

Speaker 1: All please rise. Welcome to the 2023 Law Day ceremony. The New York State Court of Appeals is honored to present the New York State Attorney General, the President of the New York State Bar Association, the Associate Judges of the New York State Court of Appeals, the Chief Administrative Judge of the Unified Court System, and the Chief Judge of the State of New York. The Law Day ceremony will now begin.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: Please be seated everyone and welcome to the 2023 Law Day celebration co-hosted by me, my colleagues, and the Attorney General of the State of New York. I would like to note, in addition to the presence of Attorney General James, the presence of the President of the New York State Bar Association, Sherry Levin Wallach. And to lead us in our first event, the Pledge of Allegiance, we have Jackson Byrne and his little sister, Lily Byrne, who are respectively second-grader and kindergartner at the Cobleskill Ryder Elementary School. And they're the grandchildren of Cynthia Byrne who is the person at the Court of Appeals who knows everything about the processing of criminal leave applications, and we rely on very heavily for that. So Jackson and Lily, if you're ready, please rise. And we're going to follow you, so start us out.

Jackson and Lily: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: Thank you both. And if you'll remain standing, we have the national anthem and we have Jessica Hernandez. It's not her first time here, not my first time hearing her. She's a lieutenant, she's a court officer who works in the Harlem Community Justice Center in Manhattan and I accidentally met her husband last week and mentioned to him that I'd heard her sing the national anthem before and that she had a lovely voice and you could see how much he loved her just when I said that to him. So Lieutenant-

Lt. Jessica Hernandez: Thank you.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: ... it's all yours.

Lt. Jessica Hernandez.: (singing)

Hon. Rowan Wilson: Thank you, Lieutenant. Although everyone here is a luminary and a valued member, there are a few people I have to call out, maybe a few more than a few I have to call out especially. First and foremost, my colleagues on the Court of Appeals, Senior Associate Judge Jenny Rivera and Associate Judges Michael Garcia, Madeline Singas, Anthony Cannataro, Shirley Troutman, and Caitlin Halligan. And let me pause for a second to thank Anthony Cannataro for his hard work over the last many months filling in in a very difficult job on the spur of the moment. He did a wonderful job.

And I also want to welcome our brilliant new colleague, Caitlin Halligan, who is a wonderful addition. Brings us up to seven, which is the way we should be operating. Attorney General James is here, Solicitor General Barbara Underwood, Counsel for the Governor Elizabeth Fine. Welcome. The Presiding Justices, three of them anyway, of the Appellate Division, Acting Presiding Justice of the First Department, Dianne Renwick, Presiding Justice of the Second Department, Honorable Hector LaSalle, and Presiding Justice of the Third, Elizabeth Garry.

Gerry Whalen wanted to be here but could not make it, and sends his regards. Chief Administrative Judge Tamiko Amaker, from whom you will hear later, welcome. And I saw Senator Michael Gianaris, the Deputy Majority leader from the State Assembly. I think we had some people who were going to come but didn't quite make it. But I'm glad the Senator's here.

From the Appellate Division, we have the Honorable Joseph A. Zayas, who will soon be the chief administrative judge. We have the Honorable Ellen Gesmer, Sharon A.M. Aarons, Lisa Fisher and Eddie McShan. We have Judge Howard Levine, former Court of Appeals judge, now retired. And some retired Presiding Justices of the Appellate Division, the Honorable Randall Eng and the Honorable Rolando Acosta.

Deputy Chief Administrative Judges. We have the Honorable Deborah Kaplan, which is right there, the Honorable Edwina G. Richardson-Mendelson, next to her, and the Honorable Norman St. George. From the Administrative judges around the state we have James P. Murphy, William Taylor, Anne Minihan, Andrew Crecca, Anne-Marie Jolly, Carolyn Walker-Diallo, Ellen Biben, Adam Silvera, Matthew D'Emic, Donna-Maria Golia, Doris Gonzalez and Desmond Green, all of whom are Honorable. It was just too much to say in front of each name. The Statewide Coordinating Judge for Matrimonial Cases, Jeffrey Sunshine, and the Supervising Judges, the Honorable Shahabuddeen Ally and the Honorable Joseph Egitto. The president of the New York State Bar Association, I mentioned before, the Honorable Sherry Levin Wallach, whom you will hear from later.

