

CLOSING REMARKS

ELISE LOPEZ*

Thank you all for coming. If you didn't catch my name at the beginning, I'm Elise Lopez, the 2016–2017 President of Empowering Women of Color (EWOC). I just want to make a few closing remarks. First of all, I want to give a huge thanks to our panelists. They were phenomenal. I hope you enjoyed them as much as I did. Thank you very much.

I always find our conference to be a reenergizing experience. It's the pinnacle event of EWOC, and we put a lot of work into it every year. I know as law students and people in the professional world, it's a lot to take time out of your day to come to a conference, but it's always so worth it. I'm always so happy that I came and this year the attendance is really encouraging. So, thank you all for that.

I love this space because I think it's a place where we can be really honest. That's there isn't always the opportunity to do this in the classroom or the office. I think our conference represents a time where these wonderful professionals, academics, and practitioners can speak openly about their experiences, and in doing so, empower and uplift other women of color.

During our practitioners' panel, we heard about the stereotypes that the panelists work against daily, including others' disbelief that they're occupying these roles, whether they're a prosecutor, or in public interest, or the only person of color at a small firm. It's really inspiring to hear how they navigate those worlds and how they keep their energy up, because I think it's something that we law students will also encounter.

From our healthcare panel, we watched a clip from *Wilhemina's War* and learned about the huge inequalities that still exist in access to proper healthcare. One of the people interviewed in the film actually said that healthcare and education are the two things that are creating generations of poverty; it's an area where there's still such a huge fight. And, of course right now it's obviously very relevant as we face the new proposed healthcare bill.

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Our academic panel shared how they push barriers by presenting their scholarship and working in subject matter areas that are traditionally not associated with people of color. Despite the adversity they meet, they succeed in occupying these worlds and leading in them. So, we thank you so much for your remarks, and for sharing with us, and really being open, because that's what this conference is all about.

Lastly, I really want to thank my board. I have to give credit where it's due. These are exceptional women. We're all 2Ls, and so of course there's a lot going on in our lives. We have people on journals, and people who are heavily involved in pro bono work, committing their spring breaks to actually doing pro bono work instead of taking a break. I particularly want to thank our conference chairs, Alexis Johnson and Cindy Li. They are the thought leaders of this conference who really put it together, from shaping the narrative of our theme and conducting outreach to recruiting all of our panelists and making sure that everybody came through. They both created the shape and the theme of the conference, and also covered all the details and logistics of making it a reality. Thank you both so much.

I also want to thank my better half, Chloe Bootstaylor, our Vice President this year. She's always the one who, when I forget something, is already on it. She's excellent, and all of our board really pulled through. This is a board that's excited and energized. These are amazing women who I fully expect to see as panelists here in a couple of years. I'm just proud to know you. You make me proud to be a woman of color and a future lawyer. Thank you for just being inspiring.

The last person I wanted to thank is Yadira Ramos-Herbert, our newly appointed Dean of Students. She has truly been a fairy godmother, a guardian angel to EWOC. Since its inception she's been there. She always makes time out of her busy, busy schedule, even now. Every week we've been in her office talking about the conference, and she's helped us pull together panelists, reminded us what we need to do to put on a truly excellent conference, and she's just always there for us. I don't know how she makes the time, with her two beautiful kids and new job, but she just does it all. So, thank you for being a role model and for being so supportive of us. We love you.

We hope to see you next year. Every year this conference is getting bigger, I think we're going to need a bigger room next year; we've filled it. Thank you so much, again, for attending. You truly are what keeps the organization alive and well, because we need that interest and that engagement. So, thank you.