

Dean's Remarks:

**The Medal for Excellence: 2025 Winter Luncheon
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I. INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Wade [Leak], for that kind introduction and for your leadership of the Columbia Law School Association. Your unwavering support of the Law School and its alumni is inspiring, and we are lucky to have you at the helm of the CLSA.

And, thank you, President Armstrong. It has been a pleasure to work alongside you these past several months. I truly value our partnership, and I am very grateful that you took time out of your schedule to join us here today.

Wow! I knew that Columbia was bigger than my prior institution, but this is just incredible. I don't know how anyone could be here and not feel a sense of awe and inspiration. There are so many reasons why I was so enthusiastic about joining this extraordinary university. And Seeing so many Law School alumni, faculty, students, supporters, and friends together in one room only further confirms and validates my enthusiasm.

It is an honor to be with you, and it is a privilege to be able to welcome you to this year's Winter Luncheon. Thank you all so much for being here today.

We have some special guests with us that I want to take a moment to acknowledge:

In addition to President Armstrong, we are joined today by Columbia's Provost, Angela Olinto, as well as several Columbia University Trustees and Trustees Emeriti, and a number of my fellow deans. Former Law School deans Gillian Lester and David Schizer. Many distinguished members of

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the judiciary and several Medal for Excellence winners from years past. And, of course, our honorees—the reason why we gather in celebration this afternoon—Elizabeth Glazer, Class of 1986, and David Greenwald, Class of 1983. Welcome both of you, Liz and David, and to your family members, friends, and colleagues who accompany you today. We look forward to honoring you during today’s program.

Almost 142 years ago, during the last week of April 1883, Columbia Law School moved from its early quarters in downtown Manhattan to a newly erected building just seven blocks north of where we are now. The decision to relocate to the northeast corner of 49th Street and Madison Avenue was controversial at the time. There were objections to the idea that students would be so far removed from the courts and firm offices where they could see the law in action.

But that reluctance quickly dissipated. It turned out that benefits of being closer to other Columbia faculty and students, who were already located on the College’s 49th Street campus, were transformational. At least one historian called the move “a first step toward changing the Law School into a real School of Jurisprudence,” teaching students about the “history and principles of law.”²

In other words, the Law School began to educate students about the law’s development over time, how to engage in rigorous analysis using legal reasoning, and how to apply those skills to the practice of law in a variety of professional settings. At that point, a Columbia legal education became less about memorizing statutes and reciting treatises, and more about teaching students *how to think*.

Even though the Law School only spent 14 years on 49th Street before making the journey even farther uptown, the legacy of the transformation that began there is one that we continue to carry forward today. As a law school, our enduring mission must remain at the forefront of all that we do: to teach our students *how* to think, not *what* to think.

To do this, , we must tether ourselves to some common principles:

² Julius Goebel Jr., etl. al., *A History of the School of Law: Columbia University 92–94* (New York, Colum. U. Press, 1955).

1) We must embrace **free expression**, which generates productive discomfort in service of learning; which enables debate and open inquiry; which brings together a wide range of perspectives and life experiences; and which creates opportunities for faculty and students to express their views openly and individually, without the risk of coming into contestation with the institution itself. In the words of our own Justice [Ruth Bader] Ginsburg, we need to be able to disagree without being disagreeable. And we need to do so in an environment free from discrimination.

2) We must prioritize **academic excellence**. This means a faculty that is composed of intellectual leaders—scholars who are at the forefront of their fields, leading conversations at the vanguard of knowledge creation. It also means students who are not only outstanding academically, but who have the ambition, commitment, potential, and diversity of experience to pursue excellence in whatever path they choose—before, during, and after law school.

3) We must embrace **innovation** and prepare for the profession of the *future*, not just how it exists today. How do we ensure that we can continue to pursue priorities that are core to our mission—advancing the rule of law; broadening access to legal education and the profession; supporting private sector practice and public interest/public service work—while also anticipating all that is to come? How will breakthroughs in artificial intelligence affect the law and legal practice? And what kinds of courses, experiential learning opportunities, and skills training do our students need in order to remain the most in-demand lawyers of their time? They need to know how to think, but they also must be comfortable with uncertainty, resilient in the face of challenges, open to a range of ideas, and prepared to lead wherever their careers may take them.

