

Graduation 2000



The chess players in the corner of the park didn't seem to be paying attention, but they were the only ones. The rest of Washington Square Park, and all of New York it seemed, were focused on the sea of purple that surrounded the landmark fountain in the center of the park. The graduates' dazzling robes were reflected throughout the scene: purple flags flew from atop the arch, purple balloons escaped hands, loyalists from NYU's thirteen different schools brandished pompoms at each other, and a large bouquet of lilacs decorated the fountain. On graduation morning, the park reveals its true color, and it is Mayfair violet – those who read the graduation program learn not only the words to the school song, but also the proper name for its signature hue.



At the University graduation in the park, the Law School is merely one of thirteen schools, but Dean John Sexton made sure it was noticed. Out of the thousands of university graduates, only Ben Wizner and Inosi Nyatta, representing the J.D. and LL.M. classes respectively, were on the platform to receive (symbolic only for all) the coveted Dean's hug. The rest of the J.D. and LL.M. graduates were hugged individually the next day at the Law School Convocation in the Theater at Madison Square Garden. At the Garden, Sexton laid out the order of the day: for each student, he said, "there will be a special hug and we'll all huzzah." Speaking for the faculty,

Howard Greenberger, both of whom entered the Law School in 1951, and both of whom retired this year.

Jason Yat-Sen Li of Sydney, Australia, the class' student speaker, took the stage next to describe the two great extralegal lessons he took from his year at NYU. The first was humility. He recalled that many of his fellow students had been "legends" in the previous stages of their lives; then they arrived in New York and found a whole adopted family full of equally legendary people. The second lesson was the value of multiculturalism and diversity. "Perhaps I was your first Asian-Australian friend – perhaps you were my first Mexican friend, my first German



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Sexton brought the graduates through one of those cycles, reminding them of the first time he addressed them, in Tishman Auditorium during orientation. "We told you then that you need not worry; that even as you heard the remarkable credentials of the people with you, you shouldn't be afraid; that you deserved to be here," he recounted. "I told you it would work out. And it has!"

Before all the hugging got underway, though, Sexton noted other passages: he remembered Fritz Alexander ('51), who passed away this year. Alexander, the first student to step inside Vanderbilt Hall, went on to become the first African-American to sit on the New York's highest court. The Dean also honored Professors Dan Collins and

friend," he said. "We are the generation that can forge a consciousness of national identity with no regard to the color of our skin."

Sexton then introduced the J.D. speaker, Rafiq Kalam Id-Din, with a tale about the Law School conference last November that gathered the leaders of six countries. "As president of the Student Bar Association, Rafiq demanded a seat with the other heads of state." Pointing out that he "deserved to be at that table," Sexton took the opportunity to launch Id-Din's Senate campaign, telling the audience that he expected Rafiq ultimately to win that post.

Id-Din took the Dean's pastoral style down his own road, exhorting his fellow-graduates to continue the "great work of changing nations." "I have seen you awaken. I have seen you powerful," he said. "I have seen you provide intellectual food for minds that are starving. I will see you in a different place."

Zachary Carter ('75), former United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New

York, continued the activist theme. Carter recalled that he came to the Law School as the Vietnam War was ending, school busing was heating up, and President Richard Nixon, "a man who knew how to commit real crimes and misdemeanors," was in, and out, of the White House. He recalled the feelings of guilt that student radicals felt as they went through law school, worrying that they were becoming part of the establishment. But he also remembered the achievements of his class, like improving diversity at the Law School and expanding its clinical programs. Most importantly, he reported, "We came to understand we had a partner in the Law School itself. Sometimes it was reluctant, sometimes it was enthusiastic, but it was always better here than anywhere else."

After recounting the good work done by members of his class, Carter reminded the graduates of the work that remains for them to do.

