

SLS Graduation 2017  
José L. Martinez J.D. '17  
June 17, 2017

Here's my attempt at distilling the past three years into a pithy, commencement speech-type adage:

Community springs forth.

Now I know I had six months to come up with something, and maybe that's not impressive on its face. But I do think the notion of community springing forth does our time here justice: the kinship we've created—with each other, with our clients, with our mentors—has been the most important part of our Stanford Law School experience.

There was the end of our first finals season, when we went through the 2L and 3L tunnel, letting that ecstatic feeling wash over us. It was *over*. We'd *done* it. There were the clinic wins with disbelieving, jubilant clients. There were the BLSA Galas and the SPILF Auctions and the Cincos and the law proms. There were the phone calls that you'd gotten the job, the clerkship, the externship. There were the Facebook threads during class—ones that made it hard to contain your laughter during LRW—the lazy afternoons in Crocker, the gatherings in Munger.

From joy, community sprang forth.

Then there was the sheer difficulty that comes with law school—stress, anxiety, breakdowns. There was the grappling with the fact that, as former top students in a class full of former top students, not every one of us could be a top student. There were conversations with clients where we told them bad news that would change their life—but we still got the privilege of walking back to our apartments, our education, our families. There were the rejections from any number of amazing opportunities. There was the life stuff that's in no way unique to law school—death, relationship problems, fear of not being *enough*—which all felt 10 times harder because we were trying to get through law school at the same time.

From pain, community sprang forth.

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And then there were the reminders that, if we're going to be forces for justice, it's going to be a ride. We became painfully aware that we are a divided nation and world—one that constantly threatens to revert to a more shameful, less inclusive version of itself. As we marched toward this day—*still*—there were people wrongfully evicted, convicted, terminated, deported. Still, there were people unable to chase *their* dreams—forced to eke out a living and relegate their passion to another life. Still, the notion of black lives mattering is controversial. Still, communities of color, of women, of LGBT individuals, of Muslims, of immigrants live every day fighting harder for their rights, dignity, and humanity.

But from the unrelenting hope that fuels the fight for social justice—from the tireless effort to put our hands on the arc of the universe and bend it a little more toward what is right and good—community springs forth.

I think right now, we're all thinking about the vignettes of joy and pain and growth and failure that, taken together, define our Stanford Law School experience. These are the things that we *reveled in* and *powered through* to be here today, receiving our J.D. from the best law school in the world.

And here again, as we gather for the last time as third-year law students, our community springs forth in one of its *grandest* forms:

From our classmates, with us in the trenches since 9:45 a.m. on September 2, 2014—or since they joined us 2L year;

From our partners, fiancées, and spouses, who held us up in our low points and celebrated us always;

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From the families from which we come, on whose shoulders we stand and who send us forth to do greater things than even them—who watched as we carried on the family tradition of becoming a lawyer, or as we became the first in our family to do so, or something in between;

From the families we've created, who maybe keep us up at night, but also make life worth living;

From our friends, who in asking us to *please* stop talking about law school, gave us a much-needed dose of perspective that life goes far beyond this beautiful campus;

From our faculty and staff mentors, who have pushed us to be better while always reminding us that we're enough.

Long after today's reception ends, community will continue to spring up around us, and because of us. Father Greg Boyle—a Jesuit priest who works with formerly gang-involved women and men in East Los Angeles—invokes what he calls a “circle of compassion,” and calls us to “imagine no one standing outside that circle, moving ourselves closer to the margins so that the margins themselves will be erased.” That's a good guiding principle for the rest of our lives—and we've set the groundwork here. We're bound to each other by our collective willingness to look outside ourselves—to offer something *of* ourselves. I don't think we'll stop doing that once we cross this stage, whether we end up in the private sector, committing ourselves to the public interest, or doing something that's unrelated to the law altogether.

I'll end with this. During our most recent Admitted Students Weekend, Dean Magill told a group of prospective students that they would change this place, that they would shape this place. That, she said, is what makes Stanford Law School so great.

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From *those* students, a new community will spring forth—but today we celebrate ours. It's been my absolute honor to see living, breathing proof of Dean Magill's words in all of you, for the past three years.

Thank you for that, and congratulations.