So once again, good morning. It's my turn to tell you a little bit about my thoughts about today's topic provided to us by the American Bar Association. The theme for Law Day this year is Cornerstones of Democracy: Civics, Civility, and Collaboration. In past years I've in different places happily given Law Day speeches on the ABA's theme, but this year I have a problem. I don't agree with the theme's thesis. Now, before you go around saying the Chief Judge thinks civics, civility and collaboration are hogwash, let me explain.

I have no quarrel with civics as a cornerstone of our democracy. It plainly is. Civility and collaboration, however, are not. They're great and we surely could use more of both, but they're not cornerstones of our democracy, neither in theory nor in practice. Let me explain why I say that. First, civility. Why would anyone think that our democracy was based on civility? Even President

Washington was not spared attack. Newspapers described him as monarchical and Thomas Payne called Washington "The patron of fraud," and wrote that it would be "left to history to decide whether Washington was an apostate or an imposter and whether he's abandoned good principles or whether he ever had any."

The election of 1800 between John Adams and Thomas Jefferson included following attacks: "John Adams is a blind, bald, crippled, toothless man. John Adams is a hideous hermaphroditical character with neither the force and firmness of a man, nor the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." "Jefferson is a mean-spirited, low-lived fellow, the son of a half-breed Indian squaw, sired by a Virginia mulatto father. If Jefferson is elected, we would see our wives and daughters as the victims of legal prostitution and he would create a nation where murder, robbery, rape, adultery, and incest will be openly taught and practiced."

Putting aside that Vice President Burr felt sufficiently insulted by Alexander Hamilton to kill him in a duel, in the 1828 election between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, charges of bigamy and adultery were leveled against Jackson. He was also called a murderer and his mother a prostitute. While the Jackson campaign fired back by accusing Adams of pimping an American girl to the Czar.

In the 1860 election, Stephen Douglass accused Lincoln of being a drunkard saying that "he could ruin more liquor than all the boys in the town together." Harper's Weekly published a compendium of insults leveled to President Lincoln, including "Filthy storyteller, Ignoramus Abe, Despot, Old scoundrel, big secessionist, perjurer, liar, robber, thief, swindler, braggart, tyrant, buffoon, fiend, usurper, butcher, monster, land-pirate," and my favorite, "a long, lean, lank, lantern-jawed, high-cheek-boned, spavined, rail-splitting stallion." I had to look up spavined.

In the election of 1876, Democrats claimed Rutherford B. Hayes shot his mother in a drunken fit of insanity. Opponents of Grover Cleveland called him a moral leper and adopted the chant, "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa?" to claim that Cleveland had fathered and abandoned a child out of wedlock. That pervasive incivility was not unanticipated. It was embedded in the political philosophy on which our nation was based. In Federalist Paper 10, Madison famously explained that "the causes of faction are sown in the nature of man, that human passions have divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to cooperate for the common good."

In a similar vein, Adams wrote to Jefferson that "Neither philosophy nor religion nor morality nor wisdom nor interest will ever govern nations or parties against their vanity, their pride, their resentment or revenge or their avarice or ambition. And those passions, when unchecked, produced the same effects of fraud, violence and cruelty." Civility then was never a cornerstone of our

democracy. Instead, our democracy, with its separation of powers, checks and balances and authority divided between the federal and state governments, was designed to address the fundamental problem of human nature identified by the Founders and mainstream western political philosophy dating back to the ancient Greeks, the inherent selfishness, greed, and animosity that animates human conflict.

