

No Ordinary J.D.

*Excerpts from the Hooding Ceremony remarks of
Rama Taib, President of the Law School's Class of 2010*

FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, I've struggled with this one agonizing question: "So Rama, how's law school going?" I never knew how to answer.

Do I tell them that it's going well?
*No—I'm studying or working around the clock, my entire livelihood is in a laptop right now, and in my free time, I have to figure out how to pronounce words like *res judicata* and *modus operandi*. It's awful!*

Do I tell them that it's bad?
Well, no—the people are great, I'm learning a lot, I get to have real live clients, and there is always free food somewhere in the law school. It's great!

Do you see the problem here? And after three years, I still can't find the words that accurately describe law school, much less what it means to graduate.

I guess the obvious answer is that graduation opens doors. But for us, it's not so simple.

Because behind door #1 is The Bar Exam. Behind door #2 is Finding a Job. And don't even think about opening door #3 because that's where your loans are hiding.

And that's one thing law students know all too well: If it's not one thing, it's another.

So today, let's just keep those doors closed. For once, let's focus on just one thing. Let's try to put everything else on hold today because today, my fellow graduates, we receive our Juris Doctor.

Juris Doctor. Let it sink in. Really think about what it means to have a J.D. (other than the fact that those two letters are going to look real nice after your name).

And no, it's not just a ticket to the bar exam. What we are receiving today is no ordinary J.D.

It is a J.D. from Maryland Law—one of the highest degrees attainable in this country from one of the finest institutions. It comes with a particular sense of pride and accomplishment.

We committed three, for some four, years of our lives to the study of law—practically eating, drinking, and breathing the law—and we survived to tell the tale.

We were broken down, picked apart, and transformed into attorneys.

We have forever changed how we write, how we work, even how we think, and to the great dismay of our family and friends, how we argue.



The change started off harmlessly. Making really bad jokes like: "That pothole is a tort waiting to happen!" or "Hmmm, what would the reasonable man do?"

But then things started getting out of control. Like developing an obsession with the Supreme Court Justices or watching an arrest take place and wondering, "What was the probable cause there? Was that guy read his rights?"

It's a little sickening but true.

This transformation is common to the law school experience, but again, I'm telling you, our degree is no ordinary J.D. A J.D. from Maryland Law is different.

And the difference is simple: People are nice here. Our professors and administrators really do care, and the students are always looking out for each other—sharing notes if you need them, bailing each other out when you get called on in class, and making sure you're not walking home alone after a late night in the library. There is a deep sense of community here.

And our class, especially, is very close. Don't believe me? Ask our now married classmates Jung and Allison Lee, or Chris and Elizabeth Webster.

We came in as complete strangers to one another but now, we're like family—one big, stressed-out, drama-filled family. And like all other families, we have many, many memories together.

Class of 2010. We might be going in different directions but all of these memories and what we've experienced at Maryland Law—that is the common root that we will always share.

Class of 2010. Today, we commit to uphold the ideals of our profession for the rest of our lives. Our profession is a noble one, and it is a privilege to become a part of it. I urge you to never, ever take that for granted.

Class of 2010. It is an honor to have been your colleague for three years. We finally made it. We made it together. Congratulations everyone.