

SEPTEMBER 2025 SPEAKER
ROB GOODMAN
“CANADA AFTER AMERICAN DEMOCRACY”

Rob began: “I’m here as a proud immigrant who in a few weeks will take the citizenship test to become Canadian..” An American by birth, Rob moved to Canada in 2018 after receiving a Ph. D in political science from Columbia University, New York City, prior to which he was a speechwriter for two long-serving, prominent Democratic Party members of Congress. He did postdoctoral research for a year at McGill University and since 2019 has been associate professor of politics and public administration at Toronto Metropolitan University. “I chose to make my life here in Canada as the best place to bring up my kids– they’ll have control over their bodies and a solid education.”

Rob’s specialty is populism, rhetoric, and the rhetoric of political thought. In his sombre talk he explained his use of “after” in his title was because Canada,” is a democracy with a neighbouring country that has gone from a democracy to authoritarian. It will continue to be after current president Donald Trump. Venezuela after Hugo Chávez and Argentina after Juan Perón show that authoritarianism can outlast the current single charismatic leader, so we can’t be complacent. It’s not simply a threat to Canada; it’s also a responsibility and opportunity for Canada to display its commitment to Canadian values of civic virtue.

“In 2022 I wrote a book *Not Here: Why American Democracy Is Eroding*. I wasn’t nearly as pessimistic as I am now. V Dem Institute [an organization that has developed a data set to measure democracy or its lack] predicts that by next year the U.S. will no longer score as a democracy.”

“Canadians need to be more than bystanders,” he said, citing how Canadians “embraced” the urging of American slavery abolition leader Frederick Douglass in a speech in Chatham, Ontario on August 3, 1854, for Canadians “to use their moral influence.”

He compared the current breakdown of constitutional government in the U.S. to King Charles II of England (reign: 1660-1685) dissolving the English Parliament when they wouldn’t bend to his orders, then ruling omnipotently.

He pointed out that while Canadians’ boycott of American products is heartfelt, “it’s a drop in the bucket. Half of Canada’s national public pension funds are invested in the U.S. and only 12 percent in Canada.. The travel boycott by Canadians of the U.S. exemplifies strategic use of economic power. Canadians should support research and higher education; education is as important as national defence and infrastructure. More funding is needed to encourage discontented American scientists and researchers to come to Canada rather than go elsewhere. It’s an investment, not a welfare payment. The Trump Administration is attacking independent scientific research through its plan to cut \$44 billion from funding cuts to such research.

“It’s good to be here in Canada where freedom matters.”

Susan Goldenberg