

00:00 Good evening, everyone.  
00:00 And welcome to Suffolk University's  
00:03 Celebration of Black Excellence.  
00:05 Please welcome the co-chair  
00:06 of the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network and member  
00:10 of the Suffolk University Law School Alumni Board,  
00:13 Tamela Bailey.  
00:15 (audience claps)  
00:18 Thank you. Thank you.  
00:21 Thank you.  
00:22 Oh, here he is,  
00:24 the man of the hour.  
00:25 (audience laughs)  
00:26 I was about to stall.  
00:31 Look at this.  
00:40 The party doesn't start until Ernst,  
00:45 until Ernst gets here.  
00:47 Thank you for coming.  
00:49 (audience laughs)  
00:51 We weren't gonna start without you.  
00:52 I, no, I'm serious.  
00:54 I told Caitlin we can't start without you.  
00:57 All right. All right, all right.  
00:58 So, good evening, everyone.  
01:02 I'm gonna say that again.  
01:05 Good evening, everyone.  
01:06 <v Audience>Good evening.</v  
01:08 <v ->There you go. There you go.</v  
01:10 So, hello and welcome.  
01:11 Thank you so much for coming out and celebrating  
01:14 with us tonight  
01:15 at the 4th Annual Black Excellence Celebration.  
01:19 (audience claps)  
01:25 So, my is Tamela Bailey, as was just announced,  
01:28 I am so excited to be here with everyone.  
01:31 I'm looking in the audience.  
01:33 Like, who did I invite? (audience laughs)  
01:36 They better be here, or they should be watching.  
01:40 So, I am a 2004 graduate of the law school,  
01:44 a member of the alumni board of directors,  
01:46 co-chair with Hind,  
01:49 of Suffolk University Black Alumni Network.  
01:52 I'm co-chair and so is Hind.  
01:55 Chair of the all rise committee,  
01:57 I'm a former president  
01:58 of the Black Law Students Association at Suffolk University.  
02:03 I am a Ram mentor, a mentor to several law students,  
02:07 and I participate on a few other committees.  
02:11 Suffolk is keeping me busy.  
02:14 So, with us tonight are many members  
02:17 of the Suffolk community, including President Marisa Kelly,  
02:22 and president, the presidential spouse, Margie Arnold,  
02:27 chairman of the board to trustees, Bob Lamb,

02:30 as well as several other trustees,  
02:32 including one of tonight's honorees,  
02:36 my brother from another mother,  
02:38 (audience laughs)  
02:39 Ernst Guerrier,  
02:40 the Dean of the Sawyer Business School, Amy Zeng,  
02:45 and many others, including Suffolk administrators,  
02:47 faculty, and alumni, and students.  
02:50 In addition,  
02:51 we have several past Black Excellence Award recipients  
02:56 in the audience tonight that I want to recognize.  
02:58 You can stand or not.  
03:01 Is Roxann Cooke here?  
03:04 (audience member cheers) Roxann!  
03:05 (audience claps)  
03:06 Thank you for coming out.  
03:08 Is Sharice Perry in the room?  
03:12 Not yet?  
03:13 And Cherina, is Cherina here with us tonight yet?  
03:18 Well, Cherina is always here in spirit  
03:20 because she supports us so much.  
03:24 So, it is your attendance and participation  
03:27 that makes this event very special.  
03:29 And I will add that I'm so happy we are here in person,  
03:34 considering what happened in February,  
03:36 and this evening would not be possible  
03:38 without the great work  
03:39 of the Black Excellence Planning Committee,  
03:43 made up of alumni, students, faculty and staff  
03:46 from all three Suffolk schools.  
03:48 We have met the past several months,  
03:51 actually more than the past several months,  
03:53 since this was supposed to happen in February,  
03:55 and we had to start over, kind of,  
03:59 working closely with Caitlin and her team.  
04:01 Anna Maria, I wanna mention her.  
04:06 Will the members of the Black Excellence Committee,  
04:09 as well as Caitlin and her team,  
04:11 please stand so we can give you a round of applause?  
04:14 (audience claps)  
04:22 Thank you.  
04:25 So, many of you may know  
04:26 that the Black Excellence Celebration is actually one  
04:29 of SUBAN's largest events.  
04:31 As co-chair, I'd like  
04:33 to provide you a quick background about SUBAN.  
04:37 It started in 2018 by our pioneer, Ernst Guerrier,  
04:42 trustee, Ernst Guerrier,  
04:44 Jenny Joseph-Hayle, Joyce Miller and several others  
04:50 who I won't list all the names, but those are a few.  
04:55 SUBAN's mission is to celebrate and serve current  
04:57 and future Black alumni through mentoring,  
04:59 philanthropy, volunteerism, and events.  
05:01 SUBAN supports the recruitment, retention,

05:05 academic achievement, and successful graduation  
05:08 of Black students.  
05:09 SUBAN also supports the career development  
05:12 and professional opportunities of Black students and alumni.  
05:16 All Suffolk graduates are invited to join SUBAN.  
05:19 If you have any interest in getting involved in SUBAN,  
05:22 please make sure you sign our sign-in sheet,  
05:26 which is at the front desk.  
05:28 We are always looking for dedicated alumni with passion  
05:31 to help us achieve SUBAN's mission.  
05:34 Please join us and become a member on LinkedIn.  
05:37 We also are currently looking for Black alumni to be mentors  
05:40 of SUBAN's mentoring program, which is in the works.  
05:46 I want to recognize as well the SUBAN leadership committee,  
05:49 who serves as ambassadors of the university,  
05:52 working closely with Caitlin in the office of advancement  
05:55 to promote alumni engagement and giving,  
05:58 particularly for the SUBAN scholarship.  
06:01 Will the SUBAN leadership committee members  
06:04 all please stand?  
06:06 And we will give them a round of applause  
06:09 (audience claps)  
06:17 Thank you.  
06:18 And speaking of the SUBAN scholarship,  
06:21 I want to give a big thank you to all of you who contributed  
06:24 to the SUBAN Scholarship Fund.  
06:27 And I would be remiss if I didn't mention,  
06:31 we hope that other folks are in a giving spirit.  
06:35 If you're feeling like donating this evening,  
06:37 you can definitely do so.  
06:39 We also have a fundraiser happening this evening,  
06:41 where you can buy a SUBAN t-shirt.  
06:44 We have long and short sleeve t-shirts.  
06:46 Some of the proceeds will go to the SUBAN scholarship.  
06:49 That is another way that you can donate.  
06:51 And they're really nice t-shirts actually.  
06:54 So, without further ado,  
06:57 it is now my pleasure to introduce Suffolk's 11th President,  
07:02 to you, Dr. Marisa Kelly.  
07:05 (audience claps)  
07:06 Wait a minute.  
07:07 Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.  
07:10 I didn't give her accolades yet.  
07:11 You can't clap. (audience laughs)  
07:13 President Kelly is deeply committed to Suffolk  
07:16 and she brings to the presidency strong leadership  
07:19 and a clear vision for the university's future.  
07:23 Thanks to President Kelly's leadership,  
07:25 the university is breaking fundraising records,  
07:28 building its national and international reputation,  
07:32 engaging more alumni,  
07:33 recruiting more students from diverse backgrounds  
07:36 and developing innovative educational programs.  
07:40 We are so fortunate to have her as our president.

07:43 Please join me now in welcoming  
07:45 to the podium President Dr. Marisa Kelly.  
07:49 (audience claps)  
07:57 <v ->Thank you, Tamela, and good evening, everybody.</v  
08:00 It is such a pleasure to be here with you tonight,  
08:03 whether in person  
08:04 or for those of us who are joining on Zoom.  
08:07 From wherever you may be, welcome.  
08:09 And thank you so much for being here.  
08:11 And I want to give my special welcome,  
08:14 or rather special appreciation to the planning committee  
08:17 and the entire alumni relations team  
08:20 that is responsible for planning this event.  
08:25 It's always a fabulous, fabulous gathering.  
08:28 And I know it takes a lot of work to make this happen.  
08:31 This is an exciting night.  
08:34 It is absolutely an exciting night  
08:36 and it's in part because it's wonderful  
08:39 to be back together again,  
08:41 but it's especially an exciting night  
08:43 because we are here for this particular event,  
08:45 which has really become one  
08:48 of my favorite new Suffolk traditions.  
08:54 Why?  
08:54 Because tonight, and on every occasion  
08:57 when we gather in the Celebration of Black Excellence,  
09:00 we are celebrating inclusion and achievement.  
09:05 And those two things are both essential  
09:09 to who we are as an institution.  
09:12 Now, you may have heard me say this before,  
09:14 but it's important and worth repeating.  
09:17 Suffolk was founded on the ideas of equality  
09:21 of opportunity and democracy in education.  
09:25 The conviction that every person should have access  
09:29 to an empowering education,  
09:31 irrespective of an individual's race,  
09:34 gender, ethnicity, orientation, or income level.  
09:37 That fundamental principle still sits at our core.  
09:44 We are an inclusive community made up of many races  
09:48 and people of many backgrounds.  
09:50 We stand for the highest principles of diversity,  
09:55 human dignity and respect.  
09:59 And while we do not always succeed  
10:02 in living up to our ideals, we always strive to do so.  
10:10 Tonight, we celebrate alumni, faculty and staff  
10:15 who are working in various ways  
10:16 to advance important JEDI goals here in our community  
10:21 and outside of it,  
10:22 individuals who are helping us get closer in word and deed  
10:28 to our ideals.  
10:30 I'm excited to hear from our distinguished keynote speaker.  
10:33 And thank you so much, Linda, for being with us tonight,  
10:37 I'm excited to year from all of our speakers and honorees  
10:41 and my congratulations to all of our honorees in advance.