Let me turn next to collaboration. The Founders' concern with factions animated by extreme passion. Evidence is their belief that collaboration was an evil to be guarded against. The elaborate system of checks and balances was designed as a series of breaks to work against collaboration that might precipitously lead us into ruin. The initial constitutional structure in which the vice president was the runner-up for president, which might have fostered some collaboration between rival political parties, was immediately abandoned via the 12th Amendment after the election of 1800 produced President Jefferson and Vice President Adams.

Other constitutional features such as the super majority of states required to amend the Constitution, or life tenure for federal judges, were also designed to block the majoritarian collaboration from running amok. Instead, the most fundamental social and political changes in America, the abolition of slavery, the guarantee of equal protection of the laws and the right to vote, the protections for workers, the civil rights movement and the expansion of rights of free speech, did not arise from collaboration but rather from conflict, sometimes violent.

Indeed, the times when one could fairly say that the American people broadly came together to collaborate are the times when the nation faced an external enemy in actual or threatened war. That sort of collaboration of course is essential to the preservation of the nation, but it is essential to the preservation of any nation, democracy or not. That leaves us with civics, which in my view is the cornerstone of our democracy. It has been eroding over time. Only half of Americans can name the three branches of government. 60% of Americans citizens cannot pass the citizenship test given to persons seeking US citizenship.

A couple of years ago, CBS News asked people on the street a variety of basic questions. Among the answers were that the House of Representatives had 12 members and that the Chief Justice was named Trump. Others did not know who signs a bill into law. The Annenberg Public Policy Center recently reported that Americans' confidence in Congress, the Supreme Court and the presidency was 5%, 13% and 16% respectively. Jeffrey Rosen, president of the Nonpartisan National Constitutional Center, recently observed "There's no doubt that we are in a crisis of civic education. The Framers knew that the consequence of constitutional ignorance, in being guided by passion rather than reason, was armed mobs." Well, we just saw they were right about that.

Measures of civic engagement such as participation in the PTA, clubs, local government meetings or political parties have fallen by half since 1965. The

National Opinion Research Center's general social survey shows that social trust has dropped by about a third since 1972. An American Bar Association report singled out the marginalization of civics education in K-12 schools as a root cause of the decline of civic engagement. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers, only 10% of class time is devoted to social studies. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reports that only 20% to 25% of students have achieved grade-level proficiency in social studies.

Federal government investment in STEM for K-12 students amounts to \$54 per student. For social studies, it amounts to 5 cents per student. Only five states have a standalone civics course for middle school and only one requires a full year. Only seven states require a full year of civics in high school. The failure in civics education has produced staggering results. A 2018 poll conducted by Georgetown University found that more than 70% of Americans under age 40 believe it is not essential to live in a democracy. One in four do not believe it is important to choose their leaders through free elections. The solution is not easy, but it's obvious.

Republican pollster Frank Lund surveyed over 1,000 Americans, asking them what could help bridge the country's political divide. The top answer was civic education. Two years before that, Justice Sotomayor observed, "It has been closely documented that the partisan discord in our country followed very closely on the heels of schools stopping to teach civic education." Studies have shown that students with more civics education are more likely to serve as leaders in a group or organization, more likely to discuss political issues, more likely to volunteer their time and more likely to help make their city, town, or village a better place to live.

If one remembers that, to a large degree, the political philosophy of the Founders owes a debt to that of the ancient Greeks, the Greek concept of polis should animate our concept of democracy. Ruled by the people, even in a representative, democracy depends on polis, citizens who are informed in taking an active role in the welfare of the state. Advances in science and technology, in the arts and literature are vitally important. Human progress is often measured on those axes, but without a stable government that provides the freedom to create in those areas, those advances could not exist. Put differently, civics is the cornerstone of our democracy and our democracy's entire foundation upon which our social, scientific and economic progress is built.

