In “Choruses from ‘The Rock’…,” T.S. Eliot famously wrote, “Where is the Life we have lost in living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?” This lament at the progressive decline of man’s ability to interact with his world has tremendous resonance in this age of the twenty-four hour news cycle, the sound bite, spin control and PowerPoint presentations; more often than not, we resort to these shortcuts that allow us to elude the responsibility to think, if only because our minds are constantly bombarded with distractions and noise that make clear thinking a difficult but not impossible task. While the democratization of ideas is a fantastic force for freedom and a mechanism for improving the lives of all, it has a corrosive effect on thought, reducing ideas to mere information quickly replaced by new notions, which are quickly replaced by new notions and so on. In a society in which everyone has the right not only to hold an opinion but to air it in any medium whether print, television or internet, an individual must be diligent if he wants to stave off the ‘Gresham’s Law’ of ideas in his own life. He must treat ideas with the utmost respect, thinking through his own before sharing them with the world and careful screening the sources from which he gathers the ideas of others. He must be carefully so as to moderate the impact of emotion on the formation of his ideas. Lastly, he must be humble, recognizing that what is new is not inherently superior to what has come before. The stakes are nothing short of the survival of America as a democratic republic, for good citizens must have a healthy respect for ideas and not be slaves of passions and whims.

What is the precise nature of the threat? Aside from the sheer abundance of information, the pervasive belief that ideas are means to predetermined ends, ammunition in partisan guerrilla wars waged on cable television and the New York Times bestseller list, poses a substantial threat to free thinking among the citizenry. Symptomatic of this development is the over-reliance on political labels, which enable rivals to construct elaborate straw men attacking an individual based on the stereotypical views associated with his label. Honest people can agree on the facts of a situation and still disagree on the implications—political disagreement should not make two individuals implacable enemies. If it does, however, America is doomed to perpetual pitched battles for Congress, the courts and the White House, while like minded individuals flock to communities of their own kind, a development about which the superb David Brooks has written. A renewed respect for serious ideas would restore amicability to American society, as there would be a clear understanding that all respect reason and rational argumentation and thus live by John Maynard Keynes’s perceptive witticism: “When the facts change, I change my mind – what do you do, sir?”

Concord Bridge came into being so as to contribute to the spread of serious ideas and help Brandeis students develop an appropriate attitude that will make them good citizens and good learners. I would like to think we have had some success in the two years since we founded the magazine. Students who have never encountered conservative or libertarian thought have a student publication providing them with the opportunity to encounter ideas contrary to the
average college student’s opinions, and even if they disagree with every word printed, they confront our ideas and measure them against their preexisting thoughts. That it is all done with the utmost respect for civilized discourse serves to strengthen the seriousness of the ideas: thought-out ideas respectfully expressed demand attention.

Such was my aim as editor of *Concord Bridge*. No education is complete without a multitude of ideas which one can use to seek the truth, and I wanted *Concord Bridge* to be a piece of the Brandeis education, which, after all, includes far more than what occurs in the classroom. I encourage the Brandeis community to continue to be receptive to the ideas presented here, and I say to my successors, be true to your role as purveyors of ideas, always be respectful of the standards of civilized discourse, argue forcefully and rationally for your ideas and never give in to or stoop to the level of those who practice cheap demagoguery and the politics of passion. Remain above the fray—ideas are permanent, passions are fleeting. And never forget that ideas can change the world, for better or for worse.