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FROM THE EDITOR

This year marks the bicentennial celebration of the signing of the Constitution of the United States. It is fitting that this important occasion has attracted wide public attention, prompting numerous scholars, government officials, jurists, legal practitioners, and journalists to revisit the events of that historic summer in Philadelphia and examine the hotly contested issues that surrounded the birth of this great document and that still shape our lives today.

A notable example of this stirring debate is a symposium entitled "A Constitutional Bicentennial Summer," held this last July at the University of Maryland College Park. Four distinguished speakers and sixteen commentators, representing a diversity of backgrounds and views, explored several of the major themes that have been instrumental in the origin and growth of the American constitutional process. We are privileged to include their remarks in this issue.

One of the most controversial aspects of the Constitution is the question of its interpretation. Professor James Boyd White examines the doctrine of original intent in a paper delivered as the 1987 Sobeloff Lecture at the University of Maryland School of Law. Professor White's penetrating analysis, portraying the dangers of original intent construction by focusing on the Supreme Court's rationale in the Slave Cases, is both timely and compelling.

The problems confronting the framers of our Constitution were certainly not unique to the American experience. We should not forget that fundamental questions involving the rights of the individual are indeed universal and timeless. In illustration, this issue includes a lecture delivered by Sydney Kentridge, a highly respected South African barrister, addressing civil rights in South Africa. Mr. Kentridge offers a fascinating insight into the prospects for legal solutions to contemporary South African problems.

To bring the discussion full circle, Professor William Reynolds presents an example of the Maryland role in the birth of the Constitution with his essay on the contributions of noted Revolutionary era attorney Luther Martin.

In this historic year, the Maryland Law Review is proud to offer these perspectives on the United States Constitution. As the included student note demonstrates, constitutional issues continue to demand the attention of not only scholars, but judges and litigators as well. There is perhaps no more convincing proof that the Constitution remains a truly "living" document.