After the election of 1800, Adams and Jefferson were estranged for a decade, but from 1812 until their nearly simultaneous death on the 50th anniversary of this nation's founding, they wrote each other hundreds of letters. Their mutual sense of civics, of commitment to the principles on which they founded our nation, won out over a lack of civility and a failure of collaboration. That sense of commitment, involvement and responsibility is the true cornerstone of our democracy and where our efforts should be directed. Thank you all very much.

It is now my great pleasure to turn the podium over to the great Attorney General of the great State of New York, the Honorable Letitia James.

Hon. Letitia James: So after that speech, there's not much more that I can say, other than I disagree with the Chief Judge and I'll tell you why shortly. But going forward, Chief Justice, perhaps this should be a debate. You give one position and I'll give a counter-view and that'll make it more interesting. Good morning everyone. Thank you to Sherry Levin Wallach, the president of the New York State Bar Association for bringing us all together and for all that you have done for the legal community. It is an honor to be with our new Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals, who I disagree with, but I respect him, Rowan Wilson. Congratulations, Chief Justice Wilson on this well-deserved honor.

Your brilliant career as a top-flight litigator and jurist is only matched by your dedication to improving the lives of all New Yorkers and uplifting our profession. It is an honor to be with Acting Chief Administrative Judge, Tamiko Amaker. I also want to congratulate our state's newest Court of Appeals' Justice, Caitlin Halligan, the former solicitor General in the office of the Attorney General. And acknowledge Barbara Underwood, our current incredible Solicitor General. I also want to recognize from my office, Larry Schimmel, who is my counsel, as well as Jennifer Levy, who is the Deputy Attorney General. Also recognize Liz Fine, Counsel to the governor, and the Deputy Majority Leader, Senator Gianaris. Thank you for being here.

It is an honor to be with so many distinguished jurists, one legislator, Executive Branch representatives, and legal professionals. I understand you've got a budget to pass. I recognize that. Today we come together to honor and recognize the powers of the law in this country, the pillar of our democracy that has simultaneously delivered our greatest freedoms but at times also presented our greatest setbacks, and this year has been living proof of that continued dichotomy, fraught with tension and turmoil. It is often felt as though we have lost sight of the civility and collaboration that are essential to a strong and functioning society, or as this year's theme suggests, that are the cornerstones of our democracy.

Instead, it sometimes feels as though we've been hijacked by partisan politics, no longer guided by the common good. That was the intention of a country with three separate branches and with a judicial branch to serve as a check on unrestrained power, a certain jurist was the first to applaud, no name, thank you, a judicial branch to step in and course-correct when our rights were in precarious positions. We have historically respected an independent judiciary, not subject to improper influence or pressure. Principled, respectful of precedent, above politics, a judiciary that shared the fundamental belief that the law is the greatest equalizer, in that those who sit on the court are bound to the highest ethical and moral standards.

But over the past few years, we've witnessed an increased polarization of our courts. Legal norms have been set aside in favor of advancing a specific agenda.

No longer does it feel as though we are upholding and advancing the basic and fundamental rights of all Americans, but rather a distinct focus on prioritizing the rights of a select few, an erosion of balance, undermining the scales of justice, decades of decided law trampled not in the name of progress and inclusion, but in an attempt to roll back and to deny basic freedoms.

It is a reality that has had a cataclysmic impact on the integrity and perception of our judicial system. We are witnessing a dangerous fraying of our democracy and an alarming critique of the institution that is always supposed to rise above politics. But it doesn't need to be that way. All of us should take instruction from the last time it felt as though our country was facing a true ideological reckoning back in the 1950s and 1960s, civil unrest, partisan divide, and a grossly unequal society that was perpetuated and protected by the law.

When Earl Warren became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1953, the country was still under a doctrine, "Separate, but equal." Southern states were fighting tooth and nail to maintain the legal right to treat Black Americans as a second class citizens under Jim Crow. Black men and women still could not vote in many parts of the country. Black children were held back in too many ways to articulate. It was the Supreme Court at this time that was tasked with deciding some of the most consequential cases of our existence. Brown versus the Board of Education, Loving versus Virginia, Miranda versus Arizona. It was Chief Justice Warren who maintained civility and found consensus, rising above the climate at the time, because he understood the Court's unique role as the guardian of our democracy and a stabilizing force in our nation, someone who held the special responsibility of ensuring civility and promoting collaboration.

