**NYU Washington Ribbon-cutting**

Not too long ago I was sitting at a Starbucks with an NYU administrator, watching the beautiful people stroll by…nothing unusual about that… Except I was in Shanghai, and the administrator with Mingzheng Shi, then the Director of NYU Shanghai. And as the young swells of the New China sat all around us drinking expensive coffee drinks, talked about how a school rooted by history in one place, becomes a global institution. When I was a reporter and an editor for the Washington Square News, we were writing stories about calamitous finances, about closing departments, reducing course offerings, about the aftermath of the sale of the Heights
campus, about daunting needs for new space, and the long-term wisdom of doubling-down on a city in deep decline...a place of crumbling infrastructure, rising crime, and like NYU, perilous finances. In some ways it’s hard to believe we’re talking about the same place. So, how does a university in lower Manhattan become a global institution? I realize I am surrounded by classicists, but the best answer might come from George Danton, a leader of the French Revolution: "il nous faut de l'audace, et encore de l'audace, et toujours de l'audace"—"We need audacity, and yet more audacity, and always audacity!" NYU has always offered New York and being able to dig in up your elbows in the life of the
greatest city in the world. We are always told that in the new digital world place means less and less…
that people can talk to each other from any two places on planet earth, and that in that new world, place doesn’t mean so much any more. But to be a world institution, NYU needs to be here. In the post-Cold War world, Washington hasn’t mattered less, but instead in many ways has mattered more. It is home to one of the world’s largest diplomatic corps, of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the congress, the presidency, the defense establishment, 7 of the 10 richest counties in the United States, and one of the largest concentrations
of college-educated people on planet earth. This is a great world center for journalism, finance, government, and.... Less talked about, historic preservation, the arts...performing and visual... and research institutions doing some of the best research in the country, and the world, about development, HIV/AIDS, feeding the world’s hungry, health policy, and urban affairs. You can still get a pretty good education and rarely roam south of Houston or north of 14th Street: but you can get a better one by throwing open your arms, and throwing open the windows and doors to your head, and coming to NYU as a way of learning from the best of the world. In Abu Dhabi, in Shanghai, in
Florence, Buenos Aires, Accra…and right here at Constance Milstein and Family Global Academic Center. NYU has a little advantage coming to this new marketplace. It doesn’t have to creep into town and gradually earn its spurs. To start life in Washington already having international convening power, to arrive in town with the heft and reach and ambition that has marked the modern life of this University…well, it makes life a lot easier for the new kid in town.

People used to poke fun at Washington…as a one-horse town that doubled as the home of one of the world’s two superpowers…today’s Washington couldn’t be more different from that old stereotype.
NYU can make a tremendous contribution here, and Washington has plenty to give our school in return. Thank you for including me in the opening of this place. I learned how to be a broadcaster right on Washington Square, in the studios of WNYU in the old Loeb Student Center… I wrote my first published journalism for a big community of readers at the Washington Square News… I owe NYU a lot, and I’m flattered that I was invited to be part of this exciting beginning, to new lines of inquiry made possible by being here, deepening the work already done by NYU, and making possible for our students to have experiences, and learn things hard to learn anywhere else. Thanks