

Remarks for Presentation of Honorary Membership to Loretta Lynch
New York City Bar Association
October 4, 2018
By Hon. Kiyo A. Matsumoto
U.S. District Judge for the Eastern District of New York

Good evening and thank you for being here to honor Loretta Lynch. I'd like to share with you why the Honors Committee so enthusiastically recommended Loretta for this award.

Loretta Lynch was a young girl in Durham, North Carolina, in the early 60s, when she commenced her lifelong dedication to serving the greater community, seeking equal justice for all, and enhancing the rule of law. She was descended from generations of Baptist ministers, and her great-great grandfather was a free African American man who sacrificed his freedom when he fell in love and married a woman who was a slave.

Loretta heard how her grandfather, a sharecropper and pastor, assisted African American men, who feared injustice, move north, away from the racist Jim Crow laws in the 1930s.

Loretta's father, a Baptist minister, brought Loretta along with him to the local courthouse to bear witness to legal proceedings involving his neighbors and members of his congregation.

As a young girl, Loretta's brilliance and precociousness were evident, but not readily accepted. When Loretta achieved a high score on a school exam, her teachers suspected her of cheating, and she was required to re-take the test. Loretta took the exam a second time, and she scored even higher. And, despite having the best grades in her high school class, Loretta's school wasn't ready to bestow the honor of valedictorian on a young black woman – so the high school decided that Loretta would share the honor with two other students.

Subsequently, Loretta made her own move to the north, to attend Harvard College, where she earned a BA in English and American Literature, and, thereafter her J.D. from Harvard Law School. It is not surprising that Loretta was a member of the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, a cheerleader and a choir alto.

After cutting her litigation teeth at Cahill Gordon & Reindel, reportedly working so hard that she passed out from exhaustion and dehydration, Loretta commenced her illustrious career in public service.

In 1990, Loretta joined the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York. She prosecuted a wide range of cases, including violent-crimes and narcotics cases. Her outstanding work, tireless work ethic and leadership skills propelled Loretta to be appointed as Chief of the Long Island Criminal Division, and then Chief Assistant to the U.S. Attorney, another notable City Bar member, Zachary Carter.

In 1999, Loretta was on the trial team that prosecuted NYPD officers for brutally violating the civil rights of Abner Louima, whose name she would invoke, some two decades later, as "shorthand of the day for the use of excessive force by law enforcement" in her remarks addressing Baltimore's police-community crisis.

In June 1999, Loretta was appointed to serve as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District by President Clinton. Under Loretta's stewardship, the Office prosecuted many prominent cases, including Benihana founder Rocky Aoki for insider trading, and announced a sweeping indictment of 45 members and associates, from New York, New Jersey and Florida, of the Genovese, Gambino, Bonanno, Colombo and Lucchese organized crime families.

Loretta's tenure as U.S. Attorney lasted until the new presidential administration in 2001, when she returned to private practice at Hogan & Hartson LLP. It was then that Loretta

turbo-charged her participation as a member of the New York City Bar Association. She served on a dozen committees, including the Judiciary, Criminal Law, Criminal Justice Council, Environmental Law, and Executive Committees - and finally, the one that seems to have captured her heart, the committee overseeing the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice.

Along with then-City Bar President, Evan Davis, and the previous President, Michael Cooper, Loretta was instrumental in launching the South African Legal Fellows Program, through which black South African lawyers would work for a year at major New York firms. The program was designed to help overcome the legacy of apartheid in South Africa by promoting a more racially-inclusive legal profession and spreading the spirit of *pro bono* service. To date, more than 50 Fellows have returned to become leaders of the legal profession in their country, and with the addition of Fellows from Kenya and Nigeria, the program is expanding under its new name, the *African* Fellows Program.

Loretta also began teaching an annual course on trial advocacy to prosecutors in the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and, at the Tribunal's request, led an investigation into alleged witness tampering. She has spoken of how rewarding it was to contribute to bringing justice to a country ravaged by genocide, and she described the inspiration she received from a man who saw his entire family struck down and went on to adopt eight genocide orphans. "I went to Rwanda to help people there and they ended up helping me," Loretta recalled. "I went there to share my talents and my experience and they gave me gifts far deeper and broader, and which I can never repay."

In 2010, President Obama appointed Loretta to a second stint as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York. Among many accomplishments, Loretta's tenure is regarded for the Office's widely admired work on human trafficking. The *Guardian* called Loretta "a tireless scourge of sex traffickers," and described her "prodigious history of throwing sex traffickers in prison, breaking up prostitution rings, rescuing

underage victims forced to work as prostitutes and reuniting mothers held captive by the rings with their long-lost children.” During Loretta’s tenure, the office also prosecuted political corruption cases and tried the largest number of terrorism cases nationwide.

In nominating Loretta for her second term as Eastern District U.S. Attorney, President Obama remarked that, “Loretta might be the only lawyer in America who battles mobsters, drug lords and terrorists, and still has the reputation for being a charming ‘people person.’”

In 2014, President Obama nominated Loretta to succeed Eric Holder as Attorney General of the United States. President Obama’s earlier observations about Loretta’s unique combination of steely resolve and charm proved to be accurate. Not only did Loretta comport herself with her trademark grace, intelligence, and poise during her Senate confirmation hearing, she enjoyed the tremendous support of many former colleagues, friends, family members, and current and former sisters from her sorority, Delta Sigma Theta.

