

Good afternoon, and thank you all for being here. I am deeply, deeply humbled, and I have so many thank yous.

Thank you to the Sax family and the Prize committee for this incredible honor. I am so very, very glad to be part of a Berkeley Law tradition that celebrates the extraordinary work that this community has done over the past year.

With that in mind, I want to acknowledge the exceptional student members of the clinics who are here today—not least Scott Wallace, who, to put it mildly, is one of my absolute favorite people at Berkeley. Scott, like the other clinical students in this room, should give cynics hope for legal profession. These future lawyers are brilliant, passionate, hard working, and kind. They are committed to social justice, and there are more than a few of them who should be up here today.

I would be remiss not to express my extreme gratitude for the truly amazing lawyers, teachers, and support staff who work at the Youth Defender Clinic and in the International Human Rights Clinic. Kate, Cory, Whitney, Tamura; Laurel, Alison, Roxanna, Eric, and many, many more. You have all touched my life in ways you cannot know. I stand in awe of you.

And of course, thank you to my parents, who instilled in me their commitment to public service. Simply put, I would not be here but for their support.

The time I spent in the clinics was the single most rewarding experience I have had in law school. Over the past two years, I have met the people who have inspired me, motivated me, and taught me how to be a lawyer. From them, I have learned lessons that cannot be taught in a classroom.

My clients have taught me about courage. Courage is the male survivor of sexual violence in Uganda, who lives in a country where sodomy—even when it is non-consensual—is a crime. He will face stigma from telling his story; he may face prosecution and even imprisonment, but he demands access to justice nonetheless. My clients have also taught me about grace. Grace is the young adult who shows a judge who cannot recognize his own humanity respect. My clients have taught me about love. Love is the attitude with which the head of the Refugee Law Project in East Africa approaches his work. Love is the mother who holds it together during trial, only to cry when over half a year later the judge lets her son come home.

Law school is often an exercise in individualism. But the clinics teach us how to be part of a team. Good teamwork, like good leadership, inspires us, and it makes the collective output better than the individual input. And I have had just about the best teammates a clinical student could ask for. Caitlin, who is currently at the Bronx Defenders, flew back to California for a single day to testify on behalf of our client the first week she started her job in New York. Neeta, who has been with EBCLC for over a year, and has a hefty caseload of her own, sat in when Kate and I did trial prep for hours, sharing her wisdom and feedback. And I have never had a friend or a colleague as encouraging as Sahar

Maali. We had Google Hat parties with Shayne when we needed a break from the heaviness of our work. And she is the person who provided me with the last-minute fortitude to stand up here today.

Above all, my supervisors taught me about true leadership. I think Laurel Fletcher is superhuman. This is a woman who has a treadmill under her desk—literally—and who walks for miles a day while she churns out a truly astounding amount of work. Professor Fletcher came to Berkeley over 15 years ago, at a time when women were (even more than they are today) woefully underrepresented in the legal profession and on law school faculties. In that span of time, Professor Fletcher has put Berkeley on the international legal map. She is frighteningly brilliant and yet still manages to be endlessly open and warm. In the best way possible, I am always terrified I will not live up to her expectations.

Kate Weisburd does the job of at least three people. She directs the Youth Defender Clinic, balances an enormous caseload, and somehow finds time to mentor and manage a new group of students each semester. She does all of this with an endless amount of compassion, and I don't think I ever met someone who is simultaneously so kindhearted and encouraging, and such a fierce advocate for her clients inside and outside of court.

The legal profession needs more strong, female role models like these two amazing women. I just feel lucky to call them mine.

And, when I think about the wealth of opportunities I have had in my life, when I think about being here, I do think about luck. There is no principled reason why I am here and my clients are not. There is no principled reason why the rights I demand have been granted to me, while their rights are held hostage.

If the International Human Rights Clinic enabled me to better see that our shared humanity knows no national boundaries, my work at EBCLC made abundantly clear that some of the worst human rights abuses in the world occur at home. The United States incarcerates more people than any other nation in the world. The majority of the people this country imprisons are indigent; the majority are young men of color. The appalling racial and class disparities that exist in the adult prison system hold for juveniles as well. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the Youth Defender Clinic.

When I met with our clients I wasn't struck by the differences between us—I was struck by the similarities. Caitlin and I bonded with one of our clients over our love of Bay Area's 103.7 (for those who don't know, and I'm aging myself, that would be the station that plays the biggest hits of the 70s and 80s). Another client thinks he might want to be criminal defense attorney when he grows up. He graduated from high school at the top of his class. Most of our clients come from loving homes, most have made a mistake, most are figuring out their place in the adult world. That means that most are like every single other teenager. Except that is not how our justice system treats them.

The client who loves 103.7 and who hates mornings as much as I do rarely gets to listen to the station because he is homeless. He can't afford a daily cup of coffee. The client who graduated at the top of his class was the only person in his unit to graduate that semester. He accepted his high school diploma from inside Juvenile Hall. The differences – that I am white, and they are not; that my family had resources, and many of theirs do not—these shouldn't matter, but they do.

It is a profound injustice that the people who are the most marginalized and the most in need of the legal system's protection are the ones who are least likely to receive it. But the Clinics' lawyers, students, and support staff chip away daily at this status quo. They are relentless in their pursuit of justice, even though it is often elusive. They refuse to accept defeat, even when it would be easier to succumb. They give voices to people who otherwise would not be heard, and, in so doing, they touch countless lives.

I thank them for pausing in their intrepid journeys to touch my own; I thank them for helping me find my own voice; and above all, I thank them for showing me what it means to be good lawyer. Thank you all.