

**STANFORD LAW SCHOOL
LAW SCHOOL 2005 GRADUATION CEREMONY
STUDENT REMARKS**

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While visiting India this winter I met an Andaman fisherman who told me a story before he told me his name. He said that a week earlier, a day after the westerners celebrated Christmas, he rose an hour before his alarm went off so that his nets would be the first to touch the water. After kissing his wife and two daughters goodbye, he raced the sunrise to get his bait ready for the morning catch. But the water receded, quickly swimming away from his feet. Before he could chase after it, it had returned with the force of a mountain, eclipsing the horizon and knocking him unconscious. He awoke several hours later forty feet up a tree. An ocean below him, he was accompanied only by a bewildered python who was too startled to strike. Below him were sharks swimming on the streets, surveying the detritus. He licked his wounds for hydration and kept a careful eye on his companion. After three days without food or sleep, he could see that the python's stomach was reminding the rest of its body that it was a snake, so the Andaman fisherman decided to descend. He waded through bodies and debris until he finally reached his village.

On the first day of orientation, Dean Sullivan encouraged the Class of 2005 to do well and do good. The story of the Andaman fisherman reminds me of many qualities that can prove useful to this end. Get an early start on the things you hope to accomplish. Always remember that, as Toni Morrison said, no matter how intimate you become with a snake, it is still a snake. Learn to lick your wounds to become a stronger person. Know that sometimes, you have to swim with the sharks in order to wade with your friends. Always kiss your family goodbye.

In the three years since Dean Sullivan's recommendation, I have witnessed the Class of 2005 demonstrate these qualities with exemplary aptitude, and prove an astonishing ability to do well and do good. You have written briefs for the Supreme Court and qualified for the mock trial national championship. You have scored a 9.6 on hot-or-not.com and successfully competed in San Franciscan dance offs. You have learned to laugh at yourselves and developed a healthy sense of the ridiculous. You have learned to lick your wounds, and the wounds of others when they are too tired or weak to do so themselves. You have discovered that life does not cease to be funny when people cry any more than it ceases to be serious when people laugh.

You have traveled to Africa to secure the implementation of basic health rights and traveled to East Palo Alto to ensure that indigent residents receive legal representation. You have sacrificed evenings to teach janitors how to speak English and sacrificed weekends to mentor vulnerable youth. You have raised children and buried parents. You have faced adversity and success with equal measurement. Over the past three years you

have swum with sharks, stared down snakes, and loved with the heart of a simple fisherman who has no other measure to define his existence. You have spent three years investing in a degree that will pay dividends for the rest of your lives, and for the lives of many others if you follow Dean Sullivan's advice.

When you walk on stage in a few moments, you will not just be receiving a piece of paper that will hang framed on your office wall. You will be receiving your membership in a sacred profession. You will join a lineage that includes Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Abraham Lincoln, and Shirin Ebadi. The architects of justice and the templars of humanity; you will be entrusted with an awesome duty to defend the boundaries of civilized society and lay another brick in the rule of law's fragile foundation.

Senator William J. Fulbright once complained that "the law is by its very nature a buttress of the status quo." But it has been used by men and women of great vision to disrupt an unjust status quo, and to prevent a just, yet unpopular, status quo from being adulterated. These great men and women have used the law so that many of us can be here today to join what was once a very exclusive fraternity. This piece of paper will arm you with a very powerful arrow in your quiver. One that will enable you to do well and do good.

But how well you do is not always measured by the size of your bank account. And the amount of good you do is not always measured by the number of lives you save. After spending three years in the company of your intellect and the warmth of your spirit, I have no doubt that you all have the minds to do well and the hearts to do good. But in case you ever need some perspective, the Andaman fisherman whose name I still don't know claims to have become the wealthiest man on his island when he returned to find the loving arms of his wife and two daughters. Let us celebrate this great day in the fellowship of our family and friends. Congratulations to the Class of 2005 and to our loving friends and family.