

## **Advanced Degree Students Speech**

**Stanford Law School Commencement, June 13, 2015**

**Pablo Acevedo Alvarez, LLM 2015**

Dean Magill and faculty, friends and family, graduating JDs, and Advanced Degree fellows, including JSDs, LLMs and SPILS, welcome and good morning!

I have the honor to deliver this speech on behalf of my fellow classmates, and this is not an easy task. Not only you are one of the most challenging audiences I have ever faced, but also because you know how hard it is for me to remain solemn, with my accent and personality. I hope to make you laugh or evoke your deepest emotions when I actually meant to do so.

This speech is about gratitude; gratitude to our great faculty, to my fellow classmates, to our families and friends, and to the entire Stanford Law School community.

Gratitude, in the first place, to the Law School, because this year I was given the chance to learn from the world's finest faculty and lecturers, with the support of our teaching fellows. We were able to keep up to the trends in our different areas of practice, to challenge our prior conceptions, and to pay tribute with a great deal of hard work up until last week, by the time most of other law schools in the country had already graduated. Stanford constantly reminded us that you have to work hard in order to succeed in life, and I'm thankful for that. I am also thankful for the chance to be classmates of some of this country's brightest, our JD friends that graduate today with us: congratulations my friends.

But above all I am thankful because I was given the chance to stand as a peer among 70 of the world's finest minds: my LLM and SPILS fellows.

Our graduating class comes from 27 different countries, with different legal backgrounds, different areas of practice, knowledge and accents. 70 young attorneys, divided into 35 men and 35 women.

During this year we had our own small version of the world, with classmates coming from international organisms like the World Bank, or serving as clerks in International Courts, or as associates from leading firms working in the world's most commented cases. And even though some of us had sworn not to study again after the struggle of obtaining our law degree back home, we were all here in September. To you my classmates, with your leadership, I owe a great deal of the knowledge I take back home, and I am thankful for that.

Stanford law also gave us the opportunity to connect outside of the classrooms and learn from our cultures. Whether by comparing everything using the phrase “in my country”, or with discussions regarding quality of food and drinks, like whether American Light beer would qualify as beer in other countries, or what really constitutes a barbeque, an issue very important to me. We learned about our languages and the best example was during our birthdays this year, when we received greetings in every language represented in the class; or learning how to curse in several languages, a skill we may use in our practice, who knows...

We created memories to treasure for the rest of our lives. We saw love flourishing within the class; we celebrated the birth of 3 babies, and soon we will be celebrating the birth of a couple more.

All of this could not have been possible but for our supporting families, friends and significant others. Our achievements today belong to them too, and I want to represent all that love and thankfulness by sending a big kiss to my wife. Rocío, I love you; you are the main inspiration and support of my achievements.

We spent an entire year asking ourselves what could we “take” from Stanford in terms of knowledge, and we surely did take a lot.

But Stanford gave us much more than we expected. Stanford taught us about awareness, about diversity. Stanford taught us that there are still many things to do in terms of equality, even here in the US, where we could see that discrimination and injustice are still living challenges. I invite you my fellow classmates to take this critical thinking back home and spread it. We were privileged to be here, and after graduation we have the unique opportunity to give back to the world. Remember that today we become ambassadors of Stanford Law School with our actions, and many eyes will be looking at us.

We have been living a dream for the past year, an experience out of this world. But now we must prepare to re-enter earth. We have approached the end of our year, and time has come for goodbyes. Things will not likely be the same after today. But I am sure that sooner than later we will see each other again. Please keep in touch with Chris, in charge of our class gossip, and don't you dear leave the WhatsApp group!!

Don't be sad guys; remember that after this year the world has got a little bit smaller. That's why I hope to see you soon; please know that my home will be waiting for you; my grill will be waiting for you.

Congratulations class of 2015, and thank you very much!