

*Your Excellency, the Vice President,
Your Lordship, the Chief Justice
The Attorney General and Minister of Justice
Hon. Ministers of Government
The eminent Guest speaker
My lords,
My worshipers,
Hon. Members of Parliament,
Members of the Diplomatic and Consular corps
Members of the Bar Association
Members of the Fourth Estate
Staff and students of the Sierra Leone Law School
Parents and Guardians
Comrades and friends
Ladies and Gentlemen*

All protocols observed.

Permit me to usher this expression of gratitude and appreciation with roses of reminiscences, because tonight the glamours and the glitters undoubtedly belie the many rugged and dusty paths that we traversed to reach this isle of accomplishment of dreams.

During the last call ceremony, about a year ago, I could still remember myself and Julian Cole relishing the linguistic mastery of the Director of the Sierra Leone Law School and how we quickly reached our phones in trying to archive some of the professorial dictions which melodiously beat our ear drums.

Ladies and Gentlemen, tonight marks the end of a long journey which started at FBC. For five years we were together save for those from the Diaspora who joined us at the S/L Law Sch. At FBC we endeavored to be our brother's keeper in the face of manifest paucity of textbooks coupled with a chunk of the teaching methods which still refuse the handshakes of modern education dealing indiscriminate blows on us. Those four years were characterized by torrent of academic hardships which left quite a good number of us exhausted, while crushing out those students who were not necessarily unintellectually fit for the course but who were not blessed with muscles of perseverance to brave the prolonged fierce storms of the academic sails.

One unique thing about our LLB IV Class of Seventeen was the fact that the space traditionally reserved for the many cars of Final yr law students was never occupied by any of us. This reminds me of Umaru N. Koroma, my cousin, who hire purchased a one-door car which was clearly in desperate need of a museum space, in a bid to reduce the social scornful situation even though by an

insignificant margin. Apparently he had intended to surprise the rest of the class, the morning when he first attempted to showcase his material achievement. When he arrived at model, he carefully selected me and two other muscularly built male students who were standing in very long queues. By the time we got to the bridge leading up to FBC and the muscles of the two other students utilized to help the ailing engine, I appreciated my cousin's selection of the two students disregarding my preference for female students. Unfortunately, by the time we got to Harry Sawyer hill, neither the aging engine nor the over-exhausted muscles could help my Cousin's asset to climb the back of that historic hill which is never friendly to mechanically lazy vehicles.

Our LLB Class proudly secured a record space for the multiple second class honours results and the hundred percent admission into Law school. And for me the secret behind our success story was the fact that we were like one big family. Notwithstanding the fact that we did not and some of us still do not have personal vehicles we endeavored to visit one another, share study materials and attend parties together and I could still remember after we left Mr. Bultman's house party, we went together to witness the Lantern parade and almost slept outside Tommel's much talked about Church as one of the oldest, if not the oldest in this country.

Fortunately, when we got down to Law school, coupled with the fact that we were joined by some other students, we were able to occupy the parking spaces reserved for law school students and my cousin left us overwhelmed when he first drove his almost brand new pathfinder jeep to Law school.

We would never forget the whip-lashing unquantifiable stress every day, every moment in a hurry. On Mondays when we had Equity and Trust, we did not only put on the best manner of behavior but worked tirelessly throughout those 120minutes. I tell you, there was so much work, so much academic commitments and we sacrificed our every time to the course. Somebody told a story in class one day that there was a certain man who wanted to buy the best brain in this world, he went to a supermarket and requested for intelligent brains. He was shown the brain of the scientist with a \$2m price tag, the brain of a medical doctor with \$1m price tag, the Engineer's brain, the philosopher's brain etc the prospective buyer became unsettled and said "Show me the legal brain, I mean the lawyer's brain" and the seller brought it out but to his dismay, with a very low price tag of \$500,000 and he asked? Why the low price as compared to the others? The shopkeeper looked at him and said "these ones they do not use their brains that is why you always see them with their big books, they always rely on precedents." This, however, is never true of law school students, they definitely always use their brains. After going through the various Court Rules in civil procedure or the many instruments in the Legal Drafting module, you'd realize that it is only an excellent brain that would face an examination without them. Justice Roberts used to say to us "you are not a lawyer you don't carry books around, you commit them to memory". Theories

were developed in class in some brilliant presentations such as Roland Kamara's CTN theory which solved a difficult hypothetical case under the concept of 'Contract in restraint of trade'.

There was so much competition in class, I mean healthy competition, especially for the star pupil honour. We used to have three sets of nominated candidates, Cameroonian, diasporan and from FBC. And whenever a candidate made a contribution in class or answered a question, there were shouts of "O star pupil, S.P." from particularly his supporters. Though I was the first to be nominated for the award of star pupil, honestly, few months towards the exams I wasn't the likeliest candidate. I remember after the results were published, Abdul Karim Kamara who happened to have nominated me, looked at me and said indeed you were the first to be anointed for this position.

