Commencement 2003: "Keep That Fire Burning"

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Commencement 2003:  
“Keep That Fire Burning”

“Our challenge is to keep the spirit of giving that we found on Sept. 11 going in our lives.”

Commencement speaker Hon. Sonia Sotomayor, United States circuit judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The graduation was held the day before Mother’s Day, and each graduate was presented with a rose in honor of his or her mother.
Shot through with the lingering lessons of 9/11 and leavened with the joy of new beginnings, UB Law School's 2003 Commencement ceremonies released the next generation of lawyers into the world with an inspiring send-off.

For a class that numbered 236 Juris Doctor recipients and 24 who earned the master of laws, the Law School's 114th annual Commencement nearly filled the Center for the Arts with friends and family. The graduates and their audience heard repeated encouragement to use their new degrees "to do both well and good," as Dean R. Nils Olsen put it in his introductory remarks to the ceremony.

The exercises were held the day before Mother's Day, and each graduate was presented with a rose in honor of his or her mother.

University Vice Provost Kerry S. Grant brought a noble quote — not from some august historical figure, but from the television show Law & Order: "Without the law there can be no justice, and without justice there can be no freedom."

"Becoming a member of the legal profession now takes on more urgency than perhaps ever before in American history," Grant said. "Your professional role and your social role become more vital" because of the nation's war on terrorism."

Lynn A. Clarke '85, president of the UB Law Alumni Association, congratulated the graduates on their entry into "that wonderful family known as UB Law." And she commended to them UB Law's GOLD (Graduates of the Last Decade) Group, which she said provides "invaluable networking, mentoring and continuing legal education opportunities. In addition, you will meet some of the greatest people you will ever meet, and you will have fun along the way."

"Welcome to our day!" began the student address by Jason Anthony Llorenz '03, who went on to ruminate...

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Ralph Hayes

Top: Shazia N. Nagamia and James S. Giardina.
Above: Jason Anthony Llorenz
Without the law there can be no justice, and without justice there can be no freedom.”

Associate Professor
James A. Wooten

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nate about the “dreams and stories” of the graduating class—nurtured, he said, at 3 a.m. at IHOP, at the gym, at Sunday brunch. “Maybe American Dreams should be a Law School class,” he said.

“We are a unique generation of new lawyers, forged less by fire than by the collegiality that UB Law fosters,” Lorenz spoke of an American social state in which millions of people lack job security and health benefits, and said that lawyers in response must recognize their responsibilities to the profession, to the rule of law and to “the need to fight for justice.”

“Some people wait a lifetime for a moment like this,” he concluded, “and this is truly our moment.”

The recent tribulations of her hometown New York City figured heavily in the keynote address by Sonia Sotomayor, circuit judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. Sotomayor, the first woman of Puerto Rican descent to serve on the federal bench, was raised in a housing project in the South Bronx and went on to Princeton University and Yale Law School, where she edited the Yale Law Journal.

Known as a champion of the value of pro bono work by attorneys, Sotomayor returned to that theme often in her address. But she began with some thoughts about the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and how they changed Americans’ perceptions of New York.

“The diversity of New York City is legendary worldwide,” she said, “representing every racial, religious and political group in the world.” In the subways, offices and houses of worship, she said, “we live in a diverse community every day. In our diversity, we New York City people scare many people, including ourselves sometimes.”

But moments of grace in the aftermath of that terrible day, she said, afforded the
opportunity of seeing past those differences into the commonalities all New Yorkers, indeed all people, share. As evidence, Sotomayor told of a televised interview with a Midwestern woman “who had thought New York City a strange place and its people odd, but she realized we were just like the people in her hometown.”

Pointing out her own upbringing as a Latina woman, Sotomayor said: “In celebrating my diversity, I often forgot the commonality of our human experiences. It takes a tragedy like Sept. 11 to realize that the differences that alienate us from each other and that we sometimes project on each other are superficial.”

The judge cited an outpouring of volunteerism in the wake of that tragedy, including thousands of hours of pro bono work by lawyers, and said: “What is our challenge today? It is not to fight terrorism. Our challenge is to keep the spirit of giving that we found on Sept. 11 going in our lives. You must keep that fire burning in your personal and professional lives. Even though we were shocked by the events of Sept. 11, and our grief was great, we felt good about serving others. We need to keep that feeling going.”