10:46 At an institutional level,  
10:48 our commitment to action continues.  
10:51 We know that we have more work to do.  
10:54 We are examining our JEDI initiatives.  
10:56 We are building on those that have been successful,  
11:00 such as our Ambassadors for Inclusion Program,  
11:03 which now includes a second level program  
11:06 for graduates of the first.  
11:09 Under the leadership of Dr. Joyya Smith,  
11:11 our Vice President for Diversity, Access and Inclusion,  
11:14 we are the lead institution working with AICUM,  
11:18 that's the Association of Independent Colleges  
11:22 and Universities of Massachusetts,  
11:24 under her leadership,  
11:25 we are working with AICUM in the launch  
11:27 of an inclusive leadership program  
11:29 for higher educational professionals  
11:31 from colleges and universities all across the state.  
11:35 We are recommitting ourselves to partnerships  
11:39 that support our mission,  
11:40 such as our dual enrollment program  
11:43 in partnership with Boston Public Schools.  
11:46 We have expanded our JEDI work  
11:48 to include a new procurement initiative,  
11:51 so that we can use Suffolk's purchasing power  
11:55 to help close the wealth gap,  
11:57 a problem that has been ignored for far too long.  
12:00 (audience claps)  
12:06 And we are focused on creating more opportunities  
12:09 to hear from our students of color,  
12:11 so that we can better support them  
12:13 in the ways they tell us they need.  
12:17 There is much work to be done and we will continue to do it.  
12:23 And I know we have your support in that endeavor,  
12:27 and we will continue to celebrate  
12:29 and honor those who are so essential to this work.  
12:33 Again, my congratulations to all of tonight's honorees  
12:37 and my thanks to all of you  
12:38 for joining us here tonight or over Zoom.  
12:42 Have a great evening.  
12:44 (audience claps)  
12:49 <v Narrator>And now, please welcome to the podium</v  
12:51 the co-chair of the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network,  
12:55 Hind Habbach.  
13:00 <v ->Thank you.</v  
13:03 Thank you, President Kelly.  
13:05 Hello, and happy Friday, everyone.  
13:08 Well, I'm glad mother nature worked out in my favor  
13:11 because I couldn't make the February event.  
13:15 Thanks, Boston.  
13:16 It's wonderful to be here in person.  
13:18 Thanks to everyone attending virtually.  
13:21 My name is Hind Habbach.  
13:22 I'm a college of arts and sciences class of '09 graduate.

13:26 Over the last year,  
13:27 it's been my honor and privilege  
13:29 to serve as co-chair alongside Tamela  
13:32 as Suffolk University's Black Alumni Network co-chair.  
13:36 I serve on both the Black Excellence Planning Committee  
13:40 and on the Scholarship Committee as well.  
13:42 We're joined here today by a few scholarship recipients,  
13:45 both in person and remotely.  
13:48 And I cannot stress enough how important your support means  
13:52 to both current and future scholarship recipients.  
13:55 Tamela briefly touched upon the SUBAN Scholarship Fund,  
14:00 which is the first of its kind.  
14:02 It was set up, of course,  
14:05 to establish and support students with financial need  
14:08 who are minoring in Black studies,  
14:11 who are involved in the Black Student Union,  
14:14 the Black Student Association  
14:17 and other diversity focused student organizations,  
14:21 or who have demonstrated knowledge and/or academic interest  
14:24 in underrepresented minority populations.  
14:28 Last year, we awarded three scholarships about,  
14:31 of about \$5,000, totaling, 15,000 across the three schools,  
14:37 the College of Arts and Sciences,  
14:38 the Law School and the Sawyer Business School.  
14:42 I urge all of you today who haven't already made a donation  
14:46 or are thinking about making a donation to take a moment  
14:49 to learn more about the SUBAN Scholarship  
14:51 and help deserving students in need  
14:53 in the spirit of Suffolk University and paying it forward.  
14:58 And now, speaking of paying it forward,  
15:00 I now will like to introduce someone who does pay it forward  
15:04 and have the privilege of introducing our keynote speaker,  
15:09 Linda Dorcena Forry.  
15:12 Linda is a former Massachusetts State Senator  
15:15 and state representative.  
15:16 For over two decades,  
15:18 Linda dedicated her professional career in public service,  
15:21 working in various capacities in both state  
15:24 and local government.  
15:26 As a first generation American of Haitian descent,  
15:29 she gained from her parents a strong work ethic  
15:31 and understanding of transformational power  
15:35 of education and recognized the value of civic engagement  
15:38 from a very early age.  
15:40 A native Bostonian,  
15:42 Linda was the first woman and person of color  
15:45 to represent the Commonwealth's first Suffolk district,  
15:49 a diverse and thriving cross section of the, of Boston,  
15:52 that includes Dorchester, Mattapan,  
15:54 South Boston and Hyde Park.  
15:56 And I wonder if my Boston accent did come out there.  
15:59 (audience laughs)  
16:00 In 2008, in 2018,  
16:03 Linda transitioned to the private sector

16:05 and became the Vice President of Diversity, Inclusion,  
16:08 and Community Relations at Suffolk Construction.  
16:12 Linda led the design and implementation  
16:15 of Suffolk Construction's national strategy  
16:17 to strengthen their diversity and inclusion platform,  
16:20 which is beyond words for me.  
16:23 That's amazing.  
16:24 Linda is now the Vice President of External Relations  
16:27 at Suffolk Construction,  
16:29 developing long-term strategies and tactics  
16:31 that support Suffolk Construction's vision.  
16:34 Linda is also a co-founder of  
16:37 the new Commonwealth Racial Equity and Social Justice Fund,  
16:41 along with several Black and brown corporate executives  
16:44 from leading companies.  
16:47 This fund provides essential support, resources,  
16:50 and thought leadership to make progressive societal changes  
16:54 by addressing systemic racism and racial inequity  
16:58 in all of Massachusetts.  
17:00 So, please join me  
17:02 in giving Linda Dorcena Forry a warm welcome.  
17:05 (audience claps)  
17:09 <v ->Thank you.</v>  
17:13 Okay, guys. Come on, sit down.  
17:15 Just stop.  
17:15 Stop the nonsense.  
17:19 Oh, wow.  
17:20 Okay. It is, first of all, good evening, everyone.  
17:25 Good evening, everyone.  
17:27 <v Audience>Good evening.</v>  
17:28 <v ->All right.</v>  
17:29 It is wonderful to be here.  
17:31 I am thrilled to be with all of you here this evening.  
17:35 Thank you, Hind Habbach, for that wonderful introduction.  
17:39 What an honor, to join SUBAN, the Black Student Union,  
17:44 and the Black Law Students Association for the fourth year  
17:47 of Celebrating Black Excellence.  
17:50 And to be here as you present awards out  
17:53 to seven outstanding members of the alumni,  
17:57 faculty and staff community of Suffolk University,  
18:01 among the recipients are two of my childhood  
18:04 and close friends who we've know,  
18:07 we've known each other for a long, long time,  
18:10 but Caitlin, let me give it up to Caitlin and her team,  
18:14 who's, who was on the email (audience claps)  
18:16 and Zoom with Tamela, I mean, all day long, you know,  
18:20 to get this done.  
18:21 But to President Kelly, Dr. Marisa Kelly,  
18:24 you are doing a fantastic job here at Suffolk,  
18:27 and we're so happy (audience claps)  
18:30 that you're with us this evening.  
18:33 And a special thanks to Tamela Bailey,  
18:38 and no, but it's true.  
18:39 (audience claps) We're on the phone, y'all.

18:42 And to Hind, right?  
18:44 For your work and your leadership in leading SUBAN,  
18:48 very, very important.  
18:50 And to the honorees tonight, my friends, my colleagues,  
18:55 in some cases, my neighbors and pretty much family, right?  
19:00 Rachel, Tony, Sonia, Jennifer, Loletta,  
19:04 and as I mentioned, the two people  
19:08 that I've known for a long, long time.  
19:11 I want to recognize, because it's amazing, right?  
19:14 I'm gonna pull it together (laughs).  
19:20 First, I'm gonna start with someone whose family  
19:23 and my family grew up together in Haiti.  
19:26 You see I'm first generation American.  
19:28 My parents came to this great country  
19:31 in search of opportunity.  
19:33 And when they came here,  
19:34 they taught us the importance of reaching back  
19:37 and giving back to those that come next.  
19:41 And so this incredible person that I've known, my goodness,  
19:44 I'm gonna say, St. Kevin's School,  
19:47 and it's incredible that, you know,  
19:50 he's part of this Suffolk community,  
19:53 but what an amazing accomplishment,  
19:56 the Associate Justice  
19:59 of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court,  
20:02 the Honorable Serge Georges, give it up.  
20:05 (audience claps)  
20:06 Come on!  
20:07 (audience claps)  
20:12 And to someone who was mentioned earlier by Tamela,  
20:16 the icon, the trailblazer.  
20:21 It's true, right?  
20:22 I mean, Marie (laughs),  
20:24 the one and only, now I remember Ernst back in the day.  
20:27 I was like 12. Okay?  
20:30 I think I'm still kind of millennium. I'm not a millennial.  
20:33 I'm not. I'm no longer. (audience laughs)  
20:34 That ship has sailed.  
20:36 But really, wanna give it up, you know,  
20:39 for your vision  
20:42 in pulling together this community of alumni  
20:45 and saying, it's important that we come together  
20:48 and support Black Alumni Network and people of the diaspora.  
20:54 So, they know that this is their place and their home.  
20:57 Give it up, y'all, for Ernst Guerrier.  
20:59 (audience claps)  
21:06 There's so much greatness and so much more excellent  
21:09 that lies ahead of us.  
21:11 And I'm so happy to celebrate it with all of you tonight.  
21:15 And all of us in this room are blessed  
21:18 that we can be here this evening.  
21:20 Aren't we? With everything that has happened.  
21:23 Hello, Tony.  
21:26 And you know, I've not spoken to a room like this



21:29 in a long, long time.  
21:31 So, who's keeping time?  
21:32 I just wanna make sure.  
21:34 (audience laughs) Okay, okay. I got you.  
21:36 I'm gonna be good. I'm gonna be good.  
21:37 I got this.  
21:38 So I've been thinking a bit, a lot about this event,  
21:40 a Celebration of Black Excellence.  
21:43 Black excellence.  
21:45 Join me. Black excellence.  
21:48 One more time.  
21:49 <v Group>Black excellence.</v  
21:52 <v ->And let's think about that for a moment.</v  
21:54 Isn't that turn of phrase a curious one?  
21:57 I mean, in some ways it's sort of redundant,  
22:01 like saying wet water  
22:05 or hot sun, or ice cold,  
22:12 Black and excellence.  
22:15 It should be considered synonymous. Right?  
22:19 And look at this room, look around you.  
22:22 Turn to your left, turn to your right,  
22:26 excellence, excellence, excellence.  
22:28 That's what tonight is about.  
22:30 (audience claps)  
22:38 So, you know we are fortunate to live in a time  
22:40 in which increasingly those two words mean the same thing.  
22:47 As a mom of four, my husband,  
22:50 Bill Forry and I are raising our kids like many of you here  
22:56 to be proud of their roots, the richness of their ancestry,  
23:01 all the gifts endowed on them by the blend of cultures  
23:05 and bloodlines and struggles and triumphs.  
23:09 Their Blackness is a birthright that doesn't just speak  
23:12 to their inner beauty or their outer beauty.  
23:16 It speaks to the decades and centuries of perseverance  
23:20 and sacrifice and overcoming the most persistent  
23:24 and pervasive of obstacles, the hardness of the human heart.  
23:31 So, thanks to many of you  
23:33 and your parents and their parents,  
23:36 we're in a place today  
23:38 where to be Black and excellent isn't an aberration.  
23:43 It's an expectation.  
23:46 (audience claps)  
23:51 But that doesn't mean we shouldn't celebrate it too,  
23:55 because Lord knows, for long enough,  
23:57 these sort of evenings were denied  
24:00 to too many deserving people.  
24:03 And we all need to,  
24:05 the reminder from time to time of the truth I just laid out.  
24:09 It's our job to make sure we pass  
24:12 that message along to the next generation,  
24:15 the young men and women educated here at Suffolk,  
24:18 which is what you're doing, with a particular focus of those  
24:22 of us from the African and Caribbean diaspora,  
24:25 because that truth, the reality of Black excellence,