I believe that these principles are among the most important guiding lights for Columbia Law School. They are critical to our success, and to our ability to achieve our academic and scholarly mission. And they are some of the areas that I hope to focus on as I begin my deanship.

Now, I came to Columbia Law School at a particular moment. The University has had its values challenged and its principles questioned. But I also see this time as an opportunity—if you believe in the mission of higher education, you should want to lead in a moment of consequence at a place of relevance. And it is *precisely* because of the challenges we have faced, and the impact we have in the world, that I believe Columbia is *the* place to be. I believe Columbia can be the model for both

advancing the values of free expression and open discourse, and rejecting discrimination in all of its forms. That is our charge. And, together, we can achieve it.

In the five months since I joined Columbia, I have met with our great faculty, students, and staff. I have traveled around the world meeting with Law School alumni. In addition to seeing many of you here in New York, I have been to: Beijing, Chicago, Dallas, Hong Kong, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, Palm Beach, Seattle, Tokyo, and Washington, DC. And I have a trip to Europe planned for later this spring.

After these meetings—in every location that I’ve visited, *even on Zoom!*—there has not been a single instance in which I have not walked away feeling inspired. However challenging the moment, I have been struck by the affinity for Columbia Law School that you continue to carry with you, and by the way you speak about the transformative educational experience you received while you were a student.

I have also been struck by your warmth and energy. I see within this community a hunger to get things right—a drive to be an institution that sets the standard for intellectual rigor and pathbreaking scholarship; an institution that models free expression, open inquiry, and respectful dialogue; an institution that embraces pluralism and reflects a wide range of perspectives and experiences; an institution that advances the public discourse; and an institution that seizes opportunities for innovation at every turn. I see a community brimming with possibility—overflowing with potential ready to be unleashed upon the world.

I want us to realize our ambitions, to create the conditions for every member of our community to flourish, and to close the gap between where we *are* as an institution and where we *can be*. I want Columbia Law School to *lead* the conversation in this moment of great consequence, both for our profession and our world. After all, we are the Law School of scholarly giants like Gellhorn and Monaghan, innovators like Henkin and Schacter, and advocates like Ginsburg and Greenberg.

But as much as our legacy is defined by the contributions of these seminal figures in our past, our future will be written by all of us. Together.

I am fortunate to stand on the shoulders of those who came before me—leaders like David and Gillian. I am also incredibly fortunate to have all of you as partners in this work.

So thank you for coming today. Thank you for the kindness and support you have shown me so far. And thank you for all the ways you will continue to contribute to the shared project of moving Columbia Law School forward.

Enjoy your lunch, and I will return in a short while to present the Medal for Excellence.

II. PRESENTATION OF MEDALS

I am now delighted to begin the presentation of the Medal for Excellence to our honorees.

As you know, the Medal for Excellence is the highest honor bestowed upon Columbia Law School alumni and faculty members who exemplify the character, intellect, and social and professional responsibility we seek to instill in our students. It is my great honor to present this year's Medal for Excellence to two extraordinary recipients.

ELIZABETH—or as most of you know her, Liz—GLAZER, Class of 1986, is a force of nature.

Her career is a testament to what's possible when you combine a razor-sharp legal mind with a profound commitment to justice and fairness. Across every role she has held during her career—from federal prosecutor, to New York City's top criminal justice official, to founder of Vital City—Liz has pursued one goal: making communities safer and stronger.

Liz's story begins right here in New York City. She grew up just blocks from Columbia's campus, with a family steeped in the University and its academic life. Her father and stepfather both taught at Columbia. And her upbringing in a home shaped by academic rigor and deep reflection on history—especially her grandparents' flight from pogroms and her stepfather's survival of the Nazi regime—instilled in her a passion for justice and fairness.

That passion led her on an extraordinary journey. Liz's curiosity about systems and how they shape lives emerged early. She studied medieval intellectual history at Harvard, then spent a year as a Fulbright Scholar in Germany. Afterward, she worked in refugee camps in Southeast Asia, helping Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees rebuild their lives.

That work, inspired by her family's experiences, showed her the power of the law to create change, and it sparked in Liz a desire to pursue a legal education. It was her best friend since the age of six, Jane Ginsburg—Columbia's own Morton L. Janklow Professor of Literary and Artistic Property Law—who convinced Liz to take that next step.