As Justice Potter Stewart said, "Warren's great strength was his simple belief in the things we now laugh at, motherhood, marriage, family, flag, and the like." Through that belief, he brought our Court together during the most tumultuous of times to ensure that our children, all of our children, would be treated equally regardless of their race, that the color of your skin should have no bearing on whom you were allowed to love, that everyone had a right to vote and that all people should be afforded and informed of their legal rights in our criminal justice system.

He fundamentally believed that the Constitution guaranteed natural rights and viewed it as a living, breathing document that was meant to move with us, just as the Founders did. The Founders knew that the Constitution, and they themselves, were imperfect. They would not have wanted Americans 236 years later to be tied to the rules and prejudices that prevailed in their time, in that time. In fact, they intended for the opposite. In 1816, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand-in-hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy,

as a civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

Now, Jefferson certainly had his flaws. It's clear that he and the other Founders saw the Constitution as a foundation meant to grow and evolve as society did, too. And that basic but profound intention is irreconcilable, at odds with what we are experiencing today as a nation, and perhaps the very reason for the concerning lack of public confidence in the system. We should not be treating women as though it's 1787 and they do not have the right to make decisions about their own bodies. We should not be striking down common-sense gun laws based on what society looked like in 1791. And let me just thank my office yesterday. We have taken off the street, as of one day, over 3,000 guns, including 200 assault weapons and 100 ghost guns.

We should not be entertaining whether Black and brown kids should have access to equal protection, equal education like it's 1954. We should not be rolling back the right to vote and undermining all that we achieved in 1965. We should not be questioning whether the love between two men or two women is any less beautiful, sacred, or legal than any other marriage. We cannot allow the most horrifying aspects of our past to govern our present. These values are not liberal or conservative, they are cornerstones of our profession and the essence of your theme today.

We need look no further than some of our nation's former chief justices to see that civility between those who may share different worldviews, recognize the need to balance interest in order to affect a more perfect union, and that the need for collaboration was fundamental to a functioning court. Under Chief Justices Warren, Burger and even Rehnquist, all men with divergent judicial philosophies, there was still consistent respect for democratic values that undergirded most of their opinions.

As the public's faith in our nation's courts is stumbling, it has never been more important for New Yorkers to have faith in our highest court in New York, the Court of Appeal, and our government. We need judicial leaders who are consensus builders and will be guardians of justice and civility. And I believe Chief Justice Wilson is the right person to navigate us through these uncharted waters. I know he will work tirelessly to extend the core values of liberty, democracy, and freedom far beyond the original intended recipients. He will do this through civility, through enlightenment, through wisdom, experience, collaboration, and most importantly, with compassion.

In his seminal book, *Justice and the Poor*, the famed Boston Legal Aid lawyer, Reginald Heber Smith, wrote about this more than a century ago. "Without equal access to the law, the system not only robs the poor of their only protection, but it places in the hands of their oppressors the most powerful and ruthless weapon ever invented." And the poor meant those economically impoverished and marginalized by society in general, including women and minorities. If we, my friends, are to continue as a multicultural democracy, we

must not allow the law to be a cudgel for the powerful, but rather it must be a shield for the downtrodden. You must understand that compassion is a fundamental element of the work we do and must be a factor when we are thinking about the law and how we use or amend it.

All of us in this room are guardians of American democracy. It is through the skills we developed in law school, and refined by practicing our profession, that we must safeguard our fundamental values and rights and not upend years of reliance on settled law, be they voting rights, abortion rights, the rights of underserved people, the rights of new Americans or the right of communities to protect themselves from wanton gun violence. If we are to live in a society worthy of calling itself a democracy, everyone must have access to the same rights, the same protections, and the same liberty.