And then, it was time for the hoods. After working out how the tall students might receive hoods from some of the shorter faculty members, the ceremony went smoothly. A name was called. A student stepped up, back to the faculty, face to the audience. The hood was draped, and the student strode across the stage into the arms of the long-awaited Dean's hug. The cycle started again.

NYU tradition provided a final reminder of the cycles that intersect at graduation. The last students to cross the stage received their hoods from close relatives who in earlier times had graduated from the Law School. Maxwell Pfeifer ('49), the oldest alumni relative, hooded his daughter Tara. Judge John Koetl, a member of the faculty, hooded his niece, Susan Kearns. Mothers hooded sons, brothers hooded brothers, fiancées hooded their betrothed. The ceremony culminated in a moment that John Sexton would have had to invent if it hadn't actually happened. LL.M.s Sylvia Carreno and Benoit Charriere-Bournazel, married just the day before, hooded each other, then they joined the dean for a triple hug and a dance.

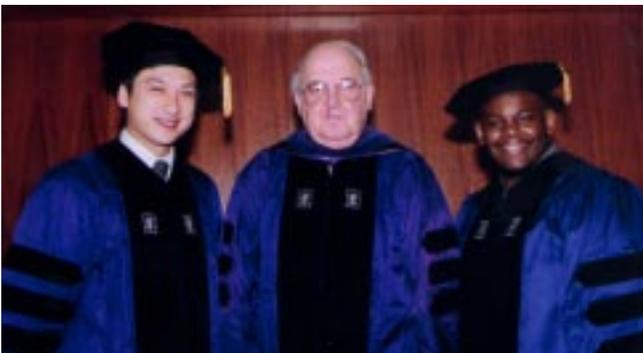
Then, the circle unbroken, Sexton ended the formal Convocation with three all-important announcements: he called the students to live up to their potential and to "always love this place." And he invited everyone back to the Law School to continue the festivities in a day long party. Hours later, the graduates, their families – and, of course, the Dean – were still exchanging hugs. ■

▶ Rafiq Kalam Id-Din, Student Bar Association president leads students into Washington Square Park.



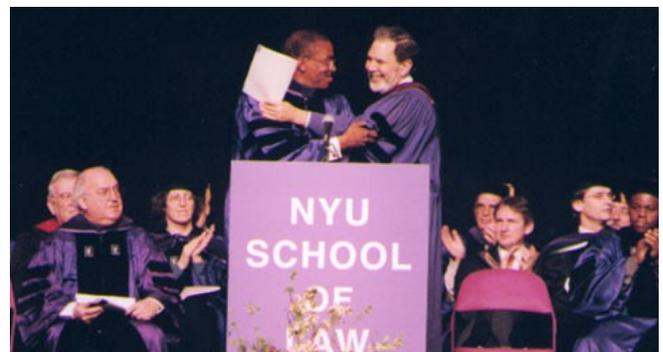
▶ Ben Wizner accepts his diploma on behalf of the Class of 2000.

▶ Substantial Performance, the Law School *a cappella* group, opens the Law School Convocation with *The National Anthem*.



▶ Student speakers Jason Yat-Sen Li (left) and Rafiq Kalam Id-Din with Lester Pollack ('57), President of the NYU School of Law Foundation.

▶ Dean John Sexton welcomes Zachary Carter ('75) to the podium to deliver the Convocation Address.





◀ Jia Chen with her husband, Xusheng Yang (M.C.J.'98) and daughter, Stephanie

▶ Hans Christensen with his mother, Andrea Christensen ('66)



▶ Jonathan Rogal with his sister, Melissa ('96)

Family

▶ Naomi Liss with her father, Solomon ('72)



▶ Douglas Segal with his father, David (LL.M.'67)





Sarah Epstein with her father, Bennett ('69)



Frank Rambo with his uncle, Edwin Williamson ('64)



Album



Tara Pfeifer with her father, Maxwell ('49)



Emily Poler with her mother, Ellen ('69)



Allison Teitler with her father, Stanley ('70, LL.M.'84)