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### January 6, 2018: Greetings from San Diego

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Title: Greetings from San Diego

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1/6/2018—As the East freezes, the AALS is holding its annual meeting in San Diego. This is a coincidence. The organization does hold such meetings in winter weather cities as well. Is it me or is there a distinct lack of focus at this year's meeting? Actually, there is a focus, but it seems to be teaching methods. I am not coming to the aid of bad teaching, but I think of bad teaching as a lack of focus by the faculty member and a lack of insight into the material. More frequent assessments, team learning and so forth are matters that, at the graduate school level, should be the responsibility of the student, not the professor and not the institution. But that is easy for a faculty member at Duquesne to say, with its high bar pass rate. Other than that, the AALS has lost its concern with the future of American democracy. Last year, the threat was President Trump. Now, a sense of fatalism is creeping in. On the other hand, among African American's and other minority groups, there is a clear sense of positive momentum. The attendance at this year's meeting seems much more diverse than in past years. Given the emphasis on diversity, this positive trend was to have been expected. But what about America? Not on the agenda, it seems. The main theme is access to justice—read more money to lawyers. Not very controversial and irrelevant, given government funding cuts. The other theme is intellectual diversity, which is pretty funny. The AALS is so one-sided that last year, when they wanted balance on the panel to be discussing Trump, they found an anti-Trump conservative. Still no representation from Fox News on the future of journalism panel on Wednesday. The question we should be asking is, how do we recover from this moment in American public life? More and more, especially given good economic news, conservatives seem to be deciding that Trump is worth a deal with the devil. Very unfortunate decision.