



**Remarks of Fuad Gonzalo Chacón Tapias '18 LL.M., LL.M. Class Speaker
Columbia Law Graduation
Monday, May 14, 2018**

Hola, Columbia. My name is Fuad. I come from a small city called Bucaramanga, hidden among the mountains of Colombia. Our state song has a very powerful chorus: *Siempre adelante, ni un paso atrás*. “Always forward, not a step back”. We sang it in school, in stadiums, *everywhere*, reminding us to *always* keep walking, keep looking to overcome new challenges.

In my city, children grow up with a dream: study to become engineers and work in our state oil company. But that was not *my* dream, I wanted to be a lawyer. My dream brought me here, to Columbia Law School, the origin of the most exciting adventure of my life, where I had the opportunity to meet all of you--the most amazing people I have ever known.

We all have made sacrifices to get to this point. We all experienced those lonely nights, studying the complex science of law in a language that may not have been our own.

Nights when all our insecurities knocked on the door: “Was coming here the right decision?” “Will I be good enough?” and “Will I find my dream job?” But then, we remember, “*Always forward, not a step back,*” and we know our effort has been worth it. My parents are here. And like many of our parents, this is their first visit to the United States. They do not speak perfect English, yet they are smiling. Why? Because joy is a universal language that needs no translation. To all the parents and family members who are here today celebrating, and to those far away, “Thank you for your support. *We made it!*”

Being a lawyer is not easy. But as graduates of this great institution, we are ready. The world needs more lawyers with passion, willingness to serve, and high ethical standards. And the world needs us *now*, because we live in an era that is scary. Gunfire resonates louder than public discourse, dreams are blocked by walls, love is sometimes forbidden, and hate is too often promoted as government policy.

But don't worry, because the world has *us!*

Our challenge is huge, but our dreams are huge too.

Siempre adelante, ni un paso atrás. “Always forward, not a step back.”

Let's make some noise, Columbia!