

I would like to give a brief overview of my experiences with the University of Chicago since 1963 which give evidence that it is a special place.

As a senior at a small Midwestern college in fall 1963, I was invited as part of a group to visit the Department of Philosophy as a prospective graduate student. The first day I arrived, I witnessed a student-led demonstration against the resumption of football. Having played and watched football in college, I was shocked and charmed at the same time. Here people think differently. On Friday I was in the Center for Continuing Education for lunch when a wave swept the room, with people getting up and rushing to check the lobby TV. The President had been assassinated. Everyone's life changed, and I applied to come here and nowhere else. I was admitted in 1964 with no scholarship. I was one of 64 graduate students in philosophy. That too seems unusual today.

But it was the sixties and the times were changing. I had sat in at Woolworth's in college and helped organize Students for a Democratic Society here, which in 1965 held one of the first anti-Vietnam demonstrations in Washington. I was involved in three sit-ins at the Administration Building lasting for a total of 21 days. In retrospect, the University acted with restraint, never calling in the police, and each time we voted ourselves out of the building. Nonetheless, I was suspended and eventually expelled in 1969. When I went to ask Dean Charles O'Connell exactly what it meant to be expelled, he said that it was a good question and showed that a University of Chicago education had not been wasted on me. The issue had to be resolved by a rare meeting of the Faculty Senate. The decision was that to be expelled meant an eleven-quarter suspension before reapplying, with the University retaining the right to deny readmission. All this time, the Philosophy Department and Alan Gewirth as my advisor, supported my readmission, which occurred in 1974. This also was not typical.

I continued my studies, but along the way had a career and a family, and remained in Advanced Residence working with Jon Elster and Ian Mueller. In 2004, Josef Stern wrote to encourage me to finish up or possibly face restrictions. A few years later, when I was over 65, Martha Nussbaum agreed to supervise my dissertation on the foundations of human rights, which was accepted in 2013. This is just one example of her generosity toward students with special needs and unusual situations. I continue to attend her Law and Philosophy workshop, and am writing a book expanding on my dissertation. Many of the authors I discuss, whether religious or secular, libertarian or socialist, or some combination thereof, studied or taught here. This intellectual diversity is indeed distinctive.

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