Liz found her way to Columbia Law School—a place she has said reveals the “gears of society.” At Columbia, Liz was an editor of the *Columbia Law Review* and active in the Public Interest Law Foundation. Her relationship with Jane's mother, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Class of 1959, deepened when Liz clerked for then-Judge Ginsburg in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. That clerkship was part of a lifelong connection to R.B.G., who would later officiate Liz's wedding to her husband, Bill Montgomery, a fellow member of the Law School Class of '86.

After graduation, Liz's legal career began with remarkable impact. At the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, she was a trailblazer. (By the way, Liz's boss at the SDNY was none other than Mary Jo White, Class of 1974 and fellow recipient of the Medal for Excellence.)

From 1987 to 2000, Liz served as Chief of the Organized Crime, Violent Gangs, and Crime Control Strategies unit. Liz pioneered the use of racketeering laws to combat gang violence, demonstrating her knack for crafting innovative solutions to complex legal challenges. She understood that sustainable public safety isn't just about arrests—it's about understanding systems and building pathways to opportunity.

Her next professional chapter took her to [New York] state government as Deputy Secretary for Public Safety, where she oversaw eight state agencies, including Corrections, the State Police, and the National Guard. Managing a \$9 billion budget and a workforce of 40,000, Liz brought her trademark focus on systems and results to every aspect of her role.

But it was in New York City, as Director of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice, that Liz truly redefined what's possible. During her tenure, she was the architect of a transformative strategy to reduce the city's jail population while maintaining historically low crime rates. Under her leadership, the number of people in the City's jails fell by more than half, reflecting her belief in using data to drive policy and her deep commitment to justice and dignity.

But her work wasn't just about numbers; it was about people and neighborhoods. Liz spearheaded NeighborhoodStat, a program that brought residents, city agencies, and community organizations together to tackle the root causes of safety challenges. From fixing broken lights to creating youth

programs, Liz understood that safety is rooted in civic vitality. As she has said in an interview, “Safety is not just about policing; it’s about strengthening the fabric of communities.”

Liz’s innovative thinking continues to shine through Vital City, the policy venture and magazine she founded in 2022. Vital City serves as both a platform for evidence-based solutions and a call to action for policymakers. Liz’s work to launch this new platform reflects her vision of public safety as a shared, community-driven responsibility.

Her voice on criminal justice has reached far beyond New York. Liz has written about her work and ideas in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other leading publications, amplifying her influence as a thought leader in the field.

Her connection to Columbia has remained steadfast. Liz has served on the Dean’s Council since 2015 and has taught here as a lecturer in law, sharing her expertise on gang prosecutions and public safety strategies with future generations of legal minds. For her, Columbia isn’t just an alma mater—it’s a place where she continues to contribute her expertise and shape the next generation of legal minds.

Today, we are honored to have Liz’s children—Quentin, Aaron, and Eliza—here with us to celebrate. Quentin, a recent graduate of Columbia Business School, continues the family’s remarkable connection to this institution. And Liz’s parents and stepfather, all of whom earned graduate degrees from Columbia, would undoubtedly share in this proud moment.

Liz’s career has earned her countless accolades, including being named one of the New York Law Journal’s Distinguished Leaders in 2022. But the most powerful testament to her work is the impact she’s had on the lives of countless New Yorkers. She’s shown us what’s possible when we dare to think big, focus on evidence, and stay committed to justice.

Liz, we honor not just your achievements but the principles and passion that drive you. You’ve shown us how law can be a tool for systemic change and a force for good.

On behalf of Columbia Law School, it is my distinct honor to present you with the Medal for Excellence. Congratulations!

DAVID GREENWALD, Class of 1983, truly embodies the spirit of what it means to be a Columbia lawyer.

He began his legal career at Fried Frank in 1983, after graduating from Columbia Law School. He made partner in 1990, and his corporate practice focused on private equity clients, as well as mergers and acquisitions.

In 1994, he joined Goldman Sachs, where he held several pivotal roles of increasing scope and responsibility—managing director, partner, international general counsel, and deputy general counsel. His tenure at Goldman was marked, in particular, by the many contributions he made to improving client and business standards, as well as his leadership in advancing diversity initiatives.

