

Stanford Law School Graduation Address
May 10, 2009
Robert Gonzalez

When I graduated from high school 7 years ago, my Mom asked me why I wasn't the graduation speaker. I told her that to speak at graduation, you had to have the highest GPA in the class. Fortunately for me, here at Stanford Law, all you have to do is be the social chair.

I'd like to start by thanking Dean Kramer for the introduction, and for his years of commitment and service to the law school.

I would also like to thank all of the faculty, administration, and staff who have put this graduation ceremony together, and who have made our three years here possible, especially Cathy, Chidel, Faye, and Jillian.

I also want to thank my co-president, Mohith Julapalli. When we were planning events over the last couple of years, I used to say that I was the ideas man and he was the details guy... but, in reality, he was actually both, so thank you. You'll hear from him next, when he announces the student, staff, and faculty awards.

And for all the friends and family who have come from near and far to be here with us, we really appreciate you coming and hope you enjoy the celebration

Finally, thanks to all of the mothers in the audience. Thank you for sharing your holiday with us. We are lucky to be able to share this day with all of you.

It is especially fitting that today is Mother's Day, because I had planned on talking about family, and how family really lies at the core of Stanford Law School.

It is family that has gotten us this far, and it is a sense of family that has characterized my time here.

Now granted, we have kind of a strange family here at SLS. I remember arriving on campus for orientation, and meeting a whole cast of characters, people with amazing backgrounds and experiences, some people with skill and talent like I have never seen, and some people with...interesting personalities. Over the last three years, we spent countless hours in the library, and equally countless hours in bars and dance floors, or at one friendly gathering or another. And now today, after the hard work and sacrifice, after all of the good times, and even – especially – the hard times, we come together as a family, the brothers and sisters of the Class of 2009.

For me, family is about sacrificing for one another. My parents, Guillermo and Regina, uprooted their entire lives from Mexico so that my siblings and I could grow up in the United States. Somehow they had the foresight and determination to cross the border from Mexico into the United States each time one of my siblings was born, making sure that we would be

American citizens. Speaking little English, they sacrificed so much to start a new life in Arizona; they left their friends, their relatives, the country they had known their entire lives, for their family. Without their hard work, dedication, and sacrifice, none of what I have done would have been at all possible.

I want to thank my parents for being here, and also quickly thank my siblings. My brother Guillermo is a year older, so every grade I entered, I had the built in advantage that my teachers already loved a Gonzalez brother. Who doesn't!?

My sister Mariana is a Senior here at Stanford, and has kept me company throughout the last three years here.

And the littlest, Gaby, has all of our best qualities and hopefully none of the bad ones. Thank you guys for everything.

Looking out at all of the smiling faces, I know that each of us graduating today owes a similar debt to our families, to those who sacrificed for us. Like the Class of 2009, everyone's story is unique, every family takes a different shape, but the sacrifice and support, through good times and bad, are a constant.

Some of our classmates have even gone through law school supporting a family of their very own. I know I won't be able to name them all, but: Karrigan Bork, Russ and Sandy Fusco, Dan Knauss, Aaron Konapasky, Rachel Lee, Alan Mouritsen, and Thomas Haymore. They have managed to juggle Supreme Court advocacy, with potty training; mergers and acquisitions, with daycare centers and blankies.

I could barely get *myself* through law school in one piece; that they did it all while caring for a family is truly amazing and inspiring, and they deserve a hand.

So we know that family is defined by sacrifice and support, but what else defines our family here at SLS? For me, what characterizes this family is the stories we tell to one another.

From the day we arrived here on campus, we have been telling each other our stories, either about where we are from, where we are going, what exams we are worried about, what party we are going to that night, or who was canoodling with who last weekend, it's all about stories. Some more important than others, but that collective narrative, told by various voices, is what makes up our familial experience here.

I have loved nothing more over the last three years than sitting around with all of you and hearing your stories.

It is the sharing of these experiences that brings a family together, and that has brought us together here as the Class of 2009.

I'd like to end with one last little story about my family.

You can't tell by looking at us now, but my siblings and I used to fight quite a bit. During some of the heated name-calling sessions, especially on those long road trips in the family van, my dad would try to quiet us with a simple quote: "One for all, and all for one."

Yes, it's cheesy; and yes, it's from the Three Musketeers. But for some reason, I can't get it out of my head today.

It really does represent what family means to me, and what this Stanford family has meant: that one would stand up for the rest, and that the rest would always wait for the last one.

The Class of 2009 is the last class of an era. A lot of things are changing around here after we leave: a new calendar, new dorms, a new grading system. But the family we have forged here won't change. I look forward to continuing this story with all of you.

Thank you and Congratulations!