24:29 it's our truth.  
24:31 But we all know it's not everyone's truth.  
24:34 Don't we?  
24:36 And that's why we're here tonight.  
24:39 We don't have the luxury to lay back.  
24:41 We know the forces  
24:43 that are out and about afoot in this country  
24:46 that don't believe in Black excellence.  
24:50 They haven't gone away  
24:52 and they have no plans to change course.  
24:56 And by the way, when we uplift Black excellence,  
25:00 it's important to remind ourselves that, in doing so,  
25:04 we don't seek to diminish any other culture or other people.  
25:09 (audience claps)  
25:14 Black excellence lifts everyone.  
25:19 You hear me?  
25:20 Black excellence lifts everyone.  
25:25 And it's always been so.  
25:28 Our greatness enhanced the fabric of America,  
25:32 making it stronger and nimble and resilient,  
25:36 strong enough to withstand the assault  
25:40 of hatred, bigotry, transphobia,  
25:45 intolerance, and yes, even insurrection.  
25:50 We've done it before.  
25:53 So, this work requires all of us,  
25:56 'cause like I said, Black excellent lifts everyone.  
26:00 It requires all of us to do it together.  
26:03 In our jobs, in our communities, in our schools,  
26:07 we have to hold each other accountable, not just our words,  
26:12 but the actions, and Dr. Kelly,  
26:15 President Dr. Kelly said it today, right?  
26:18 It's about action.  
26:19 And the procurement in looking at, creating,  
26:22 closing the wealth gap,  
26:24 making sure that there are opportunities is critical.  
26:30 How are we being purposeful and intentional  
26:35 in truly created an inclusive culture?  
26:39 Are we embedding changes in our policies and procedures  
26:42 that have held so many people back?  
26:45 And I want you to think of the work,  
26:47 wherever you work, right?  
26:50 In your communities,  
26:51 what are some things we can do differently?  
26:54 Are we fostering a culture of empathy and understanding?  
26:58 Very important, right?  
27:00 We want people to be able to place themselves  
27:03 in someone else's shoes,  
27:06 to just get a sense of what people are going through.  
27:11 And this is not a race thing, right?  
27:14 It's not.  
27:17 It's about us taking that moment and being human  
27:21 and recognizing, as I lift up the immigrant issue,  
27:26 we're all immigrants in this country,  
27:30 generations of immigrants, from the Irish and the Italian.

27:34 So, many people that came and that struggled.  
27:39 How do we help and support and uplift  
27:43 this incredible place we call America,  
27:46 that is made up of so many people  
27:49 and so many languages?  
27:51 In working together,  
27:53 bringing our thoughts together at the table  
27:56 to tackle these difficult issues before us.  
28:00 So, tonight isn't a rest  
28:03 on your laurels kind of night folks, right?  
28:07 It's not.  
28:08 This is definitely a past, present and future sort of night,  
28:13 because we're not done making a difference.  
28:16 You all are not done making a difference.  
28:21 You're not done being leaders.  
28:23 You're not finished with the journey  
28:25 that led you here tonight.  
28:27 Not by a long shot, right?  
28:29 And neither am I.  
28:32 Neither are any of you in this room  
28:35 because you are in these places  
28:36 where you have an opportunity to create change,  
28:39 when it comes and when you see it.  
28:42 So, being in government for 22 years  
28:45 and being elected for 13 years  
28:47 and looking at legislation and policy, you know,  
28:51 I'm proud of some of the work that I was able to do  
28:54 with my colleagues and with governors,  
28:56 both Baker and Patrick.  
28:59 But when I think of that, I think of access and opportunity.  
29:03 When I represented the first Suffolk district,  
29:05 the first time there was someone from Dorchester,  
29:07 the first time there was a woman,  
29:08 first time there was a person of color  
29:10 that sat in the Senate seat of South Boston,  
29:13 they called it, right?  
29:14 (audience claps)  
29:18 But as I represented that amazing district, right?  
29:22 Incredible district.  
29:24 And it comes full circle  
29:25 because I'm a kid who grew up in Dorchester  
29:27 in Uphams corner, right?  
29:29 And I remember when my dad drove through South Boston,  
29:33 I wasn't in the car, but two of my kids were,  
29:35 two of my siblings were,  
29:37 and a rock came through his window.  
29:40 And here it is,  
29:40 his daughter elected this incredible district,  
29:44 only here in our great America can this happen.  
29:47 Right? But it's true. (audience claps)  
29:50 But I bring up the Senate because I say,  
29:52 you are in spaces where you're able to open the door, right?  
29:57 And we've talked about this, Tamela, right?  
29:59 How do you open doors for others?

30:01 And as a Senator, there was an opportunity.  
30:03 When we think about development  
30:04 and when we think about access and opportunity, and for me,  
30:08 it was looking at legislation.  
30:10 Tony may remember this.  
30:11 I look at Chrystal too. Okay.  
30:13 I'm calling out names now. These are government folks.  
30:15 But you know,  
30:17 in terms of the expansion of the convention center  
30:20 and the billion dollar, you know, convention center,  
30:22 within that language that we were able  
30:25 to craft talked about equity by people of color,  
30:29 in big developments in our city.  
30:32 And that was realized, it's now called the Massport Model.  
30:36 Right? It was realized with the Omni Hotel.  
30:39 But that's where it is.  
30:41 Wherever you are, don't have to be elected,  
30:44 the space that you're working in, that you're living in,  
30:47 how do we stand up and be there for others?  
30:49 How do we create opportunity?  
30:50 You know, for other people, is really, really important.  
30:55 So we belong, I'll say this,  
30:58 'cause this was one of the pieces we had talked about too,  
31:01 in terms of all of us, we belong in spaces.  
31:04 But in particular, I wanna talk to the students, right?  
31:07 And stuff, who are, a lot of times in our city,  
31:11 in our state, I'll say this, right?  
31:13 In other places, you will go around the country  
31:15 where you will be the only one, right?  
31:19 You will be the one, you will be the two  
31:21 or you will be the three people of color,  
31:24 Black, Latinx, Asian, Native American,  
31:26 two or more cultures that are in a room.  
31:31 And it can be annoying. No doubt about it, right?  
31:35 When you see it, when you see that happening.  
31:40 But know, which is really important,  
31:42 that you belong in that room.  
31:45 You belong in that room  
31:47 because so many people came before you.  
31:51 You belong in that room because you have something  
31:55 to contribute and something to add to the conversation.  
31:59 So, let's hold our head up high.  
32:02 (audience claps)  
32:04 So, let's hold our head up high and walk in  
32:08 with all those who came before,  
32:11 and let's get it done,  
32:13 'cause that's what it's about.  
32:15 Let's get it done and make a difference.  
32:20 And so, I'm thrilled,  
32:22 really excited to hear from the honorees.  
32:25 And I know many of you,  
32:27 as I said, from my time spent in elected life.  
32:33 And some of you, like I said, have been family,  
32:36 but your stories inspire us.

32:39 And that's the truth.  
32:40 It inspires us. It inspires me.  
32:43 And they inspire the students who you serve  
32:47 and guide here at Suffolk and beyond.  
32:50 And you are each deserving of these honors.  
32:53 And I wanna thank you all for having me here tonight.  
32:57 And to know that this work just continues.  
33:01 It's another reiteration, but we can do this,  
33:05 if we can put everything aside,  
33:08 wherever people stand, whatever people are thinking,  
33:12 we can come to the table and have real conversations.  
33:18 It doesn't have to be adversarial because we have to do this  
33:24 in order to save our great America.  
33:26 Thank you all and God bless.  
33:28 (audience claps)  
33:45 <v Narrator>To kick off the Black Excellence Awards portion</v  
33:49 of the evening,  
33:50 please welcome member  
33:52 of the Sawyer Business School Alumni Association  
33:55 and past chair  
33:56 of the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network,  
33:59 Jenny Joseph-Hayle.  
34:00 (audience claps)  
34:09 <v ->Good evening.</v  
34:11 <v Audience>Good evening.</v  
34:12 <v ->It is my pleasure to begin the awards portion</v  
34:16 of the ceremony.  
34:18 The Planning Committee reviewed the credentials  
34:22 of numerous Suffolk alumni, faculty and staff members  
34:25 who were nominated by the Suffolk community  
34:27 to receive Black Excellence Awards.  
34:31 Selecting just a few to honor tonight was no easy task.  
34:36 Our alumni are out in the world doing impressive work  
34:40 and Suffolk faculty and staff members are truly dedicated  
34:44 in supporting our students.  
34:46 The Celebration of Black Excellence  
34:48 Outstanding Alumni Awards are presented to alumni  
34:52 who have made a significant contribution to society  
34:56 and/or their professions  
34:59 and thereby achieved a level of distinction,  
35:01 which has brought honor to them and to the Suffolk community  
35:05 and from the school of which they graduated.  
35:08 That includes Suffolk University Law School, Suffolk,  
35:11 the Sawyer Business School  
35:13 and the College of Arts and Sciences.  
35:16 The Celebration of Black Excellence  
35:18 Outstanding Faculty and Staff Awards are presented  
35:22 to faculty and staff members who support  
35:25 and empower Suffolk students  
35:27 and are exemplary members of the Suffolk community.  
35:32 It is my honor to present the first two awards  
35:35 of the evening.  
35:36 At this time, I ask that President Kelly join me.  
35:41 (audience claps)