When Loretta was sworn into office in April 2015, she was the first African American woman; the second African American, after Eric Holder; and the second woman, after Janet Reno; to serve as Attorney General of the United States. Loretta served with distinction as Attorney General of the United States, from 2015, until January 2017. In addition to high-profile terrorism, narcotics and public-corruption cases, Loretta oversaw the investigation of the tragic church shooting in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Orlando nightclub shooting, and the most sweeping mafia prosecutions in New York City history, involving seven organized crime families.

Upon her appointment, Loretta skillfully navigated some of the most combustible and polarizing issues in America, involving law enforcement and race, brought to the fore by the deaths of Eric Garner in New York, Laquan McDonald in Chicago, and Freddie Gray

in Baltimore.

Loretta worked tirelessly to improve relations between the police and the communities they were charged with protecting. Following the death of Freddie Gray, the Justice Department investigated the practices of the Baltimore Police Department. After the Department of Justice announced findings that members of the Baltimore Police Department had engaged in unlawful and unconstitutional conduct, ranging from the use of excessive force to unjustified stops, seizures and arrests, Loretta appeared at the University of Baltimore School of Law to outline the DOJ's plans to engage the community. She observed, that in talking with local leaders, protestors and police officers, "I heard the same refrain: 'I love my city. And I want to make it better.'"

She continued, "We, as a nation, have at long last begun to hear the voices of those who do not feel protected by the police, who feel singled out because of where they live or what they look like. We have at long last begun to understand the unique stresses and dangers that our law enforcement officers face as they work to address violent crime, drug abuse, human trafficking, and so many of the other ills that afflict our communities. We have begun to understand that we all have a role to play in strengthening our communities, reducing crime, and improving trust. In short, we have at long last begun to recognize one another's common humanity – to see each other as we really are, and not as we assume each other to be."

*

After leading the Eastern District's multi-year investigation into corruption in global soccer's governing body as U.S. Attorney, and soon after starting as Attorney General of the United States, Loretta and her Eastern District US Attorney successors, Kelly Currie and Robert Capers, announced two successive indictments of 16 top FIFA officials, charged with engaging in "rampant, systemic, and deep-rooted" corruption.

Loretta's stellar career and her multiple titles reflect her deep commitment to protecting and improving the lives of all Americans. U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, not once but twice; Law Firm Partner; Attorney General of the United States: These titles are all impressive, but Loretta is the ONLY person in the world who has been named by Marvel Comics as a superhero known as...



...the FIFA Slayer! This new superhero was created by Marvel, at the request of ESPNW, after the FIFA prosecutions were announced. ESPNW commented, “We have no word on whether Loretta Lynch’s foot ever nailed a ball into a soccer net, but after this year, her impact on the beautiful game is as legendary as Brandi Chastain’s.”

One cannot help but assume, that among all of Loretta’s impressive accolades, she will hold a special place in her heart, not only for the MARVEL SUPERHERO honor, BUT ALSO THE THIRD ANNUAL GOLDEN BLAZER AWARD, conferred upon her in April 2016, by the two cheeky British soccer commentators known as the “Men in Blazers.” In bestowing the “Golden Blazer” award upon Loretta, they called Loretta America’s “greatest gift to the world since the Marshall Plan.” The British Embassy in Washington, DC chimed in on Twitter to congratulate her.

*

How far that brilliant, compassionate, young girl from Greensboro has come, that precocious daughter of a pastor and a school librarian. From her earliest years, Loretta learned and lived the values of close family, service to one’s community and country, and the pursuit of equal justice and the rule of law — not through abstract concepts in law school textbooks, but by sitting in court with her father and witnessing the law’s application in real time to living, breathing people.

That child became the woman who would remark, decades later at a Vance Center forum, “One of the pillars of the legal profession should be to provide assistance to those who don’t have the means to afford it, because it is not just a constitutional right as it is for us, but a fundamental *human* right.... If you really believe in the rule of law, then there really are no boundaries, geographic or otherwise.”

Like Loretta Lynch, the New York City Bar Association, since its early days, has been

dedicated to the highest ideals of our justice system. After nearly 150 years, the City Bar endures and contributes to the public good, thanks to its members, and recognizes and celebrates the lawyers who emerge as leaders of their generation.

You may be wondering, how special is the award of Honorary Membership in the New York City Bar Association? I submit as evidence, with no further comment, a small sampling of those who have received it: William Howard Taft, Benjamin Cardozo, Charles Evans Hughes, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Felix Frankfurter, Learned Hand, Dag Hammarskjold, Earl Warren, Warren Burger, Thurgood Marshall, William Brennan, Marian Wright Edelman, Harry Blackmun, Cyrus Vance, William Rehnquist, Judith Kaye, and Jack Greenberg.

To this illustrious list, it is our great pleasure this evening to add the name of Loretta Lynch. Congratulations, Loretta.

#

Sources:

<https://www.cnn.com/2014/11/19/us/loretta-lynch-fast-facts/index.html>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loretta_Lynch

<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/article9232778.html>

<http://time.com/4341913/loretta-lynch-commencement-speech-american-university/>

<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/interesting-cases-attorney-general-nominee-loretta-lynchs-career/story?id=26758832>

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-loretta-e-lynch-delivers-capstone-remarks-community-policing-university>

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/may/29/loretta-lynch-profile-fifa-corruption-charges>

<https://meninblazers.com/2016/04/07/goldenblazer2016/>

<https://www.npr.org/2015/01/14/376997783/tough-attorney-general-pick-loretta-lynch-vies-for-senate-confirmation>

<https://www.vogue.com/article/united-states-attorney-general-loretta-lynch>