

**Holt Alden, JD '22**  
**Student Remarks**  
**June 11, 2022**

Buenas tardes y bienvenidos familia y amigos. Es un honor hablar de parte de la clase del 2020 (dos mil veinte) de Stanford Law School. ¡Felicidades!

My name is Holt Ortiz Alden, and it is my great honor to speak today on behalf of the Stanford Law School Class of 2020.

I would first like to recognize the loved ones we have lost since we began law school. We lost Leon Cain, a classmate who was an exceptional friend and mentor. We lost Professors Deborah Rhode and Barbara Babcock, whose guidance and teaching continues to impact our lives. And the many other loved ones who we carry with us in our hearts and our memories. Each of them are here with us.

Today we return to campus to celebrate our graduation, and the three years we spent building this fantastic community. We each charted a unique path, through classes, student groups, and other experiences, while also bridging connections with one another, making these halls feel like home. We created special moments; from pickup soccer at Wilbur Field, to packing into the library coffee room late at night, to dressing up for BLSA gala, and so many more.

We also cultivated relationships with our amazing faculty, who welcomed us into their homes and took the time to connect with and support each of us. I would also like to thank our administrative staff, deans, custodial staff, and other caretakers on campus—thank you for your kindness and commitment to working with each of us, and for providing us a beautiful, safe place to study and work.

Classmates: Think back to our beginnings. The moment you got the call from Dean Deal, five years ago. Admitted Students Weekend. Meeting roommates in Munger, or EV. I was lucky enough to find a home right away—the Stanford Latinx Law Students Association grabbed me and never let go. Think back to our first class - Civil Procedure. There, too, I was lucky. On the first day I sat next to the love of my life. Diana, I love you.

Despite the community and connection that we found here, the first quarter of 1L was exceptionally difficult, not least because we were repeatedly shown the prejudice and inequities that form the foundations of law—foundations that were often built on the exclusion of marginalized people. I struggled to square my own sense of justice with the material we learned.

And these injustices were not confined to our textbooks. Someone placed horrific, racist hate mail in another student's mailbox. White supremacist posters appeared in our halls. Classroom comments revealed racist thinking or unconscious bias, and lectures erased the brutal oppression that communities of color continue to experience today.

A small group of 1Ls, mostly women of color, decided to act. They hung a banner across the law school with a message that no student or professor could erase. That Racism Lives Here Too.

They spoke up when others chose to remain silent. A Coalition of Students of Color grew around them, following their leadership and power. And we made ourselves heard, through activism and protest. We embodied the words of Professor Miguel Mendez, the first Latino professor at this law school, who said that we must always leave the door through which we enter a little wider for those who follow.

Indeed, many of us are here, celebrating our graduation from this prestigious university, because doors have been opened for us. As we take up the influence and authority that is granted to lawyers in this country, we stand on the shoulders of giants, the shoulders of our families. Our parents and grandparents who labored on roads and bridges, who worked in custodial or food service, who traveled across continents to put their children in a position to succeed. Those who imbued in us a love for learning that led us here. For our families' perseverance, love, and sacrifice, we are truly grateful.

Our class learned many lessons during our time on campus. We learned that this university, a wondrous place of learning and knowledge, is also a home to bigotry. That this law school, where one can fall so deeply in love that you float to class, can also be a place where constant reminders of injustice and trauma weigh heavy.

This tension is not a paradox. It reflects reality – it is complicated, and often uncomfortable. And it is felt differently by each of us, because it cuts across many intersections: gender, race, class, and disability being a few. Some fail to recognize or acknowledge this tension. But many of us don't have a choice—we are forced to think about these issues because our histories and our family's histories make it impossible to ignore.

For me, this tension appears in my family's path to Stanford. I can tell two stories about that journey: In one, my brown grandparents raised my mother for the early part of her life in a trailer in Colorado. My grandfather never finished middle school, because he was forced to go from working part time, picking cotton, to working full time. My grandmother worked a variety of jobs to make ends meet. I am here today because of their perseverance, and their sacrifice.

