

SLS Graduation 5-18-03
KS welcome

Graduates of the class of 2003, mothers, fathers, spouses, partners, stepmothers, stepfathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, sons and daughters, and all other family members and friends of graduates, welcome to our Law School graduation ceremony.

This weekend is an occasion for great joy and celebration. We were delighted when you chose so wisely to come here three years ago -- who could resist a world-class law school in paradise? You are distinguished today by what distinguished you then: a unique combination of intellectual curiosity and passion, bonhomie and camaraderie, and a remarkable diversity of backgrounds, talents and ambitions.

In the time you have been here, my colleagues and I have sought to give you legal education that had rigor without rancor, excellence without enmity, challenge without churlish competition. We have tried to teach you in ways that are demanding but unpretentious, to be a law school that has warm weather, but no hot air. We have tried to inspire you to welcome the challenges of law, to revel in its difficulty, to love its complexity and its nuance and depth. We have loved having you here. Thank you for spending these years with us.

Today is the turning point when you will cease studying law and start practicing it, stop simulating problems and start solving them, and stop paying for the law and having the law pay you. You didn't get here by yourselves. Please turn around and join me in thanking the people who have supported and borne with you all these years of your education—your parents, your families, and your friends.

It's now my pleasure to introduce the class presidents to present this year's staff appreciation and teaching excellence awards, and let me thank them and their fellow class officers for their leadership of this class, and extend warmest thanks to all of you who contributed to reach your terrific goal of 75% participation in the Class of 2003 gift.

KS charge to class

Let's begin by looking back. As you leave Stanford Law School today, we hope we have given you a running start on the jobs in law firms, judicial chambers, government offices, impact advocacy organizations, businesses and investment banks you're going to. We hope you have learned as much from each other as you have from us. We hope we have prepared you well for a world that has changed since your arrival. For

those of you who arrived here in 2000, you were innocent of the knowledge that markets were things that could go down. You grew up under a series of administrations, Republican and later Democrat alike, that declared that the era of "big government" is over. And you belong to a generation that, unlike the great generation that lived through the bombing of Pearl Harbor, as did many of your grandparents here today, didn't know that Americans could become vulnerable to attack on our own soil.

Now, in a world sobered by the burst of the dot.com bubble, and much more tragically so by the events of September 11 and continuing threats to peace, you graduate as law students with a renewed sense of purpose. You know better than those who graduated before you how important the balance between public and private values is. You know that government is full not just of red tape but blue- white- and green-clad heroes whose sense of public duty saves lives even as it costs them theirs. You know that markets need regulators and accountants need standards lest irrational exuberance be revealed as resting on foundations fit only for the paper shredder. You know that the privacy we enjoy in a newly digitized world interacts with concerns about national security. And you know, better than many law school graduates before you, how greatly the

world needs lawyers—that group of people whose job is to anticipate, prevent and manage conflict.

Indeed, however much lawyers are needed in peaceful times to increase prosperity and the quality of life, we are even more necessary in times of stress and conflict, when divisions deepen, and fears tempt. It is lawyers who construct the institutional means of escape from dark times, whether through the contracts that repair confidence in markets or the constitutions that enable regime change. It is lawyers who ensure that we do not commit the sins of discrimination of times past.

Now let's turn the telescope round and look forward. Right now it's hard to imagine yourself some years from now, focused as you are upon the immediate issues of packing, moving, studying for the bar, leaving paradise, and starting new jobs, whether you are JD's, JSMs, JSDs or our first ever crop of newly minted LL.Ms.

But 25 years from now you'll be back, I hope, for your 25th reunion. What will you have done in the meantime? You have multiplicity of backgrounds, talents and ambitions, and lying before you is a diversity of marvelous opportunities a degree from SLS opens up. I know of no better source of inspiration than a canvass of our own remarkable alumni:

You might be serving in elective office, like our alumni who are United States Senators, or high appointive office, like our alumni who have served as Secretary of State or the President's deputy chief of staff. You might move between private practice and state and federal government posts as so many of our graduates have.

You might be teaching law like our alumni Professors Grundfest, Barton, Thompson and Weisberg.

You might be the chair a multinational law firm, as many of our prominent alumni are, or if not a whole firm, you might be chairing a department of a firm.

If not between private law practice and government, you might have moved between private law practice and business, working in venture capital or an investment bank as an increasing number of Stanford alumni have. (Actually, in this market, you might want to keep that law option open. Be sure to take the bar.)

You might be serving on the bench as are the over 200 alumni judges whose photos we hang proudly on the first floor wall of our classroom building in tribute to their public service, from Chief Justice Rehnquist and Justice O'Connor, who just celebrated their 50th SLS

reunion, to our graduates who grace California's and Arizona's supreme courts.

You might be starting your own company or magazine, as our alumni and alumnae have.

You might be heading an impact advocacy practice, like our graduate Anthony Romero, the prominent director of the ACLU, who next year will be the inaugural award winner of our new Stanford Public Interest Lawyer of the Year, who exemplifies the point I made earlier about lawyers who help to modulate the popular passions of difficult times.

You might have given your talents directly to serving the poorest of the poor, working in direct representation of clients through legal aid organizations.

Or, better still, you might create your own unique career path, and go where no Stanford Law graduate has ever gone before.

Whatever you do, we hope we have prepared you to do it with intelligence, wisdom, judgment and panache, with fearlessness and generosity, with grace, integrity, civility and tact. We hope we have given you a set of tools, intellectual, rhetorical and practical, to solve problems that urgently need, now more than ever, superb lawyers' sense of balance

between private gain and public values. We hope that you will continue to inspire in those of us who had the pleasure of teaching you here the pride in you as lawyers we have felt in you as students. We hope you will stay in touch with the school as faithful alumni and help to support and guide and inspire the students who come after you, and to give back to them generously through gifts to the School, as have the alumni before you who have paid for 2/3 the cost of your education. We hope you will do well, and even more, we hope you will do good. And we hope that whatever you do, you'll look back from that 25th reunion with a feeling of a life well spent. Congratulations, and warmest wishes.