So all of us in this room have a special responsibility to ensure respect for the rule of law, and that can only happen when the public believes our justice system works fairly, impartially and without favor. I am confident that we can rise above current problems and that our state, under the leadership of these great Justices, led by this great Chief Judge, that our state and judicial system can be a beacon of hope not only to the residents of New York but throughout the nation. The task ahead of us may be daunting, but by prioritizing core democratic values and by leading with civility and promoting collaboration and even debate, we can turn things around. Thank you.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: Thank you, Attorney General James. I think the two of us should take our show on the road, be a model for civic education. And it's amazing how much you can agree with somebody who you don't agree with. In any case, it is now my great privilege to introduce to you Sherry Levin Wallach, the president of the New York State Bar Association, to make her remarks.

Sherry Levin Wallach: Good morning, and I have the most difficult job of today and that is to follow our incredible Chief Judge Rowan Wilson and our Attorney General Leticia James, and I actually told her that this morning, so I will hopefully shed some additional thoughts on today for you all. First, I'd like to welcome you all to Law Day 2023. It is truly an honor to be here among thousands of members of the New York State Bar Association, on behalf, sorry, of the tens of thousands of members of the New York State Bar Association. And I'm honored to be here amongst all of you.

Chief Judge Wilson, thank you so much for having me, Attorney General Leticia James, thank you so much for challenging me, and our Chief Administrative Judge, Tamiko Amaker, so nice to be here with you. So nice to be here with the members of our wonderful Court of Appeals, our Presiding Justices, the members of our Appellate Division and the other leaders in New York State, Liz Fine and the members of the Legislature. And I'd also like to welcome our international guest, the United Kingdom's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of the State for the Ministry of Justice, Minister Michael Freer.

We are immersed in history and that is apparent from what we've heard so far, but the Court of Appeals Building where we are gathered today has a noble past. The level of respect we, in the legal profession, have for the court and this building is unmatched. It symbolizes that we are a part of a proud tradition and members of a dignified profession. We therefore have a duty to uphold its purpose. Understanding how laws are made and interpreted advance our system of justice. Encouraging our children to gain a better understanding of our legal system is the catalyst for social change, but we cannot expect them to actively participate in our government if they do not understand how it operates. The foundational pieces of our democracy need to be imparted to them. Our children are our future.

It is essential that we invest in education and training of the young people in our communities to provide them with opportunity to reach their greatest potential, the understanding of civics and the concept of what we call the rule of law, an integral portion of their successful engagement. A strong civics education that instills knowledge about the cornerstones of democracy comprises the antidote to the cynicism that has caused Americans to lose faith in the very institutions, these institutions that are designed to protect them.

Students need the tools to help them, to help them think critically about what they read, see, and hear. This is a topic that I care deeply about. I'm a mother of three children and I'm a criminal defense attorney, who have represented too many young people who have lost their way and I empathize with how vulnerable they can be. I also have a deep appreciation for the value of being a mentor and a student. I was fortunate to work alongside Congresswoman Representative Stacey Plaskett, who has inspired my work with the US territories to fight for equality of all citizens of the United States in overruling the Insular Cases and the Territories Clause.

I very quickly learned how few lawyers and people know about the Insular Cases and their role in our history and in our history of racism in America. Engaging and introducing students of all ages to trial advocacy is one way to educate them about the law and improve their public speaking skills. I have taught trial advocacy. I have coached and judged mock trial teams from high school to law school and I am proud of the role that I have played proposing, and the founding of the New York State Bar Association's Trial Academy.

My continued teaching at the organization's program has continued to inspire me to teach. This spring also invigorates me because the spring is a time for rebirth and growth, but we in the legal profession must focus on wellbeing of our attorneys, our clients, communities, and our children. Our state and country is amidst an enormous mental health crisis. Our parents must be healthy to raise their children and our children must be healthy to prosper. If our children prosper, our societies prosper, and our attorneys must be healthy to provide proper representation to their clients.