The class was full of humor, we had so much fun, this reminds me of Bernard Jones, my first encounter with him at law sch because he was not part of the class from FBC, when I first met him in class, I walked up to him, looked at his tie and said 'wow, Marks and Spencer indeed, this one is from the PZ subsidiary'. He looked at me as if to say, you don't even know me, why are laughing about my tie? He later confessed he was really vexed but soon realized that the class was just full of jokers. Seray Wurie and Darren Edwards were almost always heard arguing about who attended a more prestigious college in England. Julian would always tell us during lunch break that he was going to Crown bakery until he was discovered by the president, Festus Conteh in N'gor Mamie's cookery shop. Our foreign brothers were part of the fun too, I remember Ndip Mannseeh, boasting about being a Div 2 player in Cameroon but when we played against the Bar Association at Old skool grounds, most of us honestly thought that he was not even a potential for Div 4.

Irrespective of the fact that some members of our class were twice as old as some of us, we related well, Tommel used to refer to them as Class 7. Only that if you hear Edmond Cowan Jnr say "You want me to go physical"? I bet you, when you look at him you wouldn't have difficulty in finding a testimony to the veracity of that caution.

Like what President Obama said, "Though passion may strain, it must not break the bonds of our affection" Not often though we disagreed in order to reach concurrence on some salient issues but we never allowed those useful disagreements to overshadow our bonds of unity. I remember when Serray Wurie had a dispute with Yankuba, an ad hoc court was set up presided over by Umaru Napoleon Koroma and even though I put up a strong defence for my client, Seray-Wurie, he was ordered to apologise to Yankuba in front of the whole class and to buy him a pint of coke. So we organized these class room court sessions with

truncated rules of procedure but truly speaking more often than not, the sessions were dominated by pompous display of oral English.

The other day, I remember being asked by a current student of the law school how I did it, but I was quick to respond that her question should have been “how we did it” because I am only the first among equals.

To the present students of the Law School, let me reiterate what I told her: Attend classes always and pay keen attention to classroom lectures; Study like you never done before and take your continuous assessments seriously; organize proper study groups, because in the law school a one man army is easily injured by the fiery darts of the course; Pray hard, I wouldn’t have bothered to mention prayer if it didn’t work for me. Two weeks to the Bar examinations, I got 3/10 in Equity and Trust which left my overall continuous assessment below borderline, when I was given the script, Darren looked at me and said since he knew already I was working hard, man pray! Though it was surprising to have that kind of spiritual advice from him, it helped me realize that one needs more than hard work to thrive at the law school.

Ladies and gentlemen, now we can look back and proudly say we made it. It would never have been an epochal event tonight without your support and contribution in many and various ways. I want to express invaluable appreciation to the VP for gracing this occasion, the CJ for her wonderful statement tonight and the Guest Speaker for his/her talk on....To the rest of the eminent personalities of the high table, I want to say “Gratia”

To parents, guardians and those who have stood in loco parentis, we say “Merci infiniment”. This august achievement fundamentally proves that our parents and guardians have met their responsibilities. The financial and moral support they provided throughout these years did substantially help in bringing our dreams to fruition. Therefore, to our parents and guardians, you can consider tonight as the full maturity of your treasury bearer bond.

To the tutors and administrators of the Sierra Leone Law School, I want to express invaluable gratitude for the hectic task of preparing us for this honorable profession. To especially the deputy Director, Mr. Vincent who treated us as his children encouraging every shade of argument in class even if starkly absurd. Hon. Justice Roberts was not only excellent in his lectures but advised us often about life in general and how to prepare to reflect the honourable profession in our lives. And the Acting Prosecutor of the Special Court for S/L and President of the Bar association who would always endeavor to maintain standards in both his test and examination questions. And Pa Caesar would forever be remembered by us for his frequent use of the word “pulverized”, I became one of his favorite students because I was able to recite some of his favorite classical quotations.

The various secretaries, librarians, administrative assistants all played their parts in ensuring that tonight is not a fiasco. Julian Cole and I, especially because we were the last students to pay our fees, would not forget the generous efforts of Mr. McCarthy, the Finance Officer who advocated for us time and again so that we were not driven from class.

To the new set of lawyers, let us thank ourselves for reaching this port of success, because we sailed sometimes with the wind, sometimes against the wind, yet we did sail and not drift nor lie at anchor. At last, we have the honour to address ourselves as 'learned colleagues'. I have so much respect for each one of you because you chose to be assets of society and have throughout these turbulent years sacrificed a lot and kept your lives clear of social vices. I know you share in my Renaissance's dream for an African Jurisprudence and the push for Freedom of Information law championed by Emmanuel Saffa Abdulai.

Learned colleagues of the Bar association, kindly do not view the presidential call for change as an academic thesis for theoretical review but let us strive to overturn the decadence in our judiciary so that glory and honor such as is befitting of the noble profession can once more return to the corridors of justice in this country. Let us endeavor to contribute, in whatever manner towards the rebranding of our judicial system so that the prestige of our courts as the masjid of truth can once again be restored. Don't let the pessimisms of skeptics and cynics limit you, for as John F. Kennedy put it, they are limited by physical realities. Remember, the invincible force of the words YES YOU CAN is not a permanent resident of America, yes we can get there only if we realize that justice is not a matter of charity or favor or discretion, it was, it is and it shall always be a matter of right. This nation shall never trade poverty for sustainable development if social justice continues to be a thorn in the flesh of citizens and non-citizens whether rich or poor, disabled or not disabled, black or colored.

Ladies and Gentlemen: Once again,
THANK YOU,
GOD BLESS YOU
AND MAY GOD BLESS MAMA SALONE.

*AUGUSTINE S. MARRAH
STAR PUPIL 2008/2009
31ST OCTOBER 2009*