Sotomayor said less than 30 percent of indigent people who need a lawyer – for such matters as writing a will, preparing an uncontested divorce or reviewing a lease – actually find one. “You can

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LATIN HONORS 2003

Summa Cum Laude
Tamara L. DiVasto
Robert Joseph Fluskey Jr.
Sheryl A. Kashuba
John Philip Longobardo
Paul Andrew Sanders

Magna Cum Laude
Timothy Alan Collins
Robert Day
Beth-Anne Carole DiDio
Matthew Lawrence DiRisio
Megan Kathleen Dorrite
Tonia Marie Ettinger
John Mark Jennings
James Michael Lennon
Thomas John Maxian
Nadine Esther Patterson
Dawn Marie Rooth
Eric Daniel Usinger
Dmitriy Valentinovich Verenyov

Cum Laude
Fawn Amber Arnold
Jessica Marie Beller
Keith Ian Bernstein
Jennifer Lynn Biletnikoff
Mary Beth Brandoni
Jorian L. Brock
Thomas Clark Burnham
Matthew Aaron Galarco
Marc Richard Davies
Kelley A. DeAngelus
Gina Marie DePrima
Catherine Anne Doran
Mariely Lindsay Downey
David Andrew Eghigian
Ronald Fine
Kelly Ann Gale
Elena Anastasia Gekas
Christopher Stephen Glasco
Jonathan Gerald Gorman
Bernadette Marie Hoppe
Jason M. Kiefer
Brian Wright Kittle
Joseph Thomas Kozlowski
Thomas Martin Krol
Ian Thomas Lane
Joseph Alexander Leta
Jason Allen MacBride
Lorenzo Napolitano
Margaret Dolan Needham
April Jennifer Orlowski
Andrew John Potak
John F. Quinn
Stephanie Blodwyn Rohrer
Gina Marie Rossettie
Angelique Monika Shingler
Michelle Corinne Smeadala
Amber Mary Stanwix
John Albert Stanwix
Jaclyn Suzanne Wanemaker
Sarah L. Wannop
Steven W. Wells

Above: Professor John H. Schlegel and David M. Abbaloy
Left: Mariely L. Downey and child
2003 COMMENCEMENT AWARDS AND PRIZES

Sixty-two students at the University at Buffalo Law School received awards during the school’s 114th commencement on May 10.

The Law School’s top award, the Max Koren Award, went to John Philip Longobardo (Tonawanda).

The John N. Bennett Achievement Award was shared by Tamara L. DiVasto (Ithaca), Robert Joseph Fluskey (Amherst) and Sheryl A. Kashuba (Kenmore).

The Dale S. Margulis Award went to Margaret Dolan Needham (Syracuse).

The Birzon Prize in Clinical Legal Studies was given to Dia Helen Nicolatos (Buffalo).

American Bankruptcy Institute Medal for Excellence in Bankruptcy went to Steven W. Wells (Springville).

American Bar Association and the Bureau of National Affairs Award for excellence in the study of Intellectual Property Law was given to Robert Day (Spencerport), Marybeth Priore (Williamsville) and Angelique Monika Shingler (Amherst).

American Bar Association and The Bureau of National Affairs Award for superior academic performance in the study of Labor and Employment Law was given to Catherine Anne Doran (Buffalo), Kelly Ann Gale (West Seneca) and Jason M. Kiefer (Rochester).

Charles Dauwe Award for research in the law of real property went to Seth Adam Weinstein (Williamsville).

Professor Louis DelCotto Award in Tax was presented to Tamara L. DiVasto (Ithaca).

Maurice Frey Award in Family Law was given to Amber Mary Stanwix (Cheektowaga).

Edith and David Goldstein Award for debtor-creditor and bankruptcy law was presented to Jaclyn Suzanne Wannemaker (Buffalo).

The Thomas E. Headrick “Trees and Forest” Award in Corporate Finance was given to Paul Philip Parisi (Rochester).

