

Good evening everyone. Thank you so much for tuning into this meeting. Your presence here tonight means the world. Welcome to our new normal.

Before I get into my very brief remarks, I would like to thank everyone who worked so tirelessly and who were instrumental in putting together this program and making sure that we could still have this event under the guise of the “new virtual world.” Thanks Alicia and John. And Thank you Robin Wilson, Katie Kirby and Delante Spencer Thomas for your committee reports. You’ve all kept this association up to date and organized through this entire year.

Thank you to Brian Sullivan and Steve Wasserman for announcing the Scholarship recipients and leading the charge with the scholarship committee and selection process this year.

Thank you Ben Wiborg for leading the Nominating Committee in the nomination process and selection of new trustees and the transition of other trustees.

All of your relentless efforts throughout the year, and certainly over the last few months during this unprecedented pandemic, has been remarkable.

Thank you Dean Fisher for your remarks. It is always reassuring to hear you speak about the law school, from the day you came in as interim Dean until today. There's something about your positive attitude, confidence, and resilient and tenacious spirit, along with your innovative and thought provoking strategic planning that encourages continued effort and drive towards growth. I am confident that the school is in good hands. Thank you.

Thank you to those who are not a part of this program, there are too many to name - please don't take offense if I haven't named you, but those who have worked constantly behind the scenes all year long to help grow and to help the sustainability of this organization. Thank you all for your all for all that you do in making sure that this organization runs like a well-oiled machine.

Thanks to my family...

This year has been a year of a lot of firsts under the leadership of John Calabrese. His impeccable organization, preparedness, professionalism and outreach to judges, law school representatives and alumni in general throughout the community has taken this Association to yet another level. You've heard some of the things that he's spearheaded during his time of

presidency, like my favorite - opening his home for the first meeting of the year with an incredible spread and amazing selection of wines that came directly from his family's restaurant across state lines... all in the midst of a power outage! Thanks for setting the stage John for 2020!

But seriously, some of the things that he has done include working closely with the Dean, updating the Code of Regulations, initiating the endowment fund, structuring financial sustainability for the organization, and finally getting a long awaited and demanded website specifically for the Alumni Association. Not only did he manage to successfully spearhead these efforts, but he managed to drive this association straight through this unprecedented COVID-19 time period unscathed , while already setting the stage for things that couldn't take place this year, for reasons outside of his control, to take place next year. For all of these reasons and for reasons that we don't have enough time to go over, I'd like to recognize John Calabrese for his efforts. John on behalf of the CMLAA I would like to present you with this award of recognition. If you were here, I would hug you, shake your hand and present you with this plaque. But as a part of our virtual meeting, Alicia will hold the award up and read it to you.

Now, for my brief remarks!

As this day has been approaching I have been thinking back over the past four years as an Officer for the Alumni Association - when I came in as the treasurer under the leadership of my long-term mentor Chief Magistrate Gregory Clifford when he was President. Time has flown by since then. And despite my kicking and screaming out of fear of the responsibility and accountability of being the treasurer, I stand here honored. Honored that he paved the way for me to one day follow in his footsteps, and the footsteps of so many other esteemed colleagues from this fine institution. Thank you Chief Magistrate Clifford and thanks to all of you who have led this organization before me.

I started looking back at all of the years that I've been a member of the Alumni Association. It was at that time that I was reminded that it has been 20 years this year since I graduated from Cleveland-Marshall. And when I think about my involvement in the Alumni Association, I think back even further to when I was a student. Because it was at that time, that despite my kicking and screaming, my long-term mentor Chief Magistrate Clifford pulled me in as a member of the Minority Concerns Committee, now known as the Minority Outreach Committee. The

committee's primary goal was to serve as a support system to minority students and to make sure their concerns were not only heard, but where deemed appropriate, they were advocated for and addressed as well. This included making sure that the minority students had both a face and a voice at the school.

Involvement in that committee and efforts of that nature, *at that time* seemed like the right thing to do. Today, involvement of this nature and more, are more important than ever given the current state of affairs in America and around the world. As I look at the media and social media feed, I am saddened by what appears to be society taking steps backwards as it relates to equality and justice.

This weekend I went to the "Justice for George Floyd Rally" organized by BLM with guest speakers from one of our own- Ian Friedman, president of the CMBA. As I looked around the crowd, I saw people of all races and ethnicities. At one point it appeared that there were more whites than blacks. The solidarity. The unity. The togetherness brought tears to my eyes. As a lawyer, the cries and chants of "No Justice No Peace" shot daggers through my heart, as I thought... "what am I doing to ensure that Justice is served."

As I look around the screen, I see faces of the law school, the legal community, the alumni association, family members, friends, and colleagues. All of whom I consider as my “family!” In the midst of all that is going on in the world today, that means something. Admittedly, something much bigger than it would have last year. Or even 4-5 months ago. Despite, race, religion, sexual preference, national origin, political status or any other category that someone can differentiate one person from another, I see family.

And because you are family I want to share a story. People have been affected by the current events from so many different angles. Me in one way. My family members and friends in other ways. No one really understanding exactly how the other is impacted. Not even my daughter who is the subject of this story that I am about to share. I have 3 daughters. They were raised in Macedonia. A predominantly white community. My youngest daughter has had the same group of friends since junior high school. Most of them, about 6 other girls, are white. In college at Mount Union, most of her friends were white. She currently lives with one of her high school friends and one of her college friends. Both white. They do everything together. They traveled to Greece together. She was

dating a young man who is white. The current events have impacted her in ways none of us could have imagined. During her emotional turmoil, her group of people that she spends all of her time with were silent. Silent. They weren't saying anything to her. They weren't talking about it. She felt alone. So she asked them, why? She told them she needed them. Their response was that they wanted to say something. They wanted to be supportive. But they didn't know what to say. They didn't know what to do.

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So I come here today, to ask my "family" for two things. I ask the alumni association, members, honorary trustees, new and remaining trustees, for each of us to take a pledge. A pledge to do that which our law school stands for - "Learn Law Live Justice." It's written on the walls of the law school.

We are a united legal voice in the community. People are lost. People want change. But people don't know what the best way to make those changes is. Let's not be silent. Let's take a pledge to do our part to eradicate injustice.

Ask yourself these questions:

1. What am I doing to help America live justice?
2. What's my role?

3. What can I do?
4. And pledge to do it!

The second pledge should be to ask yourself:

1. How can I commit to investing in the future of this law school?

You heard the Dean and the scholarship committee. We need money for scholarships. The school needs money. We are in trouble. What will your financial investment be to the future of the school?

I've pledged to make a difference. To do my part in ensuring justice.

My investment pledge - I graduated in 2000. It's been 20 years. It's 2020. My first financial pledge is \$2020 for the upcoming year.

Make your pledge so that law school can be sustained and we can all continue to Live Justice!

Thanks for all of your support.