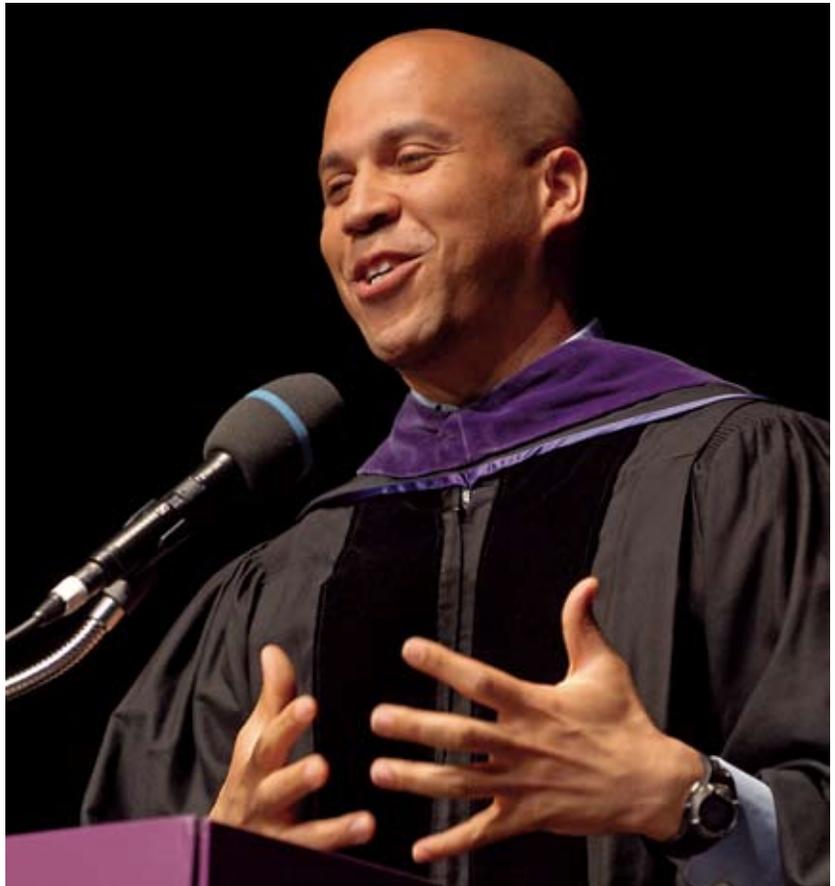
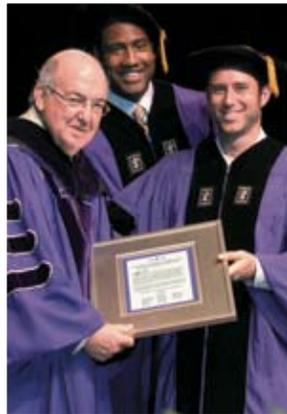
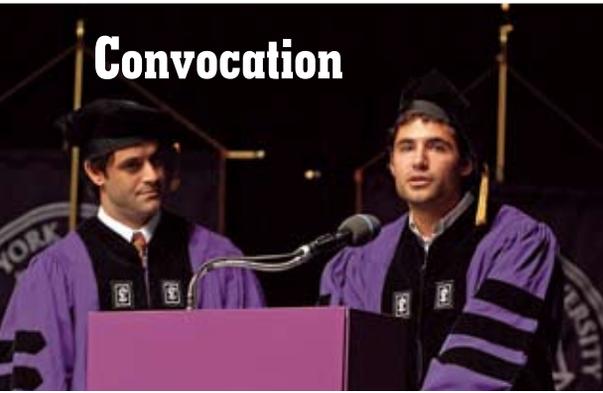


Convocation



Granit and Houdrouge, top; clockwise from right: Cory Booker; Law School board chairman Lester Pollack '57 accepts a \$210,000 class gift from Jason Washington and Moshe Orlin; Hernandez.

“Go Out in the World and Stand Tall”

ONLY 10 YEARS OUT OF LAW SCHOOL himself, Newark Mayor Cory Booker was in a prime position to reach the graduating students during his keynote address to the Class of 2007.

In 1999, when he was a Newark city councilman, Booker met Ms. Jones, a resident of the crack-ridden and violent Brick Towers housing project, who said to him, “You need to understand that the world you see around you reflects what’s inside.” Booker pitched a tent in the middle of the project and staged a 10-day hunger strike to draw media attention to the flagrant drug dealing that had paralyzed the community. He remained a resident of the Towers until 2006. The tactic so successfully drove dealers away that he moved temporarily into a motor home on one of Newark’s most dangerous street corners the following year.

