



“Suppose you could travel back in time and have five minutes with your younger self at graduation. What would you say?” asked Joseph Bankman, the Ralph M. Parsons Professor of Law and Business, during Stanford Law School’s graduation on May 4, 2008. • Bankman, who was honored with the 2008 John Bingham Hurlbut Award for Excellence in Teaching by the graduating class, was

selected to deliver the keynote address. He said that to prepare for the speech he e-mailed a survey to his students from the Class of 1988—the year he started teaching at the law school. In addition to inquiring about their lives and careers, he asked what they would tell the Class of 2008.

Some gave practical advice of varying relevance, from “Consider the commute: Is it really worth an extra two hours a day to take that job?” to “If you see a shrink, the only stuff that really works is cognitive behavioral therapy.” But the most common admonition Bankman received was “to follow your own path.”

“Work with people and issues, and in places, that you enjoy. Life is too short for compromise,” wrote one survey respondent.

“Listen to that little voice inside you,” wrote another.

“It’s important advice but it’s not exactly as concrete as you might want, is it?” mused Bankman. “I mean, it would have been better if they had told you the secret [is] labor law is where it’s at. Or that everything goes great in Seattle.”

Bankman continued more seriously: “They left you with the responsibility of listening for and following that inner voice.”

SLS faculty members  
Thomas C. Grey (BA ‘63),  
Joseph Bankman,  
Deborah L. Rhode, and  
Barbara Babcock



# G R A D U A T I O N

## Class of 2008 Urged to Chart Own Paths

Chinwuba Onyedikachi “Onye” Ikwuakor ’08, co-president of the graduating class who was chosen to speak by vote of his peers, praised his “brilliant, fascinating and breathtaking” classmates and spoke of a future that they would shape together.

“We’ll all take the same JD,” he said. “But with different pasts and different futures we will make that JD into a thousand different things, a thousand different admission tickets to a thousand different careers.”

He said, “The degree will not define us. We will define this degree.”

After announcing that the Class of 2008 had raised more than \$100,000 for the class gift, Ikwuakor turned the ceremony over to his co-president, Brooke E. Nussbaum ’08. Nussbaum presented Evelia Ramirez, a member of the law school’s custodial staff, with her second Staff Appreciation Award and Bankman with the Hurlbut Award.

After Bankman’s speech, Larry Kramer, the Richard E. Lang Professor of Law and Dean, proffered advice in the context of several classic law cases. One case Kramer cited was *Murphy v. Steeplechase Amusement Co.*, in which Judge Cardozo famously told the plaintiff, “The timorous may remain at home.”

“Don’t you be timorous,” said Kramer. “We’re facing terrible challenges today. But if history teaches anything, it is that great challenges bring great opportunities. And, indeed, you leave here with opportunities to make a difference that are indeed rare.”



Graduates of the Class of 2008 gather outside Memorial Auditorium.