35:47 This year's recipient of the Sawyer Business School  
35:50 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award is Tony Richards.  
35:56 (audience cheers)  
35:58 (Jenny laughs) (audience claps)  
36:07 Tony earned his masters of public administration degree  
36:12 from Sawyer Business School,  
36:14 a proud MPA alum as well.  
36:17 Currently, yeah.  
36:19 (audience claps)  
36:20 MPA (cheers).  
36:21 (Jenny laughs)  
36:24 Currently, he serves as Vice President  
36:26 of Equitable Business Development  
36:28 at the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency.  
36:31 In his role, he works across the agency  
36:33 to increase the impact and reach of Mass Housing's work,  
36:37 particularly when it comes to closing gaps  
36:41 between home ownership and wealth.  
36:43 Tony worked previously as Deputy Chief of Staff  
36:47 in the Massachusetts Governor's Office  
36:49 and managed the Office of Access and Opportunity.  
36:52 During his tenure,  
36:53 he led the inception of the largest reform in the history  
36:57 of the Commonwealth, ensuring greater mandated, sorry,  
37:02 greater mandated minority participation  
37:05 in procurement accounting.  
37:08 These efforts yielded \$2 billion in annual spending  
37:12 for small and diverse businesses  
37:14 and up to \$3 billion for real estate development.  
37:17 The energy and enthusiasm Tony brings to diversity, equity,  
37:21 and inclusion issues, extends far beyond his office  
37:26 and includes his involvement  
37:28 with his father's No Books No Ball Youth Program,  
37:32 which seeks to use basketball as a means  
37:34 to achieve academic success for at-risk children.  
37:41 In recognition of many,  
37:42 of his many outstanding accomplishment as a graduate,  
37:46 as a proud MPA graduate,  
37:48 and in anticipation of his continued success  
37:52 and positive impact,  
37:54 we are pleased to present the Sawyer Business School  
37:56 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award to Tony Richards.  
38:01 (audience claps)  
38:14 <v ->Always takes so long</v  
38:16 to figure it out. (audience laughs)  
38:25 (audience claps)  
38:31 (paper crinkles) <v ->Cool.</v  
38:32 Let me get this together.  
38:33 I knew Serge was here.  
38:34 So I needed to, you know,  
38:35 make sure I got something.  
38:37 So, good evening.  
38:38 First, I want to send a special shout out to, you know,  
38:42 my other half who certainly deserves

38:44 to share this honor with me,  
38:46 you know, especially during the pandemic,  
38:48 you know, she's holding down the fort.  
38:50 I'm out, you know, trying to,  
38:51 you know, do a bunch of stuff.  
38:52 So just a quick round of applause for my wife.  
38:54 (audience claps)  
39:00 And also, I would like to congratulate tonight's honorees.  
39:03 I am humbled to receive this honor amongst,  
39:07 you know, such prestigious guests and, you know,  
39:10 a special shout out to, you know, President Kelly.  
39:13 I think, creating uncomfortable change is needed, right?  
39:17 It's not always comfortable when you lean in.  
39:20 So, I just want to give a special shout out.  
39:23 (audience claps)  
39:27 You know, but when I was thinking about this award  
39:29 and I look out into the audience today, I think of a,  
39:32 you know, I feel compelled  
39:33 to think of an African proverb that's,  
39:36 you know, always with me.  
39:37 And it says that if you want to go fast, go alone,  
39:40 but if you want to go far, go together.  
39:43 And I think that, you know,  
39:44 pretty much sums up my experience at Suffolk.  
39:48 You know, before I started the MPA program,  
39:50 you know, I really didn't know what I didn't know.  
39:54 And, you know, Suffolk,  
39:56 you know, by extension,  
39:58 you know, changed me  
39:59 throughout understanding a greater sense of awareness  
40:02 throughout that process.  
40:03 So, I had the, you know, extraordinary opportunity of,  
40:07 you know, when I was completing my MPA,  
40:09 you know, I was senior staff at the governor's office.  
40:11 I was, you know, the most highest ranking,  
40:13 you know, Black person within the administration.  
40:15 And, you know, I had the privilege and honor of,  
40:17 you know, working closely with the governor every day.  
40:21 And I very quickly was able to realize what I didn't know  
40:27 and try to just work aggressively to, you know,  
40:29 close that gap and distance.  
40:31 And I just really understood a lot of those core principles  
40:34 from my coursework at Suffolk.  
40:36 And, you know, that was just,  
40:37 you know, extraordinary at the time and,  
40:39 you know, stays with me.  
40:41 And now I, you know,  
40:42 I have the distinct opportunity to work at Mass Housing and,  
40:44 you know, for Chrystal Kornegay, who's,  
40:46 you know, here today, who's just,  
40:48 you know, super amazing. (audience claps)  
40:52 And you know, Chrystal,  
40:53 you know, has given me the,  
40:54 you know, opportunity, which is enormous,

40:57 to drive real meaningful change  
40:59 in Massachusetts and throughout,  
41:01 as we seek to aggressively narrow racial home ownership gaps  
41:05 and expand opportunities for diverse businesses  
41:08 and developers as well.  
41:10 And Mass Housing's work is so important, especially,  
41:13 you know, at a time like today,  
41:14 where affordable housing and home ownership is just really  
41:18 at a forefront with closing equity divides.  
41:21 So, I'm super excited about that work.  
41:23 And, the last thing I'll say is,  
41:26 you know, it really comes down to this.  
41:28 I say this a lot when I,  
41:29 anytime I speak, anytime I kinda get on a mic is, you know,  
41:32 I come from a working class home, right?  
41:34 You know, my dad is here with me today, a quick shout out,  
41:37 a quick, quick, you know, clap up to my dad.  
41:39 (audience claps)  
41:42 You know, he's dressed up today,  
41:45 (audience laughs)  
41:46 which is cool, but, you know, throughout my,  
41:49 my dad is an iron worker by trade  
41:51 and he's in the, you know, labor union,  
41:54 you know, so throughout my life,  
41:55 you know, my dad came home with,  
41:57 you know, dirty boots by the back door, right?  
42:00 You know, working 12 hour shifts,  
42:02 you know, the time I got to him, he was,  
42:05 you know, bone tired and still had the opportunity to,  
42:08 you know, better his community.  
42:10 Right?  
42:11 And I think the hard work and the dedication  
42:13 and the importance that he set on education, you know,  
42:17 just allows me the chance to, you know,  
42:18 go to work every day in a fresh white shirt,  
42:21 in a nice tailored blue suit,  
42:24 just trying to make a change for people  
42:26 throughout the Commonwealth that look like me as well.  
42:29 So, and it's an extraordinary privilege, that is.  
42:32 And I thank everybody here tonight for this award.  
42:35 (audience claps)  
42:50 <v ->Congratulations, Tony.</v  
42:54 The Sawyer Business School  
42:55 Black Excellence Outstanding Faculty Staff Award recipient  
42:59 is Sonia Alleyne.  
43:01 Sonia currently serves as an Executive in Residence  
43:04 at the Institute of Public Service  
43:06 and as a faculty member  
43:08 of the Moakley Center for Public Management.  
43:11 Her expertise,  
43:13 her area of expertise is non-profit organizations.  
43:16 She's also the President and CEO  
43:18 of the newly created Suffolk County Community Foundation.  
43:23 Sonia received her MPA.



43:26 Yep. See? (laughs)  
43:29 Sonia received her MPA degree from Suffolk in 2001.  
43:34 She served for 14 years as the Vice President  
43:36 and New England Regional Manager  
43:38 of Community Reinvestment at Santander Bank Foundation.  
43:42 She returned to her Alma Mater  
43:44 to serve on Suffolk's faculty in 2015.  
43:48 Over the years,  
43:49 Sonia has volunteered her time and talent  
43:52 to a wide variety of community organizations  
43:54 and has been honored with numerous citations  
43:58 from the Massachusetts State Senate,  
44:00 House of Representatives and the Boston City Council.  
44:04 She received both  
44:05 the Mayor's Award for Community Service in 2008  
44:09 and the Boston Woman's Fund Woman of Action Award in 2010.  
44:13 In recognition of her outstanding service  
44:17 and dedication to Suffolk University and our students,  
44:20 we are pleased to honor Sonia Alleyne  
44:22 with the SBS Black Excellence Faculty and Staff Award.  
44:26 (audience claps)  
44:34 Unfortunately, Sonia's not with us tonight.  
44:37 She had to unexpectedly travel out of the country  
44:39 and cannot be here.  
44:41 However, her daughter Taisha will accept the award  
44:45 on her behalf.  
44:47 (audience claps)  
45:04 (audience claps)  
45:08 <v ->Okay. It's no secret I'm not Sonia.</v  
45:10 (audience laughs)  
45:12 Unfortunately, she is not here tonight.  
45:14 We had a death in our family,  
45:16 so she is in Barbados celebrating our aunt's life.  
45:19 But on her behalf, I accept this prestigious award.  
45:22 I thank you all.  
45:24 I'm very proud of my mom.  
45:25 And I appreciate you guys honoring her tonight.  
45:27 Have a good night  
45:28 and congratulations to all the other honorees.  
45:30 (audience claps)  
45:55 <v ->Taking a second to turn all the way (laughs).</v  
45:58 Alrighty, good evening, everyone.  
46:00 <v Audience>Good evening.</v  
46:01 <v ->My name is Ahria Ilyas.</v  
46:02 I use she, her pronouns  
46:04 and I'm currently a junior here at Suffolk University.  
46:07 I'm an undergrad law major  
46:08 with a double minor in mathematics and Spanish.  
46:11 Thank you (laughs).  
46:13 (audience claps) Oh, thank you. Wow.  
46:15 (Ahria laughs)  
46:19 And I'm also a diversity peer educator  
46:21 for the Center of Student Diversity and Inclusion.  
46:24 This evening, I have the honor of presenting two awards.