Immediately after losing Newark’s 2002 mayoral race, Booker vowed to run again and won by a landslide in 2006. Much to the chagrin of his security detail, he proved his housing choices weren’t a campaign stunt by renting an unassuming rowhouse apartment in the crime-filled south section of town, where he continues to reside.

Since Booker took office as mayor a year ago, he’s instituted the Central Narcotics Division, a new police unit designed to combat violent and drug crimes; holds monthly office hours for citizens, and offers incentives for city agencies to hire Newark residents.

In the end, Booker reiterated the simple advice his grandfather gave to him on his law school graduation day. “Stand tall,” he said, bringing the cheering members of the audience to their feet.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Growing up in the poor East New York section of Brooklyn, Damaris Hernandez, the J.D. student speaker, excelled thanks to the support of her family and teachers. She graduated magna cum laude from Harvard, and, as the first in her family to pursue a graduate degree, earned a coveted AnBryce scholarship to attend the Law School.

While a second-year law student, Damaris and classmate Carlos Siso '07 co-founded TruePotential, a groundbreaking LSAT preparation program that provides low-income prospective law students with practice tests, help with their statements and abundant moral support. While coach-

ing and inspiring TruePotential recipients such as Rosanna Platzer and AnBryce Scholar Helam Gebremariam, who are now 1Ls at the Law School, Hernandez juggled her part-time job as a law clerk, coursework, a social life, editorial duties for the *Review of Law & Social Change*, and the responsibility of chairing the Latino Law Student Association’s admissions board.

“Damaris is the personification of what I’m trying to achieve,” Gebremariam said. Without TruePotential, she added, she would not have had a shot at a top law school.

“I’ve had the opportunity to experience a privileged borderland between two cultures,” Damaris said in her address, “that of the poor, inner-city, Spanish-speaking, Puerto Rican daughter” and that of the soon-to-be elite law school graduate, prestigious law firm associate (at Cravath, Swaine & Moore) and cofounder of a non-profit organization. “In my *sal si puede*, get-out-if-you-can neighborhood, the closest I ever thought I’d be to three stripes were the ones on my Adidas,” Damaris said, pointing to the black stripes on the sleeves of her gown. “I have evolved from the Nuyorican to the NYU-Rican,” she marveled.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Rayan Houdrouge and Omer Granit stood on the stage of the Theater at Madison Square Garden together, taking turns telling a story about Mideast relations. The unlikely duo—Omer is Israeli, and Rayan Lebanese—described how they met as war raged between their homelands and how they forged a bond of friendship that is, in their words, as strong as one between brothers.

Days before each traveled to New York to begin the LL.M. program in corporate law, the 2006 war between Israel and Lebanon erupted after Hezbollah forces crossed into northern Israel, kidnapping two soldiers and killing three others. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) responded in part by bombing a number of Lebanese targets.

Omer, who is still an officer in the IDF, was called into service two days after arriving (but was excused from duty to stay in school). He learned that a friend in his brigade had been killed. Rayan kept up with the terrible events in his home village of Qana, a target of IDF air strikes, on CNN.

Though angry and frustrated about the war, the two did not allow politics to dominate their conversations with fellow students. However, Rayan said in their shared speech (transcribed at right), they initially tried to keep their opinions to themselves.

Maintaining their silence quickly proved impossible. In September 2006, a heated debate held by the Center on Law and Security between counterterrorism expert Michael Sheehan, Lebanese journalist Hala Jaber and former Hauser Global Law Professor Sami Zubaida about Hezbollah forced the issue into the open. Afterward, Omer and Rayan continued talking; they commiserated about their anguish as well as their hope for a peaceful future in the Middle East. “The crucial thing was sharing our experiences and our vision,” said Rayan. “This was the only way we would be able to find common ground.”

A soccer field by the Hudson River was where Rayan and Omer could let off steam and get to know each other. “In the beginning, we made sure to talk about unimportant things,” said Rayan. “We talked about playing soccer, scoring points—and about the passes that Omer didn’t give me.” Omer’s alleged ball-hogging seems to have paid off, however, as their team won the intramural league championship.

The two graduates relish their bond. “Once you realize that there are people beyond the TV screens who like to play sports and go out,” Omer said, “you say to yourself, ‘They’re not so different.’” □

“At NYU, the World Is in the Hallways”

For the first time in its 173-year history, the Law School had two graduate student speakers at convocation, delivering their speech together. Omer Granit and Rayan Houdrouge were graduated with LL.M.s in corporate law. Granit is an associate at White & Case in New York, and Houdrouge will soon be an associate at Lenz & Staehelin in Switzerland. Below is an edited transcript of their speech.

