tom Stevens, Ambassador Stevens’ brother.
BIOGRAPHIES

Doug Wilson's 40-year career in foreign policy, national security, politics and communications strategy spans the public and private sectors. As Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs he headed the world's largest government communications operation. He helped lead the “Don’t Ask/Don’t Tell” repeal, and has three times been awarded the Distinguished Public Service Medal, the Pentagon’s highest civilian honor. Doug was a US foreign service information officer in Italy and the UK and Congressional Director at the US Information Agency, where he led the fight against consolidation with the State Department. He was the senior foreign policy advisor to presidential candidates Gary Hart and Pete Buttigieg.

Michael McFaul is the Director and Senior Fellow at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies at Stanford University. He served for five years in the Obama administration as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Russian and Eurasian Affairs at the NSC at the White House (2009-2012), then as U.S. Ambassador to the Russian Federation (2012-2014). He has authored several books, including the New York Times bestseller, From Cold War to Hot Peace: An American Ambassador in Putin’s Russia (2018). He is also an analyst for NBC News and a contributing columnist to The Washington Post.

Ambassador Gina Abercrombie-Winstanley has been a steadfast proponent of achieving excellence through diversity in organizations and breaking down barriers for women and minorities. She was the longest-serving U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malta. She advised the Commander of U.S. Cyber Forces on foreign policy priorities and expanded counterterrorism programs as Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism. As the Secretary of State’s Special Assistant for the Middle East and Africa, she monitored the election in the Gaza Strip and supported gender equality in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the first woman to lead a diplomatic mission there. She has also held senior positions at the Defense Department and the National Security Council.

Professor Chimène Keitner is Alfred & Hanna Fromm Chair in International and Comparative Law at UC Hastings Law, and served as the 27th Counselor on International Law in the U.S. Department of State. She has authored two books and dozens of articles, essays, and book chapters on the relationship among law, communities, and borders. She has testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee on foreign sovereign immunity, and is a frequent contributor to international law and national security blogs, including as a guest on The Lawfare Podcast, International Law Behind the Headlines, and EJIL: The Podcast!
A Hero Remembered

AMBASSADOR TO LIBYA J. CHRISTOPHER STEVENS ’89, KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY LAST FALL, WAS EXEMPLARY IN HIS UNWAVERING DEDICATION TO HIS COUNTRY.

On September 11, 2012, the American diplomatic mission in Benghazi, Libya, was attacked. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens ’89 and three other individuals were killed; 10 more were wounded. In the wake of this tragic event, UC Hastings remembers Stevens’s inspiring legacy of diplomatic accomplishments. He died, said UC Hastings Chancellor & Dean Frank H. Wu, “performing the highest role that a lawyer is called upon to perform: public service.”
Called to Service
Born in 1960 in Grass Valley, California, Stevens studied history at UC Berkeley and then spent several years in Morocco with the Peace Corps. Upon returning to the United States, he enrolled at UC Hastings, where he served as managing editor of the Hastings Law Journal.

Stevens made an indelible impression on both faculty and classmates. He became particularly close with his civil procedure professor, David Levine, who recalls Stevens as a natural fit for a career in diplomacy. “Some people catch your eye, and Chris was one of those people,” says Levine. “He always went above and beyond.”

After graduating in 1989, Stevens moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked as an international trade lawyer. In 1991 he joined the Foreign Service and never looked back. He was posted as an officer to U.S. consulates in Jerusalem, Damascus, Cairo, and Riyadh and had served in Libya twice prior to his arrival as ambassador in 2012: first as deputy chief of mission from 2007 to 2009 and later as special representative to the Libyan Transitional National Council in 2011.

Colleagues remember Stevens as tirelessly committed to public service. “Christopher Stevens stood out as extraordinary in an already extraordinary group of people,” said former Secretary of State George P. Shultz at a memorial service for Stevens in San Francisco. “Democracy is not a spectator sport, and Chris was a full participant in his beloved democracy.”

Stevens won over his classmates with his warmth and modesty. “Chris never tried to be someone special,” says classmate Mary Neumayr ’89, “but he was special. People were drawn to him.” Friend and classmate Chris Hilen ’89 remarks, “Chris was the finest among us. More than his obvious brains and charm, he was a man of substance and humility.” And classmate Rachel Van Cleave ’89, currently the dean of Golden Gate Law School, reminisces, “Chris was a generous and warm person who was truly open to anyone. It was impossible not to like him. His priorities, goals, and objectives weren’t about Chris; they were about his family and friends, and his country and the global community.”

Mourning a Fallen Hero
Two months after his death, Stevens was honored with the Common Ground award for conflict resolution, negotiation, and peace building. “Our country mourns a fallen hero,” said then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who presented Stevens’s award to his sister, Anne Stevens. Stevens "understood that there is no substitute for going beyond the embassy walls, building relationships and finding common ground," Clinton added. “Our diplomats cannot work in bunkers and do their jobs. We must accept a level of risk to protect this country we love and to advance our interests and values around the world.”

For Stevens, this dedication to his country always came first and foremost. "He was doing what he loved," says Professor Levine. "Everything he did was for the United States.”

“The Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens Symposium Fund
In collaboration with his family, UC Hastings has established a symposium fund to honor Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens. The symposium invites leading foreign policy voices to campus to address law and public policy as mechanisms to advance global understanding and peace—the issues to which the ambassador devoted his career.

“Chris loved UC Hastings, and we are grateful to the school for holding this event. Thanks to UC Hastings and to the outstanding speakers who have participated since the inaugural program in 2014, the lecture series has contributed meaningfully to the important dialogue concerning law and foreign policy,” says Tom Stevens, Ambassador Stevens’s brother.

For more information about making a gift in memory of Ambassador Stevens or to support the symposium fund, please contact gifts@uchastings.edu or 415.565.4665 or donate here: http://law.uchastings.edu/stevens
Thank you to these generous donors who have supported the Stevens Symposium Fund.*

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*As of March 24, 2021