

Fellow graduates, esteemed faculty, proud families, and distinguished guests:

Today is a day of celebration—a culmination of years of hard work, sleepless nights, and unwavering determination. It is a moment we've all dreamed of, and one that feels surreal now that it's here. Standing before you today as a first-generation Afghan-American Muslim woman, I am deeply humbled and profoundly grateful to share this milestone with all of you.

For many of us, the journey to this day began long before law school. Growing up, I watched my parents navigate a new language, unfamiliar systems, and relentless challenges. Their resilience became my foundation. Their sacrifices became my motivation. And their belief in the power of education became my guiding light.

As an Afghan-American, I know firsthand what it means to live at the intersection of two worlds—to carry the stories of ancestors while forging my own path. I also know how vital it is to have advocates who understand the complexities of identity and culture. For many of us here, becoming a lawyer is not just a career choice; it's a calling to serve others. This means advocating for communities like the ones we grew up in—communities filled with people who start small but dream big. It means working towards a legal system that is more equitable and more compassionate.

When we decided to pursue law school, we did so with the understanding that the law is not just about statutes or precedent—it's about people. It's about justice. It's about giving a voice to those who have been silenced and empowering communities that have been marginalized. And as future lawyers, we have been given an extraordinary gift – the power to advocate for justice and to shape the laws that govern our nation.

Let's face it; we're entering a legal landscape fraught with challenges. But that's where you come in. Class of 2025, I'm looking at exactly what this country needs right now. The next generation of attorneys all staring back at me, eager to do good work and enact change.

Yes, I know. The world out there is messy. Political divisions run deep. Racial and economic inequalities still persist. But remember this: every great movement for justice started with people just like us. People who saw wrongs and decided to right them. People who believed that the law could be a force for good.

As new lawyers, we have a unique opportunity – and responsibility – to shape this landscape. We're not just entering a profession; we're joining a legacy of those who have used the law as a tool for change. We've seen this firsthand, from cases like *Brown v. Board of Education* to *Tinker v. Des Moines*, lawyers have always been at the forefront of social progress.

As we stand here today adorned in our robes, I can't help but think of the journey that brought us to this moment. We entered as individuals, each convinced we were the next Elle Woods or Atticus Finch. We've survived the Socratic method, kind of deciphered the Rule Against Perpetuities, and somehow managed to stay alive with each iteration of the Seton Hall Law elevator systems. And now, we leave as a community, bound together by our shared experiences, a dream to leave our impact on the world, and the ethos of a Seton Hall Lawyer. We're stepping into a profession where our actions can change lives and shape policies. Our real work begins now.

... Or maybe not now-now. But after the Bar.

Today, let us remember that we are celebrating our achievements; but also honoring those who made them possible. Whether they are here in this room with us or not, it took a village. And now we thank them. To my village, my family: especially my parents, thank you for teaching me what it means to persevere against all odds. To my brothers, thank you for your unconditional support and love—even when I doubted myself, you never doubted me.

Let us not forget the professors who guided us on this journey. They challenged us, inspired us, and occasionally terrified us. To the professors who could strike fear into my heart with just two words: "Ms. Hassan?" – I thank you for teaching us that sometimes the most important skill in law is the ability to quickly think on your feet and make it convincing. To the professors who filled our empty cups and to the ones who fought for us to have a seat at the table. You are the backbone of this very institution, thank you.

And our community extends beyond just us students and Professors. To the custodial staff, our school security guards, and to the Cafe Deni Baristas-- you are the unsung heroes of our law school experience.

To our dear co-counsels and friends, thank you for being our partners in this journey—and for constantly reminding us why we started this journey in the first place.

And finally, to everyone who has ever felt like they didn't belong—whether because of your background, your circumstances, or your struggles—I see you. We belong here.

So, Class of 2025, as we leave these Setonious halls, (yes, Setonious is a word now) and step out into the world as newly-minted lawyers, let us carry with us not just our diplomas, but our commitment to use our skills for good. Let us use our legal education to amplify the voices of the unheard, to stand up for what is right even when it's hard, and to create spaces where justice can thrive.

Congratulations, counselors. May your briefs be brief, your arguments be strong, and your success be ever flowing. The world is waiting for us. Let's go set some precedent.