At the New York State Bar Association, my Task Force on Mental Health and Trauma-Impacted Representation will be presenting its groundbreaking report at our June House of Delegates meeting with a long list of recommendations on how we as a legal community can do better for our clients and our communities and the people in them living with mental illness and trauma. But at the New York State Bar Association, we have also increased our attorney wellbeing services. We have a 24-hour hotline, an in-house social worker who works closely with our committee on attorney wellbeing and our lawyers' assistance program.

Like many things, often our challenges and efforts to improve them are connected. Through our work on the issues facing the people of the US territories and our partnership and memorandum of understandings with the Virgin Islands bar, the Guam bar, and the Colegio de Abogados y Abogadas de Puerto Rico, we have learned of a heightened attorney wellbeing crisis in our US territories, and at the New York State Bar Association, we are working with them and their bar associations on ways to support the effort, their efforts, and share our resources.

We must all be sure to take time for our own wellbeing and teach our children to do so, as well. When my children were young, we would work in our vegetable garden together and this continues to be the place that I find calm and enjoy this time of year, the satisfaction one gains from witnessing life flourish through dedication, patience, and care is extraordinarily gratifying. So please take a moment. Where is this place for you? In addition to guiding our children and students on the path to wellbeing, as Mahatma Gandhi said, "Be the change that you wish to see in the world."

Our leaders, including those of us in the legal profession and our legislative members members have a chance to reach out and nurture our students so they may learn how to actively participate in government in a knowledgeable manner, especially at a time when social media permeates their lives. We can volunteer our time to arrange meetings with the students in classrooms to discuss legal issues, civic ideas or policies that may affect them. I know that our chief judge, senior associate judge and the other members of our Court of Appeals do this often by offering students internships to the Court, visits to this great courtroom, and take time to teach and speak to students often, and I thank them for being our leaders.

We can also touch base with teachers to talk about learning resources. We can partner with local colleges and universities by providing valuable resources for student political interest groups, student professional groups, and student civics groups. And we can have an exchange on the growing impact on technology in their lives and in all of our lives. We all grasp how our children are connected to their surroundings through the ongoing innovations of technology.

We are living through the fourth industrial revolution, the increasing use of blockchain technology, Web 3 and the metaverse. We are a legal community

and we must embrace this technology, understand it to do better, to represent our clients and better educate our children, but also to better understand them. Although technology is a valuable learning instrument, it conversely provides access to a variety of media channels that are rife with misinformation. This comes when many of them are at an impressionable age. 94% of Gen Z, that is ages zero to 21, use social media. It is crucial that our children are provided with the means to discern fact from fiction, to comprehend analysis from propaganda, and to understand viable news sources from those with veiled agendas so that they may have a true appreciation and understanding of our justice system.

The COVID-19 pandemic drew children back to their screens while they were out of school, which has resulted in them spending more time on them today. They are thus directed away from activities including sleeping and reading, along with exacerbating our mental health crisis among young people. The pandemic has also underscored an already existing class divide. Students of color and living in marginalized communities were more impacted by school closures due to fewer after-school activities and, as a result, were home with more time to spend on their screens.

So let us be mindful of these realities and the inequities that continue to exist. Let us continue to embrace the opportunity to speak out, to forge change. We, uniquely, are positioned to do this because we are New York, a legal group of diverse and dedicated individuals that form a beacon of trust and influence throughout the nation and the world. Once again, thank you for allowing me to be part of this wonderful program. It is my wish that we celebrate Law Day 2023 with a commitment to our youth and a pledge to safeguard access to justice for everyone, especially those who are most powerless.