Adolf Homburger Law Alumni Association Award went to Robert Day (Spencerport).

Judge Matthew J. Jason Appellate Practice Award was given to Langston David McFadden (Rochester).

David Kocbery Award was given to Bradley Ross Girdler (Buffalo).

Judge William J. Regan Award went to Mariely Lindsay Downey (Amherst).

Robert J. Connelly Trial Technique Awards were presented to: David M. Abbatoy (Buffalo); Fawn Amber Arnold (Amherst); Julie Ann Atti (Buffalo); Jacqueline Jamie DeGallia (Attica); Gina Marie DePrima (Tonawanda); David Andrew Eghigian (Amherst); Thomas Joseph Grillo Jr. (Williamsville); Brian Robert Hogan (Buffalo); Susan Marie Howard (Waterport); Sarah Anne T. Janes (Buffalo); Thomas Martin Krol (Buffalo); Sean Lair (Buffalo); Langston David McFadden (Rochester); Charles Anthony Messina (Tonawanda); Amanda Beth Newton (Amherst); Kristin Anne St. Mary (Buffalo); Martin Alex Polowy (Buffalo); and Kate Houghton (Buffalo).

Law Faculty Awards were presented to: Fawn Amber Arnold (Amherst); Sheryl A. Kashuba (Kenmore); Susan M. Schwing (Buffalo); and Kristin Anne St. Mary (Buffalo).

New York State Bar Association Ethics Award went to April Jennifer Orlowski (North Tonawanda); Christi Lynn Caratozzolo (Seneca Falls), and Gretchen Marie Kaplan (Orchard Park).

Carlos C. Alden Award for the Buffalo Law Review went to John Philip Longobardo (Tonawanda).

Justice Philip Halpern Award for excellence in writing went to James Michael Lennon (Williamsville).

Order of Barristers went to Julie Ann Atti (Buffalo); Elizabeth C. Barcena (Buffalo); Keith Ian Bernstein (Hyde Park, NY); Charles David James Case (Newark, NY); Lisa Marie Danish (Youngstown); Nadine A. Graham (Yonkers), Arienne J. Irving (East Aurora); James Michael Lennon (Williamsville), Devin Nicole White (Buffalo).

Justice M. Dolores Donovan Award and scholarship was presented to Vanessa Suzanne Guite (Buffalo) and Langston David McFadden (Rochester).

Linda S. Reynolds Award for equal justice went to Bernadette Marie Hoppe (Buffalo).

Kenneth A. Gomez Memorial Award for equality and justice went to Mary Ellen Alonso (Buffalo), Elizabeth DeLeon (NYC) and Jason Anthony Llorenz (Brooklyn).

Activist’s Gavel Award for democratic and liberal ideals went to Ellen Kathleen Poch (Buffalo).

Minority Bar Association of Western New York Award went to Erica Rae Williamson (Buffalo) and Langston David McFadden (Rochester).

National Association of Women Lawyers Award went to Tonya Marie Ettinger (Lockport).

UB Law Alumni Association GOLP Group Award for leadership skills went to Luke S. Bassis (NYC).

Milton Kaplan Law and Social Development Award went to Elena Anastasia Gekas (Rochester).

The Women Lawyers Of Western New York Award for children’s rights and/or family violence went to Stephanie Blodwyn Rohrer (Pittsburgh).

Left to right: Lynn A. Clarke ’85, Vice Dean Peter R. Pitigoff and Lawrence P. Castellani

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help in countless ways,” she said. “What you need is the heart and soul to do so. Being a hero to someone else is gratifying. It will give a meaning and a richness to your lives as lawyers that nothing else will ever bring.

“Sept. 11 was a great tragedy,” she concluded. “But it will be an even greater tragedy if we forget the lesson it taught us: how good it feels to do good for others.”

Preceding the announcement of awards and prizes and the conferral of degrees, Dean Olsen recognized the UB Law Class of 1953, marking its 50-year reunion. Fifteen of the class’ 94 members were present at the Commencement ceremony.

This year’s 13-member student Commencement Committee was headed by Class of ’03 members Alissa Hope Dien and Vanessa Suzanne Guite.