But there is also a second story. I am a legacy student at Stanford – 73 years ago, my white grandfather graduated from this university after serving in the second World War. My grandmother graduated two years later. Coming to Stanford always felt possible because I knew others who had attended this school. I am also here because of their sacrifice and hard work, although in a different way.

For many of my classmates, in particular my classmates of color, similar tensions exist in their experiences at this school. Although we each feel this tension differently, we must be willing to discuss it with one another to build connection and understanding. We have to be vulnerable, with ourselves and with each other, and use that discomfort to learn from one another's

experience. By acknowledging this tension out loud, we can establish compassion and understanding, with our friends, colleagues, and future clients.

That understanding will also help us recognize when we need to use our power, our privilege, to stand up for others. Not all of us will work with individuals who are in need, who are seeking to have their rights, or their humanity, recognized by our legal system. But each of us will have the opportunity to make an impact. For each of us, there will come times in our careers when we are forced to choose between speaking up, or staying silent. We may be concerned with the consequences of taking action. We may think that it is easier to play it safe with a boss, or a judge, in hopes that whatever was said or done will pass unnoticed. We may wait for someone else to speak up, and avoid the risk of saying the wrong thing. Perhaps we will worry that speaking up will affect our reputation.

In these moments, I hope that you remember the uncomfortable, or even painful, events that this class experienced together. I hope that you will remember your classmates who declared that Racism Lives Here Too, who understood that there may be consequences to activism but nonetheless demanded to be heard. We must remember that choosing not to engage in these difficult conversations is to be complicit. That silence is complicity.

Maybe, in these past two years, some of these moments have already come and passed, while you prioritized your work, or felt restricted in what you could say or do. That's okay—these opportunities will come again and again. We are here because we strive to succeed, we are passionate about helping others, and because we are willing to take the more difficult path. Many of us will take up distinguished positions as judges, political leaders, established lawyers. And each of us will hold power and influence. We must choose to leverage that privilege to speak truth, to take action, even when we have little to gain personally. We can take action as individuals, but we should also bear that responsibility together. We must stand as a community that fights relentlessly against prejudice and injustice. With a single voice we can demand that bigotry will not be tolerated—not when any one of us is there to root it out.

I am immensely proud to stand with each of you: my partner, many of my closest friends, and all of my classmates graduating today. Remember your voice, and this community behind you.

**Anne Joseph O'Connell**  
Hurlbut Speech  
June 10, 2022

Thank you so much, Allyn. You benefited from not being in the first Administrative Law class I taught at Stanford on the quarter system, where I confronted teaching a semester of Administrative Law in nine weeks. But many of your classmates here today were in that original class, including two students who are now engaged to be married.

Members of the Stanford Law School Class of 2020 and 2021, JDs, LLMs, JSMs, JSDs, your loved ones, and those you may not pick for your life boat:

Warmest congratulations!

I pulled an all nighter before I graduated from law school in 2000. I was furiously finishing my last paper.

My deadline driven nature has not changed. I was asked for my written remarks earlier this week. I had to admit that I had not yet started writing (though, for the record, I did give a different virtual speech two years ago). I had started thinking about what I would say for this round.

And I had reached out to our amazing librarians: librarians will always help you.

For the night owls and procrastinators, I hope I am a testament that you will be ok.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about time: before Stanford sent us home (or to zoom) in March 2020, between March and now, and this moment (kind of).

Before March 2020, you helped make this school and the larger community better places, though, of course, the fights continue.

In February 2018, along with others, a coalition of then 1Ls (Priscilla Hernandez, Elizabeth Reetz, Olamide Abiose, Serena Saffarini and Rachel Waterman), rightfully told us that racism lives here too.

In the clinics, many of you advocated for those without your education, skills, and privilege. To name just a few, drawing from the 2018 to 2020 Mills Legal Clinic Report:

Diana Sanchez and Liz Lagerfield helped prevent a lawful permanent resident from being removed from this country.

Derin McLeod and Kwan Kim assisted an undocumented mother residing in San Mateo who was placed in deportation proceedings.

Noah Breslau, Serena Saffarini, and Conner Brown got their client's charges dismissed—in an issue of first impression, he had been prosecuted based on evidence found when police came into an apartment where he was a guest.