Omer: Rayan Houdrouge is my friend. He was born in Senegal and his father is a Shia Muslim Lebanese. He is from the southern Lebanese village of Qana that is tragically known for bombings in 1996 and 2006 that together killed 130 civilians.

My name is Omer Granit. I am an Israeli who served with the Israeli Defense Forces in southern Lebanon. I have lost many of my friends in conflicts between Israel, Lebanon and Palestine.

Rayan and I are both graduating from the NYU School of Law LL.M. Program. Before this year we didn’t know each other. We arrived at NYU last summer in the middle of the war between our respective countries. At that time, we were angry, frustrated and hopeless.

Rayan: Because of these strong feelings we took a somewhat defensive position and attitude when we arrived at NYU. We said to ourselves: “Enjoy the stay, improve your legal knowledge and try to take the most advantage of this experience. But keep your views for yourself; don’t share your opinions with others because you will waste your time; they won’t understand you.”

However, here at NYU, Omer and I have learned that we were totally wrong. In fact, during this year we have had the opportunity to truly express and discuss our ideas and perspectives with other people, even the least expected ones.

We deeply believe that all of the students of the LL.M. Program have learned during this year that NYU is an extraordinary community that is based on the diversity of opinions of its students and professors. Now we know that NYU is a community we belong to not because we share a common and uniform vision but because of the quality and uniqueness of our own visions. At NYU we are all together because we are all different.

Omer: The NYU experience is about possibilities. At NYU the world is in the hallways, it’s in the classrooms, it’s in the library, it is there for you to know, to discuss, to discover, to understand.

The NYU experience is the opportunity to attend a class on Islamic law with an Iranian teacher. The NYU experience is the opportunity to play on a soccer team with Brazilians, Germans, Japanese and Senegalese. The NYU experience is the opportunity to hear Henry Kissinger talking about transatlantic relations and Al

Gore talking about the environment. The NYU experience is also the opportunity to go to the Fall Ball and have a drink with American J.D.s and debate burning issues.

Of course, these are only a few examples. However, they show what makes the NYU experience an extraordinary journey; it represents a unique chance to discover the other, to speak with him, to share with him and to start to better understand him. The NYU experience constitutes a fantastic tool to expose us to different opinions, ideas and perspectives. It presents us with this challenge to discover the other on a somewhat “neutral” ground, which allows us to free our minds, and the rest follows.

Rayan: During this year we have had to defend our positions, to argue and confront. And we believe that thanks to this confrontation, we now know more about ourselves, our qualities and our limits.

This year at NYU has been truly about building character, personality and friendships. It has helped us to enhance our goals and encouraged us to take responsibility. This year was a great legal experience; but it was also, and perhaps more importantly, a socially and politically stimulating experience.

We have met many people from all over the world and we have seen many differences among us. But at the same time we think that today we view ourselves less as citizens of a certain country and more just as humans with common fears, needs and objectives.

Now we are in a better position to understand the approaches and reasoning of people with other backgrounds and cultures. And this is why today we are better legal professionals.

As to the conflict involving our countries and Palestine, I must admit that Omer and I still disagree on a lot of points. But now we strongly feel that the crucial thing is sharing our respective experiences and visions, because it is only through this that we will be able to find common ground for solutions.

I won’t lie: We are still angry and we won’t forget what happened to my village. We won’t forget what happened to Omer’s friends; we won’t forget all the Israelis, Lebanese and Palestinians who died in the conflicts. But today we have hope, because today we believe a discussion with the other is possible.

PROFILES



Ben Gauntlett

HAUSER SCHOLAR BEN GAUNTLETT rarely cracked open a textbook in high school. The six-foot-tall Aussie was a jock all the way, playing cricket, rugby and athletics—the down-under equivalent to track and field. In 1995, his sporting days came to an abrupt end when he suffered a broken neck during a rugby match in his hometown of Perth, leaving him a quadriplegic with limited movement in his arms, hands and upper body. Recovering in the hospital, Gauntlett set aside darker thoughts: “You think you’re badly off, then you see someone on a ventilator, or a guy who gets just one visitor a year,” he recalls. “You realize how lucky you truly are.”

But determination, not luck, drove Gauntlett’s future successes. Turning to academics, he finished two years of school in one. He entered the University of Western Australia initially to study medicine, but switched to law because “law is more dependent on intellect than physicality,”

he says. Traveling with his prize-winning moot court team gave him the confidence to undertake arduous trips abroad. Graduating in 2002 with dual bachelor’s—law and commerce—he went to Oxford on a Rhodes Scholarship, then on to NYU for his LL.M. in trade regulation.

