

In Brief



Jeffery Robinson

An Unstoppable Force

Jeffery Robinson faces down racism in all its forms.

BC Law's Rappaport Center for Law and Public Policy increased its powerhouse reputation this past semester as a generator of estimable visitors, panelists, and events that elevate the conversation around society's critical challenges. Jeffery Robinson was front and center during his four-month stay as the Jerome Lyle Rappaport Distinguished Visiting Professor.

He kicked things off with his documentary *Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America*, a reckoning with anti-Black racism and white supremacy in America. The founder and CEO of The Who We Are Project, a non-profit working to expose the history of racism in the US, participated in a series of panels and talks and taught the seminar "Orwell's Nightmare: United States Law and the Support of Anti-Black Racism."

Robinson, who previously served as deputy legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union and director of its Trone Center for Justice and Equality, took on a variety of topics.

During a speech about Confederate monuments, in particular one in Georgia sacred to the Ku Klux Klan, Robinson noted: "We do not honor everyone who went to a war and killed somebody, we honor people who went to war

for what they are fighting for. But what were the Confederates fighting for? It's pretty clear and plain if you listen to what they had to say."

He led a panel that examined how peremptory challenges during jury selection, if exercised for the wrong purpose, can enable racial discrimination, and in November shared the stage with other experts on the subject of reparations.

In other news, the Rappaport Center sponsored a four-member panel moderated by Marlborough City Solicitor Jason Grossfield on what it takes to be a municipal lawyer, and hosted a conference on gun control laws featuring a keynote address by US Senator Chris Murphy. The most needed innovation, he said, must come in how lawmakers build coalitions in Congress, in how they can find compromise to "find sixty votes."

PIE Powers Forward

Innovation program impacts entrepreneurial space.

Boston College Law School's Program on Innovation and Entrepreneurship (PIE) turns six in 2023, and founding faculty director Professor David Olson is taking the moment to reflect on the academic strengths PIE has achieved. Its focus on matters pertaining to intellectual property, entrepreneurship, business law, and clinical and experiential learning has connected students and faculty with innovation and entrepreneurship communities in Boston and beyond.

"We fulfill an important mission of service to the wider scholarly and policy community," Olson says, referring to PIE's many events and collaborations, among them PatCon, the world's largest conference for patent scholars, and the International IP Summit hosted with Ropes & Gray.

Thanks to its sponsors, PIE also hosts programming on other legal topics, including artificial intelligence, chemistry and the law, cybersecurity, and opportunities for women in innovation and entrepreneurship. "With strategic partnerships, we can bring together the expertise and resources to address important issues in patents, IP, and the broader areas affecting innovation and entrepreneurship," Olson says.

As PIE has grown, its impact has expanded beyond BC Law. According to Olson, PIE supports the translation of academic work into legal and policy conversations: "In addition to regularly speaking with the press on legal issues, I have testified before separate committees in the US House and Senate on patent reform, drug pricing, and antitrust enforcement. Many of my colleagues have done likewise."

Olson says that PIE continually works with its partners to identify important areas of programming for students. This past year, PIE co-sponsored networking events and panel discussions with BC Law student organizations to promote different areas of legal practice. Olson credits a large part of PIE's success to its collaborations, which make these opportunities possible for students, faculty, and members of the IP community. —AMANDA CROWLEY