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Cardozo Celebrates the Class of 2022 at 44th Annual Commencement



“Graduating from law school is always an impressive achievement,” said Dean Melanie Leslie ’91. “But what this class has accomplished today is momentous!”

On May 31 Cardozo School of Law hosted its forty-fourth annual commencement ceremony at United Palace in Upper Manhattan. Cardozo’s Class of 2022 spent their entire 2L year learning remotely.

Judge Eunice C. Lee, United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, gave the commencement address. Nominated by President Biden, Judge Lee is the only Black woman serving as an active Judge on the Second Circuit, and the first since 2002. She is the longest-serving public defender to serve as a Judge on any U.S. Court of Appeals.

Lee spoke about her decades-long career as a public defender, where she represented indigent clients on appeal at all levels of the New York state court system and in habeas proceedings in federal court.

“The advice I would offer to today’s graduates is: figure out what’s meaningful to you,” said Lee. “That doesn’t mean you have to know what your passion or perfect job is, but you need to know what values and experiences matter to you and you need to be clear on your motivations.”

The ceremony celebrated the graduating class of 287 J.D. students, 50 LL.M. degree recipients, and one student, receiving a J.S.D., the legal equivalent of a Ph.D.

The President of the Student Bar Association, Nigel Pura Bryant '22, presented the class of 2022 awards to faculty and administrators. The Best Professor Award went to Michelle Adams, Best First Year Professor went to Michael Pollack and Best Adjunct Professor went to Moshe Horn and Brian Farkas '13. The Best Administrator Award went to Jenn Kim, Dean of Students, and the Award for Outstanding Assistance to the Student Body went to Francesca Acocella '16, Director of Student Life.

Before the conferring of degrees, Yeshiva University President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman addressed the audience, highlighting Dean Leslie's leadership of the Law School and Cardozo's world-class faculty. He spoke about Cardozo's Kathryn O. Greenberg Immigration Justice Clinic, which represented a client who was deported for 20-year-old charges for crimes he did not commit.

"Our students left no stone unturned in reinvestigating this case and tracking down witnesses who confirmed the client was innocent," Berman said.

The clinic students worked to vacate his convictions, and through collaboration with Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the client has now permanent residency status in the United States and can be reunited with his family.

"Our graduates leave Cardozo knowing they will fight for their clients with a full knowledge of the law and all of its details," said President Berman. "And by doing so, you will create a more productive economy, increase human flourishing, protect those most vulnerable from harm and defend all who have been mistreated."