

Good morning.

Thank you, Hannah. Thank you, Eamonn. And congratulations to the Class of 2015!! Each of you has worked hard to achieve this milestone, and we are immensely proud of you.

Today, you join the global community of Columbia alumni, a family that will be a source of strength and counsel for the rest of your life.

To welcome you into this community, we are honored to be joined by members of the Class of 1965, who are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their graduation. Members of the Class of 1965, would you please stand so I may address you? We thank you for your conscientious stewardship of the law and for your contributions to the betterment of society. It is *your* legacy that will guide these, our newest alumni.

Class of 1965, welcome home.

We would love to take full credit for the splendor of this class. But the truth is, we are relative latecomers to their lives. Behind each of them is a family—a family that has sacrificed for them and nurtured them. You have encouraged them, guided them, and worried about them, and today, you celebrate with them.

Families of the Class of 2015, we at Columbia share your pride, and we join with this class in thanking you!



Graduates: Today, you cross a critical threshold, and your life will never be the same. This is a moment of reflective equilibrium—a moment to take stock of the past and to look toward the future. And it can be a bittersweet moment, as you prepare to leave your friends and walk toward the disquiet of the unknown.

But it's also a moment to celebrate and revel in all of the possibilities that lie in the future you have worked so hard to achieve.

In your time here, we—the faculty of Columbia Law School—have been custodians of your development. We have led you through the rigors of the curriculum. We have asked you to challenge orthodoxies you thought were fixed. We have asked you to test the courage of your convictions. We

have helped you in many ways. But make no mistake, today is *your* day, and this is *your* achievement.

*You have* harnessed your intellect and your humanity with a focus and discipline that will have a powerful effect on the world you enter as you leave Morningside Heights. And we have good reason to be excited about your future. Just consider what you've already accomplished here: You won asylum for immigrant families facing persecution. You fought to limit greenhouse gas emissions. You addressed the United Nations on targeted killing. You challenged the regulation of domestic and global financial markets. You ran the New York City Marathon! You served as senior legal officers in the U.S. Military. You freed a man who was wrongfully incarcerated for more than 18 years. You worked in New York, Washington, D.C., L.A., Hong Kong, London, Paris, Rome, Myanmar, Dubai, Lima, Harare, Sao Paulo, and Sydney.

We *can't wait* to see what you will do on a larger stage and the world needs you. Because when conflicts arise, some citizens will turn away. Some will respond without empathy. And some will abandon their moral compass. But you, as lawyers, as society's best problem solvers, and *especially* as Columbia Law graduates, you will lead the way.



Now, we all recognize that you are entering the field of law during a very dynamic period. The question is not *whether* you will experience change. The question is, "Will you seize the opportunities that change presents?" To do that, you will need to call on two critical qualities: clarity and courage. At Columbia, you have sharpened your ability to cut to the heart of a problem. You can grasp the essence of the issues and see them with great *analytic* clarity. But when I use the word clarity, I mean more than that. In your time here, you have also sharpened your *moral* clarity. You have honed your ability to see what's right, to see what's wrong, and to see when *each* side has its *own* moral force—and that any justice that sees virtue in only one side, is imperfect at best. You have the clarity to see moral nuance, and society needs you to exercise that power.

Beyond clarity, you leave here with a stronger sense of courage—the courage of your convictions; the courage to do what you think is right, even when it goes against the grain, and even when it leads where you didn't expect.

There will be times when the path ahead is difficult, and times when there seems to be no path at all. You may doubt yourself, and others may feed those doubts. *These...these* are the times when you will have to rely on courage. I don't mean just the courage to take on a hard opponent. I also mean the very quiet, private courage to enter a world of uncertainty and to trust in your own ability *to make the right call*.

Clarity is the ability to grasp the moral landscape. And courage is having the guts to believe in yourself, to trust your instincts, and to *act*. Together, these two qualities will make you unstoppable.

So in closing, let me say, on behalf of all of us who have *taught* you, who have *worked* with you, and who have *learned* from you: We can't wait—we *cannot* wait—to watch you shine. Class of 2015, congratulations!