

Good afternoon and may it please the Court. Dean Boozang, at this time I'd like to reserve 3 minutes for rebuttal.

Beat

Oh, wait, that's the wrong speech.

I'd like to start by addressing my fellow graduates who are joining us remotely. Though we wish we could all be seated together here one last time, I want to emphasize that this is just as much your day as it is for those of us presently here, and I hope you have been able to find a way to make this day as special for you as it deserves to be, despite the distance.

Next, I believe some thank yous are in order. To Dean Boozang and the entire Seton Hall administration and staff, on behalf of all the graduates, I say "thank you" for your unwavering dedication to our pursuit of a legal education. Yes, we even thank you for making us learn the parol evidence rule, personal

jurisdiction, and the rule against perpetuities...okay maybe not that last one.

I'd also like us to take a moment and think about our family, friends, and loved ones who helped get us here today. These last three years have been a harrowing experience, and the pandemic only compounded the stress, anxiety, and pressure we all undoubtedly felt. Think about those who helped get you through the ups and downs. The good days and the bad. The cold calls and the exams. Thank them. I'd like to personally thank my mom - whose patience and guidance is the sole reason I stand here today. To paint a picture of how patient she's been, think about having to struggle through listening to me ramble through this speech....she's been listening to that for almost 30 years. Thanks, mom.

Now, in writing this speech, I found myself wondering what I should say *to* you all, my fellow graduates. It's important to use this opportunity to thank the administration and all those who helped get us here, of course, but I also feel like I should use this opportunity to at

least *try* to send *some* message to you. Maybe some insightful thoughts or words of encouragement that we can all take forward...and forget about 5 minutes after we walk out of here.

But what do I say in this moment?

“Seton Hall Law Class of 2021 - We Did It?” No, too cheesy.

What could I possibly say to a group of people who have put aside other opportunities, other joys, and possibly entire careers and likely taken on substantial financial burdens all in the name of a legal education?

Snap fingers I got it!

“Oh my god what have we done?!”

Alright, alright not that, either. I’ll actually share a semi-embarrassing childhood story that will hopefully convey the message I’m aiming for. Thankfully, it’s not embarrassing

for me, it's embarrassing for my brother, and he's not here to contest, so I'm gonna tell it.

When my brother was in high school, he ran track. He was pretty good. His coach put a lot of pressure on him, though, and in turn, he put a lot of pressure on himself. My mom never missed a track meet, and as all moms do, she wanted to take some of that pressure off her son. So, in the heat of a track meet, with coaches coaching and runners...running, my mom would repeatedly call out "Run your own race, John!" Suffice it to say that the particular tone and pitch of my mom's zealous advocacy was...audible.

But see, that's exactly what I'm here to tell you today: run your own race. We've spent the last three years inextricably tied to the performance of our peers: thinking about how we sounded to the class during a cold call; thinking about how the curve will impact our grade; thinking about how XYZ employer only has a few spots open. But we're done with that race. And I'm here to remind you that it's okay to run whatever race you want to run. Don't

focus on what someone else's race looks like or what someone says *yours* is *supposed* to look like. You can't let people rent space in your head. Don't focus on how seemingly far ahead or behind you are. The more time you spend worrying about someone else, the less time you spend concentrating on *your* race. And, if you trust in these words, when you cross that finish line, I **promise** you'll be happy. But, if you're not, good luck enforcing my promise in court.

Class of 2021 - thank you for allowing me to walk beside you these last three years, and congratulations on all that you have accomplished. You earned it.