

**Remarks of Jordan A.J. Jarrett '22 LL.M.  
LL.M. Class Speaker  
Columbia Law School Graduation  
Monday, May 16, 2022**

Thank you, Paul. Dean Lester, distinguished faculty members, graduates, guests, Mom and Dad, and my former boss, Justice Louise Esther Blenman of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, who is watching online. [Applause.] It is an honor to give this speech today on behalf of the LL.M. graduating class today.

Class, our time has been unlike any before it. Fresh off the heels of lockdowns, we entered the Law School's halls in August with masks on and with an unusual joy. This was the first time in almost two years that many of us interacted with people outside of our immediate families. We were genuinely confused by what used to be routine human interactions. No one knew whether to shake hands or to bump fists or to do that weird elbow thing, all out of fear that we would contract COVID. And thus the year began.

We spent nine months living here together. Bonding after tortuous 9 a.m. classes and devoting hours to vigorously debating how the sizes of WhatsApp groups perpetuated inequalities among us. [Laughter.] We had difficult conversations about war, history, race, and gender. We fought our way through LL.M. writing projects and dealt with that cursed thing called a *Bluebook*. And watched our lives transition very quickly from long days and nights in Central Park and at Papaztutl to marathons in the Law Library. And in a few short moments, it was all done. Today, with our degrees in hand—well, soon to be at hand—and with profound gratitude to all those who are here supporting us today, we can say we have conquered the Columbia LL.M. Clap! [Laughter and applause.]

Now, class, I've thought very hard about what I would say to you today. [When I addressed you first](#), I said, we are the proof that the world needs to know that it is possible to come back together after a difficult time, and that our differences are way less than our similarities. That our humanity binds us together way more than culture and geography separates us. Today, class, I take that message one step further and call us to action. We are among the largest and most diverse of Columbia's LL.M. classes. We're almost 400 strong, hailing from over 50 countries across six continental regions. From now on, class, a large portion of the world's happenings will have a place in the lives, homes, and families of someone sitting beside us. And by that fact, I dare to say we can no longer be strangers to the issues that plague this world.

So this is my charge to you. The next time you have occasion to send thoughts or prayers, to compliment the resilience of an impacted community, stop. And think about the position we now hold as graduates of this institution. Think of the fact that people might now choose to listen

to us more than before because we went to this school and because of the weight attached to this school's name. Think of the power you will wield by merely associating with the law firms and organizations that have hired us this year. Think. And go on to use your voices in meaningful ways.

Quite frankly, class, when I wrote this speech, I said to myself, "Oh Lord, not another, 'we can change the world.:'" But then I stopped to reflect on my own circumstances, on the circumstances of those members of our class. I thought about the fact that every year, beautiful Caribbean countries where we all go to vacation are destroyed by increasingly strong hurricanes fueled by rising global temperatures. I thought about the families in Ukraine who have the least to do with this war but are suffering the most. And the millions of people in the Horn of Africa who are facing starvation now because of a climate induced drought. I realized then that if we stand here and commend the resilience of an impacted group without doing something to change their circumstances, as people who will be heard, that is nothing more than an insult.

Class, by this degree and by this ceremony, we become the ones who can speak and be heard, whose voices can do more. And honestly, class, we don't have to look very far to find examples of how we can use our voices. Today, here, we sit among corporate, human rights, and litigation attorneys in our batch, who this year, have filed amicus briefs before the Supreme Court to influence the direction of law in the United States. Attorneys who have used multidisciplinary advocacy to address free expression concerns in the Indian subcontinent. And some who are developing software solutions to enhance our capacity to give aid to war victims. We sit among persons who started clubs this year to help address some of the systemic difficulties that persons with disabilities face and some who started clubs to promote a broader sense of corporate social responsibility among large businesses.

Class, with this degree and by this ceremony, we are engrafted into the long tradition of excellence, changemakers, and agitators this school has produced. This world's issues are now our own. Class of 2022, use your voices.

Thank you.