Allison Wettstein O'Neill and Celin Carlos Gonzalez aided residents of the largest mobile home park in East Palo Alto in preventing a big rent increase.

Reid Whitaker and Caroline Jo co-wrote an amicus brief filed with the Supreme Court arguing that fair use allowed media critics to use copyrighted materials in a database of tv news shows.

Greg Terryn and his partner from a class that got a live graduation convinced a court that their client should be able to change his name on religious grounds.

Eizabeth Lopez and Jeffrey Ho drafted governance and affiliation documents for a national gun safety NGO.

And there were the students who knocked it out of the park for clients who weren't even theirs:

Bryan Shpall, Connie Wang, Diana Li, Sam Ward-Packard, Carrie Lebel, Cody Kahoe, and if I can skip ahead a year, Katherine Giordano and Bonnie Henry in the moot court finals.

Recalling pre-pandemic times can be hard—can you remember what your last in person class discussed? I can't and I was teaching Advanced Administrative Law.

But an easier task is to think back and recall the most impressive things your friends did in their first 2 and 2/3 years (or 1 and 2/3 years, or 2/3 of the year—with all the classes combined here) of law school, and then what you did.

Let me turn to the period between March 2020 and these festivities.

One could measure it in shows: Squid Game, Bridgerton, Outerbanks, Wanda Vision, Ted Lasso, Love is Blind, Inventing Anna. I watched most of these (multiple seasons when available, that would include Love is Blind) and so many more.

Or you could measure in deaths: COVID, mass shootings, police killings, overdoses, suicides, Condo collapses, hurricanes, fires, and many other losses, some ordinary in cause but deeply personal in effects.

I want to take a moment to honor the memories of those who did not live to see this celebratory day but who played critical roles in your life.

Or you could measure the period in law-related events: zoom quarters, a virtual quasi graduation, the bar examination, the start of your first job, two new Supreme Court justices (one to start this summer), perhaps the start of your second job or thoughts about the next move, even a seeming challenge to Cheney II by the Fifth Circuit (in its SEC ALJ decision). Barring constitutional, statutory, or common law constrains, an agency gets to choose between rulemaking and adjudication. Stay away, Fifth Circuit.

When I gave you a short speech on zoom in 2020, I mentioned that I am still struck by words of a speaker at my college graduation. An English professor, he focused on the uncertainty, and even loneliness, surrounding significant transitions such as commencement, a pause T.S. Eliot describes as like when a subway train “stops too long between stations.”

From March 2020 to now was a really long stop in some ways, even as some aspects of life did not pause at all. Or as Coop in Season 4 of All American, which I was watching at 1am, says, you have to “sit in the uncomfortable.”

I said in my virtual speech that I expected the next station (or perhaps the station after the next) would fundamentally change for some of you. That this strange, scary and even rage inducing time wouldn't just postpone, it would transform.

And now we come to ... now. Sort of.

A return to SLS.

If I could give one piece of advice before you cross this stage, find your returning points and be a source of respite and joy for others.

I don't mean the negative connotations of circling back—“let's circle back to that”—when you are trying to postpone or avoid a difficult conversation. A promise to circle back that is often not fulfilled.

And I don't mean returning to provide critical accountability of the past. The January 6 Committee and their hearings are critical. This is important work (and what my husband teaches about in part, he claims it is more interesting than Administrative Law).

I mean truly returning for comfort and celebration.

It could be to people (a grandmother, a high school friend, a law school classmate, a mentor).

It could be to places (the Dish, San Francisco, Pescadero Beach, a certain post office, home, not home).

It could be to music.

On Thursday night, I took my now 14-year old daughter (please help) to see Mary Chapin Carpenter at the Palace of Fine Arts. We had last seen her perform in December 2019, also at the same location. She told the same story—about how a store employee looked at her credit card and then at her and said, my grandmother loves you.

I first saw Mary Chapin Carpenter in October 1993.

Mary Chapin Carpenter is a returning point for me—my favorite songs remain the same, but I hear some old lyrics differently (this week, it was “everything we got we got the hard way”). I hear new songs. Unlike almost all of us, she wasn’t Taylor Swift level productive during the pandemic but she did release two albums. And the music provides a way for my daughter and I to connect outside our well-treaded battle lines.