After 20 distinguished years at Goldman, he returned to Fried Frank in 2013 and spent 10 years as chairman of the firm—overseeing a multinational organization with more than 800 attorneys worldwide. And I should note that more than 75 of those are Columbia Law School graduates!

During his tenure, David guided the firm through a period of extraordinary growth in revenue, profitability, and headcount. He guided the firm's work—developing new areas of business, modernizing the firm's processes and physical infrastructure, and overseeing some of the most high-profile legal matters of the past decade. Not only did he elevate and cement Fried Frank's reputation as a global leader, he ensured that the firm was positioned to thrive for generations to come.

His many contributions are not limited to just an outstanding tenure as Chairman of Fried Frank. David has been a leader in legal practice across the world, and served as deputy chair of the Financial Markets Law Committee in the United Kingdom, and as co-chair of the Practising Law Institute (PLI) Annual Institute on Securities Regulation in Europe.

In recognition of his work, David's leadership and strategic vision have been highlighted many times over in major publications, such as *The American Lawyer*, *Bloomberg Big Law Business*, *Forbes*, *The Lawyer*, and *The Wall Street Journal*.

David's personal pursuits reflect the same dedication and drive that have defined his stellar career. An avid long-distance runner, he has completed several marathons, a testament to his discipline and endurance. And as a Yankees fan, he appreciates rooting for a team—just like his law school alma mater—that has both a storied history and the highest of expectations placed upon it.

And lest you think that David's professional accomplishments as a lawyer-leader are astounding in and of themselves, I have not even talked about all the ways he has generously shared his time, expertise, and generous support to a wide range of causes and organizations that he holds dear.

David serves on the boards of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, The Legal Aid Society, Lenox Hill Neighborhood House, and Lincoln Center Theater. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. And he chairs the Alumni Executive Board at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business, his undergraduate alma mater.

In 2017, David was recognized by the American Jewish Committee, which bestowed upon him the prestigious Judge Learned Hand Award in honor of his leadership and service to the legal community and beyond.

But perhaps no institution has benefited more from David's wisdom and support than Columbia. As Co-Chair of the Trustees of Columbia University, he helps guide the University by supporting and advising its leaders, and by ensuring that we remain resilient and well-positioned to uphold our values and achieve our mission, even in the face of challenges. I have had the privilege of seeing him at work in this capacity. And, as I am sure others here can attest, Columbia is exceptionally lucky to have David in this role of leadership.

David is also a dedicated alumnus of Columbia Law School. He is a longtime member of the Dean's Council and has also served as co-chair of his Reunion class in multiple years.

He is a major supporter of some of the Law School's most transformative projects and initiatives, including an incredibly generous gift in support of the transformation of our Law Library. When it opens next fall, students will gather in the Greenwald lounge on the Library's second floor as they make their way between group rooms, classrooms, and study carrels. He has also endowed two student scholarships, a named professorship, and a faculty research fund.

It is not at all hyperbole to say that David's support has strengthened our institution and will leave a lasting legacy for future generations of students and faculty.

On a personal note, I have had the privilege of getting to know David during my early months as dean. In fact, I was lucky to meet him before becoming dean. His guidance is always candid and spot on, and his insights have been invaluable to me. I am deeply grateful for his support, and I know many of my colleagues who are here today share that same feeling.

Finally, let me take a moment to recognize David's family, which is woven into the Columbia fabric almost as deeply as he is. Today, we are delighted to have his wife, Beth; his daughters, Emily and Hilary; and his sister, Shelly, here with us. Both of his daughters, as well as his son-in-law are alumni. Emily earned her MBA from Columbia Business School in 2021, Hilary graduated from Columbia Law School in 2017, and Hilary's husband, Ari Ruffer, is also a proud member of the Columbia Law Class of 2017. It's inspiring to see the next generation carrying forward David's legacy of excellence.

David, we recognize not only your extraordinary career but also the values you embody—hard work, leadership, and a deep commitment to serving and stewarding institutions. We are proud to celebrate you today, and deeply grateful for everything you've done to elevate our profession and our school.

On behalf of Columbia Law School, it is my distinct honor to present you with the Medal for Excellence. Congratulations!

Thank you all so much for coming today. I am already looking forward to next year's Winter Luncheon. But for now, this concludes our formal program. I hope you stay well and get home safely.

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