46:27 The first is the College of Arts and Sciences  
46:29 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award.  
46:32 This year's award goes to Rachel Deleveaux.  
46:36 (audience claps)  
46:40 Rachel is the Assistant Vice President  
46:42 of Organizational Culture, Inclusion, and Equity  
46:45 at Simmons University.  
46:47 She is a 2007 graduate of Suffolk University's  
46:50 higher education administration master's program.  
46:53 And this past year,  
46:53 she has provided exemplary service to her Alma Mater,  
46:57 serving as the first Black woman President  
46:59 of the Suffolk University College of Arts and Sciences  
47:02 Alumni Association Board.  
47:05 (audience claps)  
47:10 A long time champion for equity and access  
47:12 for marginalized communities,  
47:14 Rachel leads a diversity, equity and inclusion framework  
47:17 at Simmons that seeks to transform campus-wide systems,  
47:21 policies and practices.  
47:23 She has also founded a mentoring program that focuses  
47:26 on mentoring Black students attending  
47:29 predominantly white schools across the country.  
47:32 Rachel has dedicated her life to breaking glass ceilings  
47:35 and championing equity and access  
47:37 for marginalized communities.  
47:39 She served as the region one representative  
47:42 for the socioeconomic and class issues  
47:44 in higher education knowledge community  
47:46 for the National Association  
47:48 of Student Personnel Administrators,  
47:50 and currently serves as a member of diversity councils  
47:53 at both Northeastern University  
47:55 and North Shore Community College.  
47:57 She has mentored countless students  
47:59 and is passionate about everything she does.  
48:02 In recognition of her many outstanding accomplishments  
48:04 as a Suffolk University graduate  
48:06 of the College of Arts and Sciences  
48:08 and in anticipation of her continued success  
48:12 and positive impact,  
48:14 we're pleased to present the College of Arts and Sciences  
48:16 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award  
48:19 to Rachel Deleveaux.  
48:21 (audience claps)  
48:48 <v ->How's everyone doing?</v  
48:49 <v Audience Member>Great.</v  
48:51 <v ->How's everybody doing?</v  
48:52 <v Audience>Great.</v <v ->I grew up</v  
48:53 in a Black church, y'all.  
48:54 How y'all doing?  
48:55 (Rachel laughs)  
48:57 Well, first of all, thank you, Suffolk.  
48:59 Thank you, SUBAN.

49:01 Thank you to my Lord and savior Jesus Christ.  
49:03 Thank you to my two grandmothers,  
49:06 Esmeralda and Ida, for whose shoulders I'm standing on.  
49:09 Thank you to my dad, Donald and my mom, Susan,  
49:12 who are watching right now.  
49:14 Thank you to my favorite person in the whole wide world,  
49:17 my son, Asher, who is watching me right now.  
49:20 (Rachel laughs) (audience claps)  
49:25 Thank you to my amazing CAS alumni board.  
49:28 Thank you to my friends,  
49:30 some of who are here today.  
49:32 Thank you to my family and my village.  
49:36 I, this is divine.  
49:40 I've been in Boston. I've been back in Boston for 10 years.  
49:43 I'm gonna try not to cry, but I'm a Pisces, so forgive me.  
49:46 (Rachel laughs)  
49:48 I've been back in Boston for 10 years.  
49:51 After I graduated from Suffolk in 2007,  
49:53 still recovering from cancer,  
49:55 I left Massachusetts, you know,  
49:58 vowing never to come back and the world is my oyster.  
50:02 So you can imagine the disappointment  
50:04 and the defeat I felt when I came back five years later,  
50:08 facing a divorce and pregnant, you know,  
50:11 and back in a worse place than I had left, you know,  
50:16 and just Section 8, food stamps, all of that, you know?  
50:22 And so, I grinded.  
50:24 Year one, I grinded.  
50:26 Nothing.  
50:28 Year two, I grinded. Nothing.  
50:31 Year three, I grinded. Nothing.  
50:35 Year four, I grinded. Nothing.  
50:37 Hey God, where you at?  
50:40 It's me (laughs).  
50:41 Year five, I grinded. Nothing.  
50:45 Year six, I grinded. Nothing.  
50:48 Year seven, I grinded.  
50:50 Hey God, where you at?  
50:52 What's going on? Nothing.  
50:54 Year eight, a little bit of something.  
50:57 Year nine, half of something.  
50:59 And year 10, a lot of everything.  
51:02 (audience claps)  
51:07 You never know what,  
51:10 when your time is going to come  
51:13 and you won't ever know if you quit.  
51:16 I encourage everyone to fall into their passion  
51:19 because then you will stumble upon your purpose  
51:22 and your purpose, by the way, is not what you do.  
51:25 It's the impact that you make by doing what you do.  
51:28 (audience claps)  
51:32 So, thank you to everyone.  
51:35 Thank you to my village.  
51:36 God bless and have a good evening.

51:38 (audience claps)  
52:03 <v ->Congratulations, Rachel.</v>  
52:05 That was very inspiring. So, thank you.  
52:08 It is now my pleasure to present the  
52:10 Suffolk University Black Excellence Outstanding Staff Award  
52:13 to Jennifer Blakely.  
52:15 (audience claps)  
52:16 Yeah, yeah. (audience claps)  
52:22 Jennifer serves as the head of access services  
52:24 for the Mildred F Sawyer Library.  
52:27 She received a master's degree in education  
52:29 from Suffolk in 2020.  
52:31 Since joining the university in 2014,  
52:34 she has built on Suffolk's commitment to access  
52:36 and opportunity with a particular focus  
52:38 on making the campus a more welcoming and better place  
52:41 for students of color.  
52:43 She is a passionate student advocate  
52:44 who helps them access the resources  
52:47 and support they need to thrive.  
52:49 She is also a leader and willing volunteer who works  
52:51 to create a more inclusive environment at Suffolk  
52:54 for students, employees, and stakeholders.  
52:57 She has served as a co-leader  
52:59 of the Black Faculty and Staff Employee Resource Group.  
53:02 And she co-led the Ambassador  
53:04 for Inclusion Professional Learning Community.  
53:07 She also was the driving and visionary force  
53:09 behind Suffolk's Take Advantage Program,  
53:12 designed to support students of color  
53:13 and reduce systematic barriers to success,  
53:16 which helps students become more aware of programs  
53:18 and support services on campus from tutoring to counseling.  
53:23 In recognition of her outstanding service and dedication  
53:25 to Suffolk University and our students,  
53:27 we are pleased to present the Suffolk University  
53:30 Black Excellence Outstanding Staff Award  
53:32 to Jennifer Blakely.  
53:33 (audience claps)  
54:05 (audience claps)  
54:09 <v ->All right, so I'm already crying,</v>  
54:10 so I'm not gonna make it (laughs).  
54:13 So, I'm gonna keep my comments short,  
54:15 but thank you to SUBAN  
54:16 and the Celebration of Black Excellence Planning Committee  
54:18 for this award.  
54:19 I'm humbled and honored to receive it.  
54:23 Sorry.  
54:26 (audience claps)  
54:34 The work that I do here at Suffolk,  
54:36 both inside and outside the library has brought meaning  
54:38 to my life and I'm grateful, sorry,  
54:42 to work alongside Joyya Smith and many others  
54:44 to make an impact on the lives of Suffolk students,

54:46 the Black and,  
54:47 the Black Faculty and Staff Employee Resource Group  
54:50 has become my extended family.  
54:52 And I'm grateful for their friendship.  
54:54 Again, thank you for this award.  
54:56 And I'll continue to do you my best  
54:58 to make Suffolk a place where people feel comfortable  
55:00 and are able to thrive.  
55:01 (audience claps) Thank you.  
55:25 <v ->Alrighty. Good evening, everyone.</v  
55:27 My name is Kerimal Suriel Guerrero  
55:29 and I'm a second year law student and the president elect  
55:32 of the Black Law Students Association.  
55:35 (audience cheers) (laughs) Thank you.  
55:39 This evening, I have the honor  
55:40 of presenting the Suffolk Law School  
55:42 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award  
55:45 and the Suffolk Law Black Excellence Outstanding Faculty  
55:48 and Staff Award.  
55:49 This year's recipient of the Suffolk Law  
55:52 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award is  
55:55 the Honorable Serge Georges Jr.  
55:57 (Kerimal laughs) (audience claps)  
56:03 I'm also told that today is Justice Georges' birthday.  
56:06 So happy birthday (laughs).  
56:09 (audience claps)  
56:15 Judge Georges is a highly respected associate justice  
56:18 of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court  
56:21 and a revered adjunct faculty member  
56:23 at Suffolk University Law School,  
56:25 where he has taught and inspired a generation of students.  
56:29 Two fundamental principles have defined  
56:31 Justice Georges' career,  
56:33 a commitment to both the rule of law  
56:35 and to a fair and equitable justice system.  
56:38 Justice Georges is a 1996 graduate of Suffolk Law  
56:42 and his Alma Mater honored him  
56:44 with an honorary doctor of law and his, a degree in 2021.  
56:48 A self-described nerd who loves reading the law  
56:52 and thinking about how to apply it,  
56:54 Justice Georges is noted for his legal brilliance,  
56:57 but what sets him apart in both the courtroom  
57:00 and the classroom is his deep humanity  
57:03 and his commitment to treating everyone  
57:05 with dignity and respect.  
57:08 The son of Haitian immigrants,  
57:09 he grew up in Dorchester,  
57:11 not far from the Boston Municipal Courthouse,  
57:14 where he later served as an associate justice  
57:16 from 2013 until 2020  
57:19 following a successful career in private practice.  
57:22 He also presided over the Dorchester Drug Court  
57:25 from 2014 to 2018,  
57:27 and both experiences inform his work

57:29 on the Supreme Judicial Court,  
57:31 where he contributes a personal understanding  
57:34 of how communities of color navigate the legal system.  
57:37 In recognition of his many outstanding accomplishments,  
57:41 including his extraordinary impact  
57:43 on the Massachusetts justice system  
57:45 and the law students he teaches and mentors  
57:48 and in anticipation of his continued success  
57:51 and positive impact,  
57:52 we are honored to present the Suffolk University Law School  
57:55 Black Excellence Outstanding Alumni Award  
57:58 to Justice Serge Georges Jr.  
58:00 (audience claps)  
58:09 (group chats)  
58:28 (group laughs)  
58:44 (audience claps)  
58:50 <v ->I'm gonna take my phone out,</v  
58:54 'cause Caitlin said, if I go over three minutes,  
58:58 she's gonna rush up here and take me out.  
59:01 (audience laughs)  
59:03 On my birthday.  
59:04 (audience laughs)  
59:08 Despite some, over the years, having a pretty high profile,  
59:13 if you know me,  
59:14 you know that I actually don't prefer  
59:16 to be the center of attention.  
59:18 And when you celebrate these kinds of nights,  
59:22 for me, it's always easiest and more appropriate  
59:26 to celebrate not necessarily who I am and what I've done,  
59:32 but the amalgamation of who I am with all of the people  
59:35 in the room that helped me get to where I am  
59:37 and be who I am.  
59:39 Because when you think about some of the things  
59:40 that you've tonight, and in particular,  
59:43 what struck me was Rachel and Rachel's story.  
59:47 And it goes back to a couple years ago,  
59:50 I had the privilege of serving as the keynote speaker  
59:53 of the Black Excellence Awards Night,  
59:55 I believe it was back in 2019.  
59:59 And one of the things that I could not do for you  
01:00:01 that I still cannot do  
01:00:02 for you is define for you what Black excellence actually is.  
01:00:07 So, what I did that night  
01:00:09 and what I'd like to remind you of are,  
01:00:11 not necessarily some definition  
01:00:14 that you can walk out here and say, "Now I know what it is."  
01:00:19 It's more so the characteristics of what Black excellence is  
01:00:24 that I'd like to remind you of.  
01:00:28 All of the things that you heard  
01:00:30 about my introduction might make you think  
01:00:32 that it was an upward trajectory  
01:00:34 that always kind of led to this.  
01:00:38 But I am much like Rachel,  
01:00:41 where my life and my trajectory has been more like an EKG.