What music does that for you?

In law school and for many years beyond, my grandmothers were critical returning points. There was also a law school professor—one without a JD, a psychoanalyst who secretly smoked cigarettes in his office—I came back to see, a lot.

What people do you have in your corner?

The ocean, preferably by the Rhode Island coast, but I will take the Pacific any day, is another.

What places provide you solace?

What are your returning points? And perhaps more importantly are you someone else’s?

Returning points are not anchors, in the sense of them not changing in important ways. They can and do move.

When you feel like you are not moving, stuck in discomfoting ways, or when everything is moving too fast, sometimes it’s discomfoting, sometimes it’s exhilarating, these returning points—the people and places—can provide respite and joy.

Your talents (and SLS degree) will bring you many wonderful things. But please don’t forget about respite and joy.

I said I would give only one piece of advice. Let me close with another, but this is from Taylor Swift in a song about her grandmother:

Never be so kind  
You forget to be clever  
Never be so clever  
You forget to be kind

Congratulations!

**Sigríður María Egilsdóttir & Edmund Bao: Graduation Speech - SLS 2022**

Good afternoon Dean Martinez, distinguished guests, faculty, family, friends, graduating SLS students, including, especially, the Stanford Advanced Degree Class of 2020.

It is rare that one is able to address a graduating cohort two years after the fact. And, in a way, a privilege of sorts. We have had the opportunity to not only reflect, but to do so with the benefit of hindsight. Yet as we sat and ruminated in preparation for this speech, we were reminded of the reality of the past couple of years. Unprecedented times meant cutting off the outside world to a large extent. It meant holing up in our respective apartments – and in our cases – our respective corners of the world. Weeks turned to months, and months turned to years. But while our individual isolation may have made it seem, and feel, like the outside world had somehow ground to a halt – behind closed doors all our individual lives went on.

And with that thought in mind, the two of us would like to take a moment to acknowledge our absent friends. Their very absence reminds us, not only of the exceptional challenges faced by the Class of 2020, but of how the world did indeed go on. Two years may not be a life changing number of years, but two years is plenty of time for life to change. Our friends who couldn't make it here today from Germany, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, ... are not absent because they shy away from long plane rides or because their love for Stanford has changed – but because their lives have changed. Our friends are absent to us only, but they are present in new roles, nurturing new careers, relationships, marriages and even new little lives they've since welcomed into the world. And to our absent friends we say this: One day we will meet again, and we look forward to once again sharing in your successes and lives in person – but until then: we miss you.

Graduations are, by their nature, hopeful, happy occasions where a class of students, and their families get together and celebrate achievements of the years past. Various speakers then traditionally implore new graduates to use their knowledge and skills for the future, to achieve great things, but, also, not forget their humanity, their service to the community and to each other.

Well, today, the two of us are not going to deliver such a message, for two reasons. First, none of us, let's face it, are new graduates. Second, it would be superfluous of us to stand here and implore you to bring sand to the beach. From the very start of our time together, as well as through the unprecedented times of difficulty and isolation, the Advanced Degree Class of 2020 demonstrated to each other the very best of humanity. Through your acts of service and community, kindness and heart, you made Stanford feel like home.

For the Advanced degree cohort, our Stanford journey began just us. We spent our first weeks learning about the American legal system and legal ethics – but mainly we spent them studying each other. And what a bunch of miscreants. A long island iced tea cocktail of cultures and characters. At first glance, the only thing we had in common was that we had been thrown into an unfamiliar setting with each other. But despite this - perhaps even because of it - this cocktail

came together like no other. Both as a group – and on a more individual level. Everyone, even our strangest cookies, found their place. We made friends – best friends actually. The kinds of friends you think you're too old to make at this point.

And in the glaring lights of a bajillion tv screens and decade old music videos at Patio, some even fell in love. And, hopefully, along the way, we all learnt a thing or two!