He lives alone, cooks for himself and pushes his nonmotorized wheelchair. He’s assigned a notetaker, and friends help him navigate the streets in a pinch, although he was homebound after snowstorms: “It’s too bad your mates don’t have a spare bulldozer on them to help you out in the snow.”

Gauntlett is helping write a brochure for NYU law students with disabilities. “It’s one of those evolving things where people with disabilities stand on the shoulders of others,” he says. “The next person will have it easier.” He will return to Oxford to finish his doctorate in competition law, with an eye toward practicing law back in his native Australia. □



Commencement



“In recognition of his outstanding professional achievements, his profound civic and philanthropic legacy, and his unwavering devotion to this institution...”

.....

Dean Richard Revesz introducing Lester Pollack '57, chair of the board of trustees of the NYU School of Law, who was presented the Albert Gallatin Medal by President John Sexton





"We are always asked to identify ourselves as belonging to a category—male/female, straight/gay, Caucasian/African American/Asian/Hispanic. What would happen if we were all to simply identify as human beings first?"

.....

Rahim Moloo (LL.M.)
Graduate Student Speaker



"Esteemed for your fortitude, wisdom and energy in fighting crime and corruption, you have earned the profound and enduring gratitude of your fellow citizens of the world."

.....

President John Sexton introducing Spanish Magistrate Baltasar Garzón Real, senior fellow at the Center on Law and Security, who was presented an honorary Doctor of Laws.



Katrina James

KATRINA JAMES HAS WORN MANY hats—even a baker’s cap. James, who learned pastry-making as an undergrad at Cornell, is bi-racial, black and white; and bi-national, born in England. When it comes to trying on careers, she embraces the *Sturm und Drang* with aplomb.

In college she had visions of being a public defender, but after interning at a child welfare agency in Harlem, James realized that her clients needed counseling more than reduced sentences. Putting law school on hold, she earned an M.S.W. at NYU.

Later feeling burned out by social work, James went into admissions and recruiting, first at Fordham and then at NYU’s Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and noticed a pattern: Candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds—regardless of ambition—often didn’t have the requisite qualifications. Rejecting one such student, she recalls: “I was heartbroken because I knew he could be a great practitioner.” She, too,

could have missed opportunities if not for the rigorous British schooling that placed her in accelerated classes. The comparison made James realize that her original plan, law school, would better equip her to offset these imbalances in our society.

James began at NYU thinking that “the next *Brown v. Board of Education* is coming, and I want to be a part of it.” She’s active in the Black Allied Law Students Association and the Coalition for Legal Recruiting, which promotes faculty diversity.

Next she’ll work in Manhattan as an associate at Clifford, Chance, a firm she chose for its securities litigation work, and volunteer as an admissions officer at TruePotential, the LSAT prep course for low-income students started at the Law School: “I might not use all of the nonprofit skills that I have right away, but I’ll be prepared for the day when I move on to do other things...whatever I decide to do.”

We’ll add more pegs to the hat rack. □



The Empire State Building shimmered in violet on commencement eve.

.....

President John Sexton awarded an honorary doctorate of fine arts to Wynton Marsalis, who was accompanied to the podium by Law School Trustee Anthony Welters '77. Bottom, Caroline Cincotta carried the School of Law banner into Washington Square Park.



Craig Winters

THE DISCOVERY OF AN INCRIMINATING email changed the course of Craig Winters's legal career.

Probing potential abuses in the insurance industry for then-New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, Winters, a summer intern, came across the smoking gun: an email from an employee of insurance broker Marsh & McLennan providing evidence of bid-rigging. That eventually led Spitzer to file a civil complaint against Marsh in October 2004, and to clean up the insurance industry. It also gave Winters a jumpstart on another career: writing.

That winter break he started work on a book, tentatively titled *The Spitzer Effect*, which would examine the AG's impact on the mutual-fund and insurance industries. Winters, whose interest is market regulation, assisted in Spitzer's earlier investigation into the mutual-fund business. In February 2005, he received an initial book offer that was too low to pay his credit card

debt. Financially strapped—he juggled academic jobs and house-sat while working for Spitzer—Winters believed in his book enough to aggressively court a top literary agent, and, by September, he had signed a handsome two-book deal (the second book deals with the impact of excessive executive compensation) with Knopf. Winters took off that fall semester to research the book (due out by January 2008), but was never far from campus. His bylines continued to appear in the Law School's student newspaper, the *Commentator*.

In September, he and his girlfriend, Katie Roberson-Young '06, plan to move to Miami, where he'll take a year to finish his books before looking for work as an assistant district attorney. Although Winters's long-term career plans are to investigate and prosecute white-collar crime as a D.A., he will keep his pencils sharp—just in case: "Writing is as fulfilling [as law] and allows me to enter and exit the legal profession." □