

**Remarks of Udoka Joy Okafor '20
Graduation Committee Co-chair
Columbia Law School Graduation
Wednesday, May 20, 2020**

Welcome remarks:

Good afternoon, everyone!

My name is Udoka Okafor. As co-chair of your graduation committee it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Columbia Law School graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020.

Just a few months ago, we were heading into our final semester of law school, ready to take on one last round of classes, finally submit that major writing requirement, and sit for exams in Jerome Greene Hall one last time. We all looked forward to our three years of hard work culminating in a beautiful graduation ceremony on the quad.

Surrounded by family and friends, we would undergo the ritual announcing us to the world as lawyers—a celebration of all we'd accomplished up to this point, and everything that we would undertake in the future.

None of us anticipated that by graduation, the world would have changed so quickly and so drastically. “Social distancing” and “flattening the curve” weren't yet part of our vernaculars, and unfortunately, I doubt many of us had the foresight to invest in Zoom.

And of course, today's graduation ceremony is a little different than we had envisioned. It feels strange to be physically separate from the rest of the Columbia Law community as we reflect on the rewards and challenges of the last three years.

Despite that, I encourage you to take this as the joyful occasion that it should be. Whether you're here in New York City or watching from thousands of miles away, celebrate the drive and tenacity that brought you to Columbia and allowed you to thrive here. Express gratitude for those who offered up their love and support to you along the way. Reflect on all you've learned from not only your professors and mentors, but also your fellow students, who are talented, passionate, and tenacious. Honor the opportunity to carry those qualities out into the world at a time when they are needed more now than ever.

And with that, it is my pleasure to introduce Student Senate President Elizabeth Rivera Cruz. Thank you, and congratulations!