

From [Dan's Blog](#) | Original Article

Getting off the bus at Berkeley, my stop is right next to the law building.

I know that is where John Yoo, the torture lawyer, is a professor.

There are over a thousand students and faculty in the law school, who go there all the time.

And everybody knows what John Yoo has done, and that he is in the school there.

So what else would you do but go in?

Approaching the Berkeley law school, on a massive monumental inscription, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr intones:

When I think thus of the law, I see a princess mightier than she who wrought at Bayeux, eternally weaving into her web dim figures of the ever-lengthening past --- figures too dim to be noticed by the idle, too symbolic to be interpreted except by her pupils, but to the discerning eye disclosing every painful step and every world-shaking contest by which mankind has worked and fought its way from savage isolation to organic social life.

Let us put aside for a moment any potential differences with such a hagiographic description of the State and its judicial apparatus.

Let us merely ask: could there be any more beautiful description of precisely that which Yoo's work has systematically destroyed?

Entering Boalt Hall, the building housing the school of law, one sees students working hard, lectures in progress, the usual goings-on of an academic paradise.

On bulletin boards are plastered advertisements and posters: for law journals, talks, panels, conferences, classes, and more.

Many of these posters advertise a talk on the obscure of the Ninth Amendment to the US Constitution: a debate on "Unenumerated rights".

Hardly the best-known amendment, and hardly the sexiest topic.

But the moderator of this debate is none other than John Yoo.

So what else could you do but make a note of it?

The strategy seems clear: a gradual normalisation of academic presence, testing the waters with esoteric scholasticism.

There is no advertisement of the event online: google searches turn up nothing. Clearly attempting to fly under the radar.

From lower to higher profile events, evidently hoping that, step by gradual step, nobody will remember the dictum from Nuremberg:

The prostitution of a judicial system for the accomplishment of criminal ends involves an element of evil to the State which is not found in frank atrocities which do not sully judicial

robes.

Even the dedicated activists of Fire John Yoo have nothing of it at their website.

So what else could you do but notify firejohnyoo.org?

A protest is held, and press conference given, below the mighty words of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.

Nonviolently, peacefully, even politely, we march into the school.

Some in jumpsuits, some carrying pictures, some wearing ribbons, the procession enters the library.

Have you ever seen police blocking off access in a public library?

The room is full, explain the officers, looking a little guilty: someone exits the room even as they say it.

Full minus one equals full --- the officers of the Law now deny arithmetic and the conservation of matter.

There is no sense to it, but Yoo's intentional nonsense wrought far worse.

But with the Law's tapestry so savagely riven, and the architect inside, what could one expect?

But I looked beyond the Law's tapestry, here represented by automatons under arms, brute force blocking off publicly owned bookshelves.

And I looked at the students all around studying: we had speeches but we kept it quite quiet in the library.

Almost every one refused to make eye contact. Elsewhere I have seen the secret smile, the secret wink, the secret fist, the secret delight in violation of obedient social norms. Not here.

Should we pity the children --- but they are not children! Should we educate them --- but they are highly intelligent!

Should we teach them the law in law school? Is it too confusing to differentiate academic debate from criminal behaviour?

There were some students with us, but the silence spoke to me. It whispered of late Weimar Germany.

Do they have too much work? Stress? Debt? Is protest inherently crazy? I felt like a homeless outcast beggar pleading for change.

But I will plead for change, as long as it is necessary.

Why did it take a peripatetic mathematician, on a research visit, on wanderings preoccupied with symplectic geometry, to instigate this?