Remember, we are at our best when we are a collective voice to lead, influence and inspire. We will share that voice to ensure sanctity in the rule of law and of the rule of law, and our ideal of liberty under the law never dissipates. I will leave you with the words of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, "Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time." Thank you.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: Thank you, Sherry. Now we get to the last and my favorite part of the program, where Chief Administrative Judge Amaker will present awards to certain employees of the Court system who were presented with exceptional opportunities to rise up and meet that challenge. And I would describe Judge Amaker herself as somebody who stepped into a role she didn't ask for at the very last moment and has performed wonderfully at it. So Judge Amaker, go ahead.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: Good morning, everyone. Such a pleasure to see all of you, and thank you very much to our Chief Judge, our really brilliant new Chief Judge Wilson, our Attorney General James, as well as New York State Bar Association President Sherry Levin Wallach, for their wonderful remarks. This is quite an honor to be here today and to host this next portion of the Law Day celebration as we

present the prestigious Judith S. Kaye Service Awards. These awards recognize superior performance and commitment on the part of our non-judicial employees.

This year's honorees include one employee who is being recognized for his outstanding work performance and three others for their heroism. I'll begin with our award recipient in the Exemplary Work Performance category, Robert Butler. Robert began his career as a messenger and driver for OCA in 2001 and has been assigned numerous additional responsibilities over the years. His current title is Court Analyst in OCA's Mail Room, and in recent years, he has stepped up without hesitation to cover print shop and supply room responsibilities. Robert is a reliable and trustworthy colleague who takes obvious pride in his career and genuinely cares about his work and his colleagues. His work performance is indeed exemplary, worthy of the Judith S. Kaye Award. Thank you, Robert.

Robert Butler: Thank you all for coming to this building and celebrating with me this award. I would just like to thank all of you the help [inaudible 00:50:32] here. Have a wonderful day.

Hon. Tamiko Amaker: Our next honorees are Court Officers Christopher Ferrari, Paul Olsen, and James Russo who serve in New York City Civil Court in Kings County. On November 2nd, 2022, these officers were told by civilians that a carjacking was in progress nearby on Smith Street. While one officer called for assistance, the other two approached the car. They found a 19-year-old woman in the driver's seat and a man in the passenger seat struggling to take the keys from her. The court officers removed the two individuals from the car and began to interview them. The man was sweating profusely, agitated and incoherent, and the young woman identified herself as his stepdaughter and said he had a substance abuse problem and was currently under the influence. She said he had jumped into her lap and grabbed the steering wheel in an attempt to steal the car, nearly causing an accident in the process.

NYPD officers arrived. They arrested this individual and charged him with reckless endangerment. Court officers, Ferrari, Olson, and Russo... Excuse me. This is precisely why everyone should turn off their phones. Court Officers, Ferrari, Olson and Russo did not hesitate to take action to assist this young woman and to prevent injury to her or other members of the public. They displayed courage and commitment and we honor them for that. Thank you officers Ferrari, Olsen, and Russo.

We next present commendations to three individuals who serve the Court system in senior public safety positions. Chief Michael Magliano, Major John Allen, and Captain Michael McKee. These three individuals worked tirelessly to craft the court system's extraordinarily complex security plans for the April 4th, 2023 arraignment of former President Donald Trump. The arraignment took place before Acting Supreme Court Justice Juan Merchan in New York County, and it contained 34 felony charges.

This court appearance required unprecedented security and not just for that day, but for weeks leading up to the arraignment, and involved federal, state and city law enforcement agencies. New York State Court Officers secured the courthouse and the courtroom. And may I say, they did an absolutely outstanding and absolutely flawless job. Through careful planning and unceasing effort, our three honorees succeeded in achieving the equally important goals of maintaining order and ensuring public access for this proceeding.

I'm also extremely proud that I've had the opportunity to work with all three of them throughout my career and I want to thank them personally. Thank you, Chief Magliano. Thank you, Major Allen, and thank you, Captain and soon to be Major McKee. And now I'm going to turn the program back over to our brilliant Chief Judge.

Hon. Rowan Wilson: And I'm going to simply say thank you all for coming and for celebrating Law Day with us. My colleagues and I and Attorney General, our co-host, greatly appreciate your attendance and we hope to see you again next year. Thank you all.