

Good afternoon friends, family, and strangers.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Albert Chen, a graduating student of the Class of 2018 along with all the other beautiful people sitting in front of me today. If you do know me and you're wondering why I'm up here, I, too, sometimes question the school's administrative decisions. However, as I've been chosen to monopolize your time for the next 7 or so minutes, let's talk a little bit. Let's talk about where we came from and where we're all going.

I want you to think back to when you were getting dressed this morning. You were putting on your cap and gown, getting nice and pretty. I assume, or I hope, you were looking at yourself in the mirror while doing so. When you were looking in the mirror, what'd you see? Or more specifically, who did you see? I'll tell you that I personally saw, in my mirror, a wildly handsome and woefully misunderstood genius. But, when I looked closer—and I mean really close—past even my delusional façade, I saw someone else. I saw someone nervously checking for missed shaving spots before an interview. Someone making sure their hair was done just right for a networking event. I saw someone half-asleep, praying that the coffee brewing in the pot would somehow inject some life into their morning.

But most of all, I saw myself, three years ago, about to start on a journey. I didn't know what to expect at the time. I wasn't sure whether I had made the right choice. Heck, I didn't even really know why I decided to do this whole thing. All I know was that I had taken that first step. And as with any new beginning, the path ahead was dark, sometimes frightening—the danger of failure lurking behind every corner.

So, as I fumbled my way through these past few years, I would end up buying case books that, in total, probably cost more than my high school car. I attended a 1L presentation that gave fashion advice so conservative as to be nonsensical and borderline satirical. I would pillage the

leftover food after school events like I was a starving, indebted viking who didn't know when his next meal was. I was also inundated with class reading, bombarded by arcane legal concepts, and, twice a year, I just didn't sleep for a couple weeks at a stretch. At times, I felt like I was suffocated and barely hanging on—all at once nervous and calm, angry and relieved, depressed and excited. The perpetual feeling that I'm just scraping by. As if I'm constantly an hour late even when I show up fifteen minutes early.

Yet here I am today and here we are in this room. I want you to take a close look around you. Today, we're sitting here surrounded by all the family and friends that supported us on this long journey of ours. Among colleagues that we've developed lasting relationships with. And while I'm standing behind this podium right now, on this day we standing together all unified by our shared experiences. We can look behind us back to the trail we've all just walked, probably with nostalgia, perhaps with fondness, and hopefully not with regret. We can reminisce on our favorite moments, like having passed Trust and Estates, and cringe from receiving our worst grades, like receiving the grade for Trust and Estates. So, today, we're closing the chapter on what is probably the most arduous academic experience of our lives.

Joseph Campbell in his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, analyzed the hero's journey, a common plot structure used in many adventure stories, saying, "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man." As humans, we are all the heroes of our own individual journeys. But as graduating students of Seton Hall Law, we're actually standing right now at the apex of our decisive victory. To give another quote, an overly-emotional philosopher once eloquently said, "we started from the bottom, now we here." Three years ago, we started

from the bottom and now we here, having been given the power to bestow the boons of our legal education to those in need.

However, unlike Campbell's myths or Kanye West's social reputation, our stories don't end simply because the page is blank or you make wildly inappropriate remarks on national television. In many ways, we've actually come full circle—having finished one journey, we prepare now to embark on another. For most of us, August of this year will mirror that of three years ago. Just as we previously began law school taking that shy, hesitant step forward, we begin our legal careers once again hoping to find our balance, unsure of what to do and unsure of what to say. Every stride we make seems, once again, to be rife with potential missteps.

Or maybe this is just all in my head and you guys don't feel the same way. But sometimes, when I speak with established attorneys, I'm in absolute awe of how comfortable and how confident they always look. It's like they've figured everything out. I'm sitting here making sure my inappropriate humor doesn't inadvertently leak out of my mouth like a runny faucet. Meanwhile their every action and every word seems to be rooted in the most unshakeable and absolute professional certainty. I think to myself, "Will I ever be like that? Will I ever stand as an equal among the partners and associates; prosecutors and public defenders; among the judges, clerks, and counsel?"

And honestly, I don't know. Surprise some of you though it may, I am in fact graduating alongside all of you, so I don't have the answer just yet. But I can tell you my prediction. I predict that one day, once you're an established professional, you'll be able to wistfully look back to the beginning of your legal career just like you can, sitting here at this moment, wistfully look back to the beginning of your law school career. Although the future seems uncertain right now—unclaimed and untempered by the years of experience others might have—I know undoubtedly

that we can take on whatever is thrown at us going forward in our lives. Much like how we've weathered this most recent academic hurricane, maybe coming out a little bruised...and a little battered, you should know by now that there is always safe shelter from the storm. I say this confidently not because I know things will go well, as I said, I don't, but what I've come to learn from these past three years is that we are that shelter from the storm. We are all the protagonists of our own individual stories. Every single one of our journeys are circular because they all begin and end at the same point—with us.

So, whether you do or don't have faith in others or in a God, have faith in yourselves. Even if you don't know it, you're going to accomplish things you can't even realize right now. You'll find yourself pulling from reserves of strength you never even knew existed. Impacting the lives of others in ways you can't currently imagine. After all, just think back to when you were getting dressed this morning, looking at that other person in the mirror. And how that person's life has been forever changed because of you...how our lives have been forever changed because of us...the 2018 graduating class of Seton Hall Law.

Congratulations everyone.