

I am surprised and humbled to be here today. Thank you so much to my supervisors at the East Bay Community Law Center for nominating me and for all that you have done, to Seema Patel who apparently coordinated the inter-unit EBCLC effort, to the Prize Committee, and to the Sax Family. Thank you also to my classmates for your dedication to social justice work.

Before everything, I want to specifically thank some members of what has basically been a village of advocates who have worked with me over the past three years. To my supervisors at the Policy Advocacy Clinic, Jeff and Stephanie, in addition to being great supervisors-- thank you for your good humor, for caring about the mental health of your students, and for the socks with your faces on them. To my past and present team members at the Policy Advocacy Clinic— Josh, Laura, Hannah, Paula, Daisy, Rawan, and Zachariah—thank you all for putting up with me. Each of you has helped me grow as an advocate and as a person. To the Western Regional Advocacy Project, and especially Paul Boden. Paul, you everyday exemplify what it means to fight for people who have been systemically denied a spot at the table, and it has been a privilege to work with you.

I am extremely grateful to everyone at EBCLC for all that you do. In particular, thank you to the Housing Practice and especially to those of you that worked with the Tenants Rights Workshop during my 1L year. Working with the SLPS is only a small part of what you all do, but participating in TRW was fundamental to my ability as a 1L to tolerate law school and is part of what pushed me to do clinic. To the Health and Welfare Practice-- Erin, Daniel, Ingrid, Liam, and Sheila-- for being patient with me and for demonstrating how to compassionately and inclusively work with clients. Erin, I am so blessed to have had your support far beyond my time in the Health Unit. Finally, thank you to Hewot, Melissa, Seema, and Jassmin. The Community Economic Justice Clinic has fundamentally challenged me to think about the kind of lawyer I want to be, and it is a joy to learn from, work with, and take up space with each of you.

My dad is the person who inspired—and pushed—me to attend law school. My dad grew up the youngest of four raised by a single father in Mayor Wright Homes in Honolulu, HI. By a series of really fortuitous events, and with the help of my mom, he became the first person in his family to graduate from college and eventually law school. My dad's hard work certainly played a role in his career, but much of his journey would not have happened had he not been in the right place at the right time. Thus, a big part of why I am standing here today is because of my dad's good luck.

But my dad's story does not represent an ideal path. Luck should not be a determining factor in any person's life. Luck should not dictate a person's ability to access education or a secure income. More fundamentally, nobody should be uncertain about whether they will have food to eat, whether they will have a place to sleep at night, or whether they will be safe. Yet everyday

at the Law Center we work with people whose lives are routinely destabilized by events that are completely out of their control.

In the Health Unit, for example, I worked on an SSI appeal for Ms. K. During a period where we lost contact, Ms. K was wrongfully pushed out of her home by her landlord which caused her to lose her housing subsidy. Because of her lack of housing, Ms. K was unable to live with her children, which exacerbated her severe depression. All throughout, Ms. K was in debilitating physical pain due to a number of chronic conditions. In no world is this fair, and in no world do we as a society not have the resources to prevent something like this from happening.

We won Ms. K's appeal in large part due to Ms. K's own testimony and her perseverance over almost a decade of fighting for benefits. Ms. K's story is unfortunately not unique, and it showcases the incredible strength that so many of our clients embody. However, as lawyer Tracie L. Washington said in a discussion of New Orleans post-Katrina:

Resiliency ... is not a natural thing... [W]e were [not] born to be resilient. You are forced to be resilient when you are placed in an environment that is unnatural with manmade suffering—where another actor can alleviate this condition that is forcing you to be resilient to it. I don't want to be resilient, I think that we should fix the things that are making us be resilient.

Every student and attorney here today has worked with a client who has experienced manmade suffering. And we all know that so many people in similar circumstances are never able to access any legal services.

We as lawyers and law students have a role to play in changing the things that are forcing people to be resilient. We should recognize that a just society is one in which luck does not play a significant or determinative role in the wellbeing and security of community members. We should fight against harmful laws and policies that infringe on the dignity of people who have been denied access to the legal system. We can do this by ensuring that individual clients are represented, by supporting community organizing, and by working for needed policy changes and reforms.

Serving the public interest is a professional obligation prescribed in the Preamble to the Model Rules of Professional Conduct, and it is also articulated in Berkeley Law's Mission and Learning Outcomes. Thus, I hope that the law school will do more to sustain its public interest and social justice communities. I hope that Berkeley Law will further support the wonderful clinical faculty and staff who commit themselves to teaching students and supporting us in so many ways--many of which go wholly uncompensated. I also hope that the law school will make efforts to affirmatively teach 1Ls about the legal profession and what's wrong with it. Finally, we as an

institution should work to create a pipeline in which students, and particularly students of color, are encouraged to participate in clinics and pursue public interest work. Thank you.