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Coming to Stanford also allowed us to learn about new cultures. For example, I remember early on in the year, asking Sigga if Iceland was covered with ice all year around. (“To which she replied:

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‘yes, we also live in igloos and keep penguins as pets you uncultured swine’”. In turn, I asked Edmund if, being from Australia, he was used to dealing with dangerous and venomous animals like spiders and snakes. To which he replied: )

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“Come’on Sig, it’s Stanford, not a certain east coast school who shall not be named, the JD’s aren’t that competitive!” But, really, in all respects, Stanford did not disappoint. Trips to Yosemite, Dish hikes, dinners in SF and Bob-Dylan concerts on campus.

But then, the pandemic hit, and, if there was one word that described our experience, it was the word “waiting”. For the Class of 2020, our Stanford journey began with waiting for our acceptance letter, the joyful anticipation of waiting to come to Stanford, a wait that carries hope and expectations, the promise of good times and great friendships.

But then, during the pandemic, the waiting took a different turn. It became waiting, simply, for the sake of waiting. Waiting for lock-down to end. Waiting in line at Trader Joes. Waiting for in-person classes to resume. We started waiting with unnerving uncertainty. Waiting for the Bar exam, uncertain if it will go ahead. Waiting for positions, uncertain if firms were hiring. Waiting to see friends again. Waiting, still, for the lockdown to end. And finally, waiting to celebrate today, and this in-person graduation, uncertain, if, and when, it would take place. In the words of John M[e]yer – we were waiting on the world to change.

Yet... while we waited, the AD class was determined not to let life go by. And, we think, this is where the true strength of our unique, mis-matched, fun-loving cocktail of a community spirit lies. It is easy, during a period of unprecedented isolation, loss and uncertainty, to think only of ourselves. I think I speak for many when I admit that when the Australian currency tanked and

tuition fees were due, I channeled Joe Exotic in thinking “I’m never going to financially recover from this”.

Yet, instead, these extraordinary times gave rise to extraordinary actions by extraordinary individuals. When the virus threatened the lives of loved ones and familial tragedies struck in distant shores with closed off borders, members of the AD class rose up in support, not through empty words and platitudes, but through demonstrations of grace and community. With our parents, siblings and close friends in our home countries unable to help, the AD class stepped in - we became each other’s families - providing the support we all so sorely missed, yet needed. Single Costco runs became community Costco runs. Lockdown dinners that would have been spent in isolation became fully-fledged Zoom drinking affairs. There were other examples too. A humble ask here and there, a quick check-in now and again.

These are the hidden acts of service, and they are not in the least unimportant. For these acts of service, the advanced class of 2020 sought no recognition, taking joy in simply caring for one another with kindness. As we think back to our time here at the Farm, it will not be the missed prom, or the lack of in-person instruction, or that group Vegas trip that never happened. Rather, what will endure will be our international community, and our support for each other.

So, with that all said, what should be our message? What should the AD class do with this experience? Now, most speakers at this point will say something like “now go and do great things”! Well to Stanford law graduates, such expectations are almost a given, and the two of us here have no doubt they will be fulfilled.

So, with our final few minutes, we would like to take a different track.

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We all know that today marks the final, formal conclusion of our time at Stanford. Stanford equips us with a mastery of the law so we can be leaders in our respective fields. But our message today is really a message of hope - we hope, that you will continue to be good people, as you have during our time here. We hope that you take the compassion, grace and service, once upon a time, exercised towards each other, in the residential buildings and lecture halls of this hallowed institution, and apply it to the world at large.

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Because if anything, waiting has taught us the importance of humility – of doing more, and talking less, to be leaders who are happy to be outside the spotlight sometimes, rather than inside of it always (Other speaker leans in and says: Yes, we are aware of how hypocritical this sounds coming from us right now); be leaders who first extend compassion to the individual, before dreaming of grand schemes for the masses. These are the hallmark qualities of the Stanford Advanced Degree Class of 2020 – a group of remarkable individuals who don’t act like

they have anything to prove, yet prove themselves, again, and again, and again, when needed most. And that, we say, is reason enough, to raise a glass today.

It has been our greatest privilege to speak on your behalf. Thank you, and congratulations again to the Stanford Advanced Degree Class of 2020.