01:00:47 And yet, through the help  
01:00:49 of a lot of the people in this room  
01:00:51 and the love and support and the encouragement  
01:00:54 of the people in the room,  
01:00:56 I have managed to achieve a level of success that someone  
01:00:58 who doesn't know me might say, "Oh, that's great.  
01:01:00 Look how hard he worked and look what he did,  
01:01:03 look how excellent he is."  
01:01:05 But the reality is, it's a thin line between standing here  
01:01:10 and standing out there.  
01:01:12 And so, I want to remind you of one thing  
01:01:14 that's very fundamental,  
01:01:15 of what I reminded the folks that were there  
01:01:18 in the room with me a couple years ago  
01:01:19 about one of the primary characteristics of excellence.  
01:01:22 It is what you heard Linda talk about,  
01:01:26 opening a door for somebody else,  
01:01:29 helping somebody else.  
01:01:32 If you are in my class, every once in a while,  
01:01:36 I will send you an email and I will always end it the same.  
01:01:40 If you can, today, help someone.  
01:01:45 And that is a nod to a friend of mine  
01:01:47 from college who passed.  
01:01:51 And every time I'd go and I'd see Anthony Pallotto  
01:01:55 and he'd go about his business,  
01:01:56 and it was kind of odd when you're 18, 19, 20, 21 years old,  
01:02:00 to hear somebody say, "Hey, help somebody today.  
01:02:03 That's what we're supposed to do."  
01:02:05 And Anthony died some years ago  
01:02:06 and I took that and I remembered that.  
01:02:09 And I encouraged that,  
01:02:11 because in the words of Hillel the Elder,  
01:02:16 and I heard it from the first time  
01:02:17 when I heard former Prime Minister of Israel,  
01:02:21 Golda Meir say it,  
01:02:22 "If we are for ourselves only, then who are we?"  
01:02:27 Now, what you might hear and what you might say,  
01:02:29 I'd like to leave you with a couple of things.  
01:02:31 One is my brother Ernst Guerrier.  
01:02:35 I had the pleasure and the honor of coming into Suffolk  
01:02:38 in August of 1993 and being met  
01:02:41 with the Mayor of Suffolk University Law School.  
01:02:45 And I'd watch him.  
01:02:47 I'd watch him go around campus and I'd see the smile  
01:02:50 and I'd see the gregariousness and I'd see the personality.  
01:02:53 And I would see the guy that you all are gonna meet  
01:02:56 in a few minutes.  
01:02:57 And I just remember him coming up to me and saying,  
01:03:00 "Hi, I'm Ernst. Who are you?"  
01:03:02 And because we're Haitian,  
01:03:03 you can spot a Haitian.  
01:03:05 (audience laughs)  
01:03:07 Haitians can spot Haitians.  
01:03:10 And he was like, it was,

01:03:13 it was two things that I learned because of that moment.  
01:03:16 One, he was unabashedly Haitian,  
01:03:19 (audience laughs)  
01:03:20 where there are times when you are of immigrant backgrounds  
01:03:23 where you might want to recede to the background  
01:03:26 and not have anybody know that you're not from here,  
01:03:28 or you're from a different culture,  
01:03:30 or you speak a different language, you eat different food,  
01:03:32 and sometimes it might cause you to shrink.  
01:03:34 And he caused me to rise.  
01:03:36 And as he did that, he also did one other thing.  
01:03:39 He went to his locker and he opened his locker.  
01:03:42 And somehow, he had made,  
01:03:44 there were like five Haitians at Suffolk,  
01:03:47 but he had 3,000 t-shirts made  
01:03:50 that had the Haitian flag on the front.  
01:03:53 (audience laughs)  
01:03:55 And on the back, it said,  
01:03:56 "100% Haitian, no additives, (audience laughs)  
01:04:00 no preservatives, no chemicals."  
01:04:02 (audience claps)  
01:04:05 And he gave me that shirt and he made me so proud  
01:04:11 to not only be there  
01:04:12 but to be Haitian and to be in law school  
01:04:14 and to know that there had a greater purpose.  
01:04:17 And I love you. I respect you.  
01:04:20 And I look up to you.  
01:04:23 Linda Forry, our families did grow up together.  
01:04:28 And when you think about, again,  
01:04:29 what you might hear in our bios and where we come from  
01:04:32 and what we do,  
01:04:33 what you don't see is the VFW Parkway and the Heartland.  
01:04:42 You know, it's all Star Markets and Stop and Shops now.  
01:04:44 And all the independent supermarkets were,  
01:04:45 that were part of our fabric are gone,  
01:04:48 but there was one on the VFW Parkway called Heartland.  
01:04:52 And right next to it was a laundromat.  
01:04:55 And every Sunday, our families would go  
01:04:58 to do the grocery shopping and the laundry  
01:05:01 and Linda was in diapers,  
01:05:04 running around, and her little sister.  
01:05:06 (audience laughs)  
01:05:08 And when I think about those times  
01:05:12 where our families were there,  
01:05:14 just trying to get by and to have seen you grow  
01:05:17 and to have seen you shine  
01:05:18 and to see your family grow and shine.  
01:05:22 (speaking foreign language)  
01:05:25 I am, I am so proud of you.  
01:05:28 I would encourage you,  
01:05:30 all of you, you have an opportunity to do something great,  
01:05:35 and that is to help someone.  
01:05:38 You have managed to make something of yourselves  
01:05:40 and make opportunities for yourselves, make them for others.



01:05:44 You heard me be described as an associate justice  
01:05:49 of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court,  
01:05:51 the oldest Supreme Court in the Western hemisphere,  
01:05:54 operating under the oldest constitution  
01:05:59 in our United States.  
01:06:00 And you might say, "Man, he was a good lawyer.  
01:06:03 Man, he was a good judge."  
01:06:05 But the reality is I was a judge  
01:06:07 of the Boston Municipal Court.  
01:06:08 When you talk about some of the things that would keep us  
01:06:10 from being there,  
01:06:13 candidates of color, over the years,  
01:06:14 had to go up a certain vertical.  
01:06:17 If you were a judge of color,  
01:06:18 they wanted to see you go up through the minor leagues.  
01:06:21 You had to go through the trial court,  
01:06:22 then maybe to the superior court,  
01:06:24 then maybe to the appeals court.  
01:06:25 In history, there hasn't been anyone to go  
01:06:27 from the community courts where I was  
01:06:29 to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.  
01:06:31 And you might think that says,  
01:06:33 (audience claps) No, I,  
01:06:35 I'd ask you to hold your applause because you might think  
01:06:38 that is somehow an indication of how great I am,  
01:06:43 but it isn't.  
01:06:45 There are plenty of people that could be in this position.  
01:06:47 And there are plenty of people who didn't.  
01:06:50 And the reason being is because they never thought  
01:06:53 to give someone like me a chance  
01:06:55 without somebody else in the room  
01:06:58 saying, "Give him a chance."  
01:07:01 And that someone is in this room  
01:07:04 and he's already been honored and he's sitting right there.  
01:07:07 His name is Tony Richards.  
01:07:09 So,  
01:07:10 (audience claps)  
01:07:15 I want to leave you with these two last things.  
01:07:18 Up until two months ago, when I had lunch with Tony  
01:07:22 at Carrie Nation, I had never met him ever.  
01:07:27 And during the time that I was being vetted  
01:07:29 for the Supreme Judicial Court,  
01:07:31 I know that he was in Governor Baker's office and ear,  
01:07:36 saying, "You need to give him, this is the guy.  
01:07:40 This is the person."  
01:07:41 We had never shaken hands. We had never broken bread.  
01:07:44 We had never sent a text. We had never said hello.  
01:07:47 And he was working his behind off to see me get here.  
01:07:51 So when you see me, I, again, remind you,  
01:07:54 I am an amalgamation of everyone,  
01:07:58 every good, everything to help me get here,  
01:08:01 which is why I continue to give and give and give and give  
01:08:05 because I've gotten and gotten and gotten and gotten.  
01:08:09 So last summer, I was able to take my daughter Olivia

01:08:14 with me to the court.  
01:08:17 And I sat in court doing work while I looked over  
01:08:20 while she was laying on my couch  
01:08:21 with her iPad, just playing.  
01:08:24 And it was normal to her.  
01:08:28 It was normal that she was sitting  
01:08:29 in her dad's office at the SJC on her iPad.  
01:08:33 And I thought to myself  
01:08:35 and I almost cried because it isn't to say  
01:08:37 that perhaps we didn't have these dreams.  
01:08:39 It's that we didn't see them in three dimensions.  
01:08:43 So as a parent, looking at my child,  
01:08:46 hoping for a better day for her, I say to you,  
01:08:50 Mr. Richards, whatever you were doing in your household,  
01:08:57 you did something quite right.  
01:08:59 So, sir, I say, I celebrate your Black excellence.  
01:09:04 (audience claps)  
01:09:22 To all of our honorees and the committee,  
01:09:26 Chairman Lamb, President Kelly,  
01:09:30 I thank you.  
01:09:31 And I promise you I ain't going anywhere.  
01:09:35 (audience laughs)  
01:09:36 (audience claps)  
01:10:04 <v ->Oh.</v  
01:10:06 (audience claps)  
01:10:13 (audience claps)  
01:10:25 I didn't wanna interrupt the sentimental moment.  
01:10:28 Congratulations, Justice Georges.  
01:10:31 I will now present  
01:10:32 the Suffolk Law Black Excellence Outstanding Faculty Award.  
01:10:36 This year's recipient is Professor Loletta Darden.  
01:10:40 (audience claps)  
01:10:46 Professor Darden is the Director of Suffolk Law's  
01:10:49 Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship Clinic,  
01:10:52 which provides pro bono legal services to small businesses,  
01:10:55 inventors, artists, and entrepreneurs,  
01:10:58 who would otherwise be unable  
01:10:59 to afford comprehensive IP legal representation.  
01:11:03 This year, Bloomberg Law featured the IP clinic's victory  
01:11:06 over a large international corporation  
01:11:08 on behalf of a small family business.  
01:11:11 Loletta teaches courses,  
01:11:13 such as intellectual property survey,  
01:11:16 trademark law and patent law.  
01:11:18 Her scholarship focuses on IP rights for creators  
01:11:21 and inventors, particularly those who are under resourced.  
01:11:26 Her book, "US Patent and Trademark Office Law and Practice,"  
01:11:29 is forthcoming from Aspen Publishers this year.  
01:11:33 And her paper on sequential trademark rights was selected  
01:11:36 by Thomas Reuters  
01:11:37 as one of the best intellectual property articles  
01:11:39 of 2021.  
01:11:41 Prior to, yes. (audience claps)  
01:11:48 Prior to joining Suffolk, Loletta was a partner and manager

01:11:51 of the Patent Prosecution Group  
01:11:53 at Chicago's Sachnoff and Weaver.  
01:11:55 She also served as Chief IP Counsel  
01:11:58 for Duracraft Corporation,  
01:12:00 where she managed all IP litigation.  
01:12:03 She has participated in several precedent setting cases,  
01:12:06 including Atlantic Thermoplastics v. Faytex Corp  
01:12:09 and Micron Separations, Incorporated v. Pall Corporation  
01:12:13 In recognition of her outstanding service  
01:12:16 and dedication to Suffolk University Law School  
01:12:18 and our students, we are pleased to present  
01:12:21 the Suffolk Law Black Excellence Outstanding Faculty Award  
01:12:24 to Professor Loletta Darden.  
01:12:26 (audience claps)  
01:12:58 <v ->Good evening, everyone.</v  
01:12:59 <v Audience>Good evening.</v  
01:13:01 <v ->I'd, first of all, like to thank the committee</v  
01:13:03 for this award.  
01:13:04 I am truly honored  
01:13:06 and I'd like to thank also President Kelly  
01:13:11 and Chairman Lamb for setting such strong leadership  
01:13:16 for the university, for the law school.  
01:13:18 I'd like to shout out to the law school leadership,  
01:13:21 Dean Perlman, Associate Dean Kim McLaurin,  
01:13:25 who's here tonight,  
01:13:27 for giving us such supportive opportunities  
01:13:29 here in the law school to mentor and support our students.  
01:13:36 I also thank Dean McLaurin for giving me the opportunity  
01:13:40 because she was the one that hired me into Suffolk,  
01:13:43 giving me the opportunity,  
01:13:44 (audience claps)  
01:13:49 giving me this opportunity to do what I love,  
01:13:52 which is to prepare our next generation  
01:13:55 of leaders and trailblazers.  
01:13:57 Who knows?  
01:13:58 We have, somewhere in this university,  
01:13:59 in the law school, the next Ernst.  
01:14:02 (audience laughs)  
01:14:03 (audience claps)  
01:14:06 I also want to thank a special person  
01:14:08 who's not here tonight,  
01:14:10 because without her words, I would not be here.  
01:14:14 I want to thank my grandmother  
01:14:17 because she spoke my destiny into being  
01:14:21 when I was only seven years old.  
01:14:24 When I was in high school, you see,  
01:14:27 I was told by an educator that I would never succeed  
01:14:30 in my dream of becoming an engineer  
01:14:32 and forget being a lawyer.  
01:14:35 But my grandmother knew different,  
01:14:38 even though she and my grandfather never attended school,  
01:14:42 neither one of them, they both were illiterate.  
01:14:45 They saw something in me  
01:14:47 and she would always say, "That's my lawyer."

01:14:51 Every time, I'm, I had a cousins  
01:14:53 who went off to nursing school,  
01:14:55 but she would never point to me and say, "That's my nurse."  
01:14:58 She said, "That's my lawyer."  
01:15:00 Every chance she got, she would say, "That's my lawyer."  
01:15:02 My grandfather started saying, "That's my lawyer."  
01:15:05 And honestly, I never thought about being a lawyer.  
01:15:07 (audience laughs)  
01:15:10 But somehow that spoke to me and it was within my soul.  
01:15:15 So understanding the power of words,  
01:15:17 I've dedicated my life  
01:15:19 to ensuring that all who dare to dream,  
01:15:22 especially those that look like me,  
01:15:25 have a cheerleader, a mentor,  
01:15:28 a voice in their ear that says, "Yes, you can achieve."  
01:15:32 You can be that which you dream to be.  
01:15:36 You can do that which you dream to do."  
01:15:40 I challenge all the educators in this room.  
01:15:43 I challenge all the community leaders in this room.  
01:15:47 No matter where you are in life,  
01:15:49 I challenge you to become voices of hope, inspiration,  
01:15:55 and vision for someone else.  
01:15:58 We need that, particularly in this time,  
01:16:01 where there's such great efforts  
01:16:03 to divide us based on difference,  
01:16:07 to divide us based on our past,  
01:16:11 to erase the past.  
01:16:14 In a time where just basic human rights  
01:16:17 and dignity are being ignored,  
01:16:19 I challenge us to all stand up and be that voice  
01:16:22 of inspiration for someone else.  
01:16:25 Again, to the committee,  
01:16:27 I thank you for this honor.  
01:16:29 Thank you all.  
01:16:30 (audience claps)  
01:16:32 <v ->Congratulations.</v  
01:16:33 (audience claps)  
01:16:56 (paper flutters) (audience laughs)  
01:17:03 <v ->I hope everyone is enjoying themselves tonight.</v  
01:17:06 This is,  
01:17:07 <v Audience Member>Yes. So great.</v  
01:17:08 <v ->This is like, (audience claps)</v  
01:17:09 this is like a family reunion, right?  
01:17:12 Only the reunion is with Serge and Linda,  
01:17:16 (laughs) Ernst?  
01:17:21 And you just invited us to your party. Right?  
01:17:23 (audience laughs)  
01:17:25 So, before I talk about the man of the hour,  
01:17:34 I noticed Cherina and Sharice.  
01:17:42 I called on you earlier.  
01:17:43 You weren't here.  
01:17:46 Listen.  
01:17:47 <v ->I was working.</v <v ->Listen.</v  
01:17:48 I said that, I said that.

01:17:50 I said, those two are always supporting us  
01:17:54 and always advising us.  
01:17:56 But listen, I had to call you out. I'm sorry.  
01:17:58 (audience claps) You're past honorees.  
01:18:00 You're past honorees. Look at Cherina.  
01:18:02 It's okay.  
01:18:04 (woman laughs)  
01:18:04 So listen, I wanna say thank you  
01:18:07 to all the presenters this evening  
01:18:09 and a big heartfelt congratulations  
01:18:10 to all the award recipients.  
01:18:13 You are all more than deserving.  
01:18:14 I am proud to share this moment with all of you tonight.  
01:18:18 Right now, I want to invite the SUBAN Leadership Committee  
01:18:21 up to the stage.  
01:18:25 And as they're walking up,  
01:18:27 I'll just wanna say that I have the distinct pleasure  
01:18:31 and honor of presenting the Suffolk University  
01:18:33 Black Excellence Trailblazer and Icon Award.  
01:18:40 Thank you. Thank you.  
01:18:44 This person is a true personification of Black excellence.  
01:18:51 So peacefully pleasant, warm and welcoming,  
01:18:56 a very approachable and kind soul.  
01:19:00 His personality is irresistibly infectious.  
01:19:04 It is hard not to feel his energy when you're around him.  
01:19:09 And that smile.  
01:19:12 That smile.  
01:19:14 Let me see it.  
01:19:15 (audience laughs)  
01:19:17 That smile is so bright.  
01:19:19 You can see,  
01:19:21 you can see him coming a mile away with that smile.  
01:19:25 He is one of the most positive  
01:19:26 and optimistic people you will ever encounter,  
01:19:29 always seeing opportunity and possibility in everything.  
01:19:35 His kindness is unlimited and immeasurable,  
01:19:39 always showing care and concern for others.  
01:19:42 He is extremely encouraging and supportive.  
01:19:46 He is a mentor. He is a sponsor.  
01:19:48 He is a teacher, a coach.  
01:19:51 He is an irreplaceable, cherished friend,  
01:19:55 and I'm not gonna cry.  
01:19:59 He pushes us to do more, to be better,  
01:20:04 whether it is going for that bigger, a desired job,  
01:20:08 or investing and taking risk.  
01:20:12 However, accolades cannot be touted  
01:20:15 without mentioning his unwavering dedication  
01:20:17 and his selfless generosity to Suffolk.  
01:20:21 He has paved a path for so many of us here at Suffolk  
01:20:24 in the legal arena, and now, in the real estate arena.  
01:20:29 He is a legal luminary turned real estate mogul,  
01:20:32 blazing trails, shining light,  
01:20:35 looking back, pulling others up.  
01:20:39 We are truly grateful to have him as a pillar

01:20:41 of the Black community,  
01:20:43 of the Suffolk community,  
01:20:44 and of the greater Boston community.  
01:20:47 He was recently recognized by Eastern Bank  
01:20:49 for both his ability as a lawyer  
01:20:52 and his business acumen in real estate.  
01:20:55 His entire portfolio represents investments  
01:20:58 in the Black community in and around Boston.  
01:21:02 He is an unstoppable force that is spreading love  
01:21:05 of his people, and sharing his knowledge and experience,  
01:21:09 always encouraging and helping and supporting.  
01:21:13 He is a rare, irreplaceable gem who we cherish tremendously  
01:21:19 and appreciate greatly.  
01:21:21 He is Ernst Guerrier.  
01:21:24 (audience claps)  
01:21:33 Born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti,  
01:21:35 (audience laughs)  
01:21:37 he came here,  
01:21:39 his parents migrated to the United States  
01:21:41 and he came here at just the young age of seven years old.  
01:21:45 He is married to his lifelong love and beautiful wife,  
01:21:49 Marie Flore Guerrier, who works on the front lines.  
01:21:53 (audience claps)  
01:21:54 She works on the front lines as a nurse practitioner.  
01:21:57 They have two wonderful children,  
01:22:00 Christa Hope Guerrier and Myles Guerrier.  
01:22:03 Ernst is a double Ram, earning both his bachelor's degree  
01:22:07 and law degree from Suffolk.  
01:22:09 He also earned an LLM in taxation from Boston University.  
01:22:13 Upon completing his graduation degree,  
01:22:17 then Suffolk President David Sargent recommended Ernst  
01:22:20 for admission to the law school.  
01:22:22 Ernst was awarded a merit scholarship  
01:22:25 from the Richard Trifiro Foundation.  
01:22:29 The scholarship enabled Ernst to his studies  
01:22:32 at Suffolk Law School  
01:22:34 and realize his dream of becoming a lawyer  
01:22:36 and an advocate for education.  
01:22:38 Since 1997, Ernst has been the principal managing partner  
01:22:42 of Guerrier and Associates PC.  
01:22:46 In 2018, Ernst founded the Black Alumni Network,  
01:22:50 AKA SUBAN, to celebrate Black excellence and achievement.  
01:22:56 Oh, wait a minute.  
01:22:57 And achievements at Suffolk University.  
01:23:00 Ernst is also a founding member  
01:23:02 of the Suffolk University Law School Dean's Cabinet  
01:23:04 and presently serves on the Suffolk Board of Trustees.  
01:23:08 Ernst has continued the Trifiros' legacy  
01:23:11 at Suffolk University with his philanthropy.  
01:23:14 Along with his wife, Marie, he established  
01:23:16 the Suffolk University Black Alumni Network Scholarship,  
01:23:22 funding it with a hundred thousand dollars,  
01:23:25 just last year, jump starting it,  
01:23:28 so we can start giving scholarships.

01:23:32 Ernst has worked closely with the university  
01:23:34 and is always willing to assist with the recruitment  
01:23:36 of Black students and students of color.  
01:23:39 For his leadership, his mentorship,  
01:23:42 his dedication and commitment to Suffolk University,  
01:23:45 it is with great pleasure that I present,  
01:23:48 that we present the Trailblazer,  
01:23:52 the Black Excellence Trailblazer and Icon Award to my friend  
01:23:58 and brother from another mother, Ernst Guerrier.  
01:24:02 (audience claps)  
01:24:27 (group laughs and chatters)  
01:24:34 <v ->We've been doing this for how many years?</v  
01:24:36 How many years we have been doing this?  
01:24:38 <v ->It's too much.</v  
01:24:40 It's too much. <v ->I know.</v  
01:24:44 (group chats)  
01:24:54 <v ->Okay, just everybody come forward.</v  
01:24:56 Get a few.  
01:24:58 (group chats)  
01:25:20 <v ->Okay. (audience claps)</v  
01:25:21 <v ->Congratulations.</v  
01:25:22 <v ->Thank you.</v  
01:25:23 (audience claps)  
01:25:37 Good evening.  
01:25:38 <v Audience>Good evening.</v  
01:25:39 <v ->You know, there's not much you can say</v  
01:25:41 after an introduction like that, right?  
01:25:43 But I'm deeply humble to receive such a prestigious award.  
01:25:48 Thank you, SUBAN.  
01:25:50 Thank you, Tamela.  
01:25:52 Thank you, Hind, madam chair.  
01:25:58 Thank you, President Kelly, Chairman Lamb,  
01:26:02 Marge, all of you are here.  
01:26:05 The best way I can address you tonight is  
01:26:06 to just basically tell you stories.  
01:26:09 It's no coincidence that all these things are happening  
01:26:12 at Suffolk under the leadership of Marisa Kelly.  
01:26:16 (audience claps)  
01:26:22 And I say that because, perhaps,  
01:26:26 I should start on how this story began.  
01:26:29 Prior to Marisa being here, we were a divided camp.  
01:26:34 She came in and addressed our issues head on,  
01:26:40 provided us with a platform.  
01:26:42 That enabled us to celebrate us tonight.  
01:26:46 And by me saying, "Us,"  
01:26:48 I mean, all of us.  
01:26:49 So again, I say, thank you to my friend, Dr. Marisa Kelly.  
01:26:54 (audience claps)  
01:27:00 Thank you Tamela, for your leadership, your vision.  
01:27:05 It's easy to start something,  
01:27:07 but it's one thing to grow it to what it is today.  
01:27:11 Your leadership, that, and Hind, is beyond any words  
01:27:16 that I can use tonight.  
01:27:17 So, thank you.

01:27:18 (audience claps)  
01:27:22 I'd also like to thank all of those who are involved,  
01:27:26 Professor Jenny Joseph-Hayle, my friend, Kim McLaurin,  
01:27:32 Dean Cherina Wright,  
01:27:35 Caitlin Haughey, my right hand at the school.  
01:27:40 She's my everything, the go-to person each and every day,  
01:27:44 and everyone who's involved  
01:27:46 or who was involved in the selection process.  
01:27:50 Sometimes we make the mistake  
01:27:53 of thinking exactly what Serge just said.  
01:27:56 When we give an award to someone, it's because you,  
01:27:58 we think they did something  
01:28:00 that's extraordinary or excellent.  
01:28:02 I can tell you, in my case, that is not the,  
01:28:05 that is not the case.  
01:28:06 I stand here as beneficiary  
01:28:09 of a whole lot of people who sacrificed for me.  
01:28:14 And again, I choose to address it tonight  
01:28:17 by telling you stories.  
01:28:19 Serge, I love you for the man that you are,  
01:28:25 for the father that you are, the husband that you are.  
01:28:30 You mean more to me than I can ever express.  
01:28:33 So, let me tell you the stories.  
01:28:37 Serge is two years behind me.  
01:28:39 So, I graduated and did not pass the bar.  
01:28:44 And I took the bar again and did not pass.  
01:28:48 And I am I my lowest point that you imagine.  
01:28:52 "Hey, E, man! You didn't pass?"  
01:28:55 I said, "Nah, man, I didn't pass."  
01:28:58 He's like, "Listen, this is not going to define you."  
01:29:01 I'm like, "Serge, man.  
01:29:02 This is not the time."  
01:29:04 He's like, "Listen, man, I find this guy.  
01:29:07 He's gonna tutor you. He's gonna do this."  
01:29:09 I'm like, "Serge, man.  
01:29:10 I just got the news," but he wouldn't stop.  
01:29:15 He forced me to pick up the phone, make the necessary call.  
01:29:21 And of course, I went on to pass.  
01:29:25 That is exactly what we do.  
01:29:28 When we are down, and we just pick up one another.  
01:29:31 Now, lemme tell you the second story about Serge.  
01:29:35 Just last year, I was asked to lead,  
01:29:40 to be the Marshal of the Graduation.  
01:29:43 So, right before the ceremony started, Chairman Lamb said,  
01:29:47 "Let me just show you guys the path."  
01:29:51 As we were walking through Fenway Park, Serge says,  
01:29:54 "Ernest, let's just stop."  
01:29:58 And we hugged in the middle of the infield and he says,  
01:30:03 "Can you imagine this, man?"  
01:30:06 Two Haitian kids  
01:30:07 (audience laughs) in the middle of Fenway Park,  
01:30:10 a place that did not allow Black folks.  
01:30:14 And here I was, the Marshal,  
01:30:17 and Serge was the keynote speaker.



01:30:20 How could this happen?  
01:30:22 Only because people  
01:30:25 who are different than us saw us as equal  
01:30:29 and gave us that opportunity.  
01:30:31 So, once more, I would like to thank President Kelly,  
01:30:37 Chairman Lamb, the Dean,  
01:30:39 and the leadership team for giving us that opportunity.  
01:30:43 Thank you.  
01:30:45 I'm proud, (audience claps)  
01:30:50 I'm proud to call you a friend.  
01:30:53 And while I'm on the subject as, of friendship,  
01:30:57 thank you to my friend, Senator Linda Dorcena.  
01:31:02 We are childhood friend.  
01:31:04 And when I called Linda and asked her  
01:31:06 if she would be the keynote speaker,  
01:31:08 the immediate answer was, "Yes,"  
01:31:11 followed with a two hour visit in my office  
01:31:15 in which we talk about our children.  
01:31:18 You know?  
01:31:19 And if you ever see Linda and I at the supermarket,  
01:31:22 then just go into another aisle,  
01:31:24 because we'll be there  
01:31:25 for a while, right? (audience laughs)  
01:31:27 I love SUBAN  
01:31:29 and I love Suffolk.  
01:31:32 Suffolk has left a tremendous image in my life.  
01:31:38 I completed my undergraduate degree here,  
01:31:41 as well as my law school.  
01:31:44 I came to Suffolk because it gave me an opportunity,  
01:31:48 but also for what Dr. Kelly said earlier,  
01:31:51 because of the principle  
01:31:52 on which this university was founded.  
01:31:54 It was founded for people like me who were not blue blood,  
01:31:59 who dream of becoming a lawyer, can also get an education.  
01:32:05 I can tell you as a trustee,  
01:32:08 it is and remain true to the core,  
01:32:11 we remain true to the core value of Gleason Archer.  
01:32:15 We work extremely hard to maintain opportunities  
01:32:19 for those who will follow.  
01:32:22 And I can tell you, sometimes we fall short,  
01:32:26 but under the leadership of Dr. Kelly and Chairman Lamb,  
01:32:32 that I'm giving a voice to continue to advocate for you all,  
01:32:38 to continue to advocate for people that look like me.  
01:32:42 And I've never been told that it's not acceptable.  
01:32:45 Again, I'd like to thank them.  
01:32:48 (audience claps)  
01:32:50 My two degrees have opened many doors for me and my family.  
01:32:56 It has allowed me to have a successful law practice  
01:32:59 in Dorchester, where I'm from.  
01:33:01 It has allowed me to give back to my community  
01:33:04 and it has allowed me to help others.  
01:33:08 Yet, that is simply not enough.  
01:33:12 We are talking about individual success.  
01:33:15 As Serge said, to whom much is given, more is expected.

01:33:20 So, I must do more.  
01:33:23 It's not only to just better myself and my immediate family,  
01:33:28 but what am I doing for my community?  
01:33:31 So, issues such as affordable housing  
01:33:34 and access is important to me,  
01:33:38 but there's only one way that I know how to do that.  
01:33:42 And that is education.  
01:33:45 So tonight, once more,  
01:33:47 I'm pledging to continue to work with SUBAN.  
01:33:52 I'm pledging to continue to work with the university  
01:33:55 to raise money for scholarship for our existing students  
01:33:59 and those who will come.