

Celeste Schenck  
Commencement 2011  
Laudations of Honorary Degree Recipients  
May 18, 2011

Women and men of the class of 2011, these are both remarkable and daunting times in which to come of age. Global economic uncertainty, not to say crisis, has clouded since 2008 the vista of even those young people lucky enough to be graduating from college, education in hand. Yet members of your own generation have also invented tools—Facebook and Twitter amongst them—capable of creating vast, online, imagined communities broader and more populous than most nations on earth. This past spring we have witnessed how young people in Tunisia, rising up to claim their rights, expressing their desire for a better future, passed the torch to their “friends” in Egypt and elsewhere. The power of your generation to transform the social and political fabric of our lives is enormous, and with that comes great responsibility. It will be my honor in a few moments to present to you our two honorary degree recipients, Jane Goodall and Rory Stewart—both scholars, both humanitarians, both activists, both conservationists, both brilliant writers, both believers that young people hold the keys to a whole new humanity beginning here.

One of the things I like to say about the students of The American University of Paris, is that you are so much **of** the world that you are **for** it. Hailing from over 100 different nationalities, having brought into the University over the past decade 94 different languages and dialects, you have helped us create on our campus a kind of third place, a community of not inconsiderable freedom, where each of us simultaneously leaves our cultural baggage at the door and brings it comfortably inside to share with others. Those of you graduating today know just how much your years in Paris in the crucible of AUP’s global liberal arts curriculum has changed how you look at and live in the world. As you leave us today to take your places as responsible actors in communities, civil societies, and countries around the globe, it is the pride of this faculty that so many of you feel the call of the world, choose to work alongside others for the betterment of the planet, and cross cultural borders with such ease and engagement. As you go forth as our emissaries, keep foremost in mind the mission of The American University of Paris—to foster in our graduates a sense of commitment to and responsibility for a world of global interdependence. Great universities are judged, ultimately, not by the rankings, but by the impact of their graduates upon a world that has such need of them.

On our campus this year alone, here is what AUP students, working with faculty and staff, have accomplished together in the way of “world work”:

Thanks to the energy and passion of our student government president, Sam Yehya, working with the administration, AUP became the first institution of higher education in France to put in place a comprehensive recycling program. We are proud to show the way in our host country. Keep in mind that even the smallest universities, such as ours, can be world class and that size has nothing to do with leadership. The student Environmental Club also produced a vision statement, bringing the faculty, the president, and the technology group along with you to ratify and implement it. Today, thanks to you, we also have double-sided printing and plans for extensive greening of our campus in the years to come.

AUP's Roots and Shoots chapter of Jane Goodall's global youth program, founded four years ago by Professor Linda Martz and led by Molly Mason and Maxi Donicht has raised substantial funds for scholarships in Tanzania and Afghanistan, and for roof repairs on a school in Nepal. Closer to home the club stages Seine river cleanups and maintains urban wildlife refuges on our Grenelle building terraces and rooftops. We now provide a home to eight different bird species.

The students of this university also held successful fundraisers in this year of terrible human disaster—one for Pakistan in the wake of the floods, one on Valentine's Day for a heart disease association, one for Japan after the earthquake and the tsunami.

In a partnership with the Mairie of the 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, one group of student volunteers introduced English to all the public nursery schools in our district, while another mentored high school students at Lycée Victor Duruy. For the second year in a row, we ran a 7km race with our neighbors in the 7<sup>th</sup>, benefiting a local association for the blind. Still another group of students, led by Professor Edith Taieb in the French Dept., accompanied the handicapped to concerts at the Invalides.

Still another group of mainly graduate students, accompanied and mentored by Professor Charles Talcott of Global Communications, spent a month in Auroville, India bringing communications strategies and outreach initiatives to local NGOs. A number of these students have since returned to India for long internships, and more than a few students have written MA theses on their experiences or made films about them. They also bring all their learning back to campus, sharing it with us all at their annual fundraising "Night in India." This AUP Away program is being extended to Fez and Tunis.

AUP students, grad and undergrad, are currently doing internships in over 15 developing countries on projects ranging from adult literacy to village sanitation; five more will be stepping into internships at the international criminal courts in the Hague and Tanzania. We have students in this class leaving us to work at UNESCO, the OECD, the UNDP, and the World Bank, to take up positions with NGOs such as Oxfam, Echoppe, and Tostan.

And faculty and students have created a blog called “debating human rights” with contributions in real time from student protesters in Tunisia and elsewhere. Grad students also write for a blog founded by our partner program at the Sorbonne on humanitarian aid and relief.

This year has been a harvest of student engagement and civic responsibility at AUP, and the Class of 2011 has led it.

As inspiration to the graduating class on this day of your Commencement, as an exhortation to engage beyond the walls of the University, it is now my pleasure to present to you our two honorary degree recipients. I shall invite each of them in turn to the podium to receive an AUP diploma and hood from the trustees, the faculty, the staff and the students of The American University of Paris. May I invite you, Jane Goodall, to join me at the podium for the laudation.

You, Jane Goodall, Doctor of Philosophy and Dame of the British Empire, ethologist, environmentalist, activist, writer, impassioned speaker, are a shining example of engaged global citizenship. You travel over 300 days a year, indefatigably, to reach people everywhere with your message of civic responsibility, environmental stewardship, and peace—the deepest values of the Jane Goodall Institute. Since you met Dr. Leakey in the 1960s and first traveled to the Gombe forest in Tanzania, you have been an exceptional observer of your beloved chimpanzees, translating for those of us at home their behavior, their habits, their social interactions and their capacity to make tools, transforming your field of study in the process. All of that before receiving your doctorate. Your books, your speeches, your films have brought these stories to us over the course of your lifetime and ours. In 1991, believing that the planet’s youth will be its protectors, you created your global youth program, Roots and Shoots, active in 126 countries. Mounting hands-on projects benefiting people, animals, and the environment we all share, Roots and Shoots inspires its members to be a force for positive change in the world. We are proud to provide a home at AUP to France’s longest continuously running chapter. We are proud to establish with you today an enduring relationship with our university.

You, Jane Goodall, have received—in recognition of your own “world work”—every conceivable honor and award, including the Ghandi-King Award for Non-Violence, the French Legion d’Honneur, and Japan’s prestigious Kyoto Prize. You have been appointed twice UN Messenger of Peace by UN Secretary Generals Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon. Inspiring to people of all ages, faiths, ethnicities, and cultures, you have demonstrated time and time again that scientific imperatives require activism, that individuals can make a difference, as you first did at Gombe Stream, and that concerted political, cultural, educational, and artistic efforts can profoundly alter the state of our world. In your own

words, “change happens by listening and then starting a dialogue with the people who are doing something you don’t believe is right.”

You, Rory Stewart, diplomat, author, adventurer, walking enthusiast, NGO founder, governor of an Iraqi province, and now Member of Parliament for Penrith and the Border are by birth as well as inclination a citizen of the world. After Eton, and Oxford and a short engagement in the British Army as an officer in the Black Watch, you joined the British Foreign Service and held positions in Indonesia, Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan. At a relatively young age, you have already received honorary degrees, been appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire, and director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. That, too, without holding a doctorate. You have been named by Esquire as one of the 75 most influential people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Your diplomatic and humanitarian career has occasioned a series of remarkable postings followed by equally remarkable books. In 2002, you walked alone from Turkey to Bangladesh across Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Nepal. This journey is chronicled in *The Places in Between* for which you subsequently received the Ondaatje Award from the Royal Society of Literature, and the Prix Littéraire RFI Témoin du Monde. The following year you were appointed coalition Deputy Governor of two provinces in the Marsh Arab region of Southern Iraq. Your efforts to lead development projects there and to establish a functional government are described in your second book, *The Prince of the Marshes*. From 2006-2008, you lived in Kaboul where you founded and led Turquoise Mountain, an NGO devoted to the development of traditional Afghan crafts. You have also raised substantial funds to rehabilitate the commercial heart of Kaboul and to found a primary school and a clinic. The choices you have made in your humanitarian career inspire us all: to walk amongst others and to lead from within.