

*Words of Gratitude*  
*Unveiling Ceremony – Portrait of Chief Joseph*  
*University of Oregon School of Law*

As any artist or writer finishes a creative work, there is an intangible moment that he sends it on its way into a greater world. A bit of his heart goes with it. That work will have its own destiny, and touch the hearts of many, and even influence the course of untold events without the artist ever knowing about it. This ceremony reflects that moment.

I would like to express just one of the ways this painting may fill its unique destiny while hanging in the law library for two years.

In legal education, it is often noticed that students enter the halls of law school with the highest ideals and strongest aspirations of using a law degree to pursue worthy and principled ends – like fighting discrimination, or protecting the environment, or serving children or the impoverished.

But what we also notice is that after a period of legal study, perhaps in their second year or so, the fire in their hearts encounters some dampening force. It's as if they see how the law has not fulfilled the highest ideals of this country, and they get resigned to that reality. This seems to be a consequence of legal education in general.

The highest personal challenge of a professor is to feed those ideals in spite of the law's failures. Success in doing that is, to many of us, the most rewarding aspect of teaching.

I've read every one of Joseph's recorded speeches many, many times. His words are never far from my desk. Over the course of my career, beginning in my childhood education, I would go back to his words to find my true bearings – every time. To me, they express wisdom, heart, leadership, courage and a pure sense of justice better than any words I have ever known.

It is often said that a picture is worth a thousand words. This remarkable portrait puts a face on the history of the epoch struggle endured by Chief Joseph and the Wallowa Band of Nez Perce Indians – a resistance to injustice that continues to this day. Students will pass by this picture countless times on their way into the library. For many, Chief Joseph's gaze will be impressed in their minds as they open their law books. That image will remind students in a personal way of the principles our legal system stands for, and the abhorrence of failing to meet them. It will help keep alive their aspirations to use their legal degree in furtherance of a better world for generations to come.

That is something we cannot teach from the textbooks. On behalf of the law faculty, we are deeply grateful to Jim Gronsand for his two-year loan of this portrait.

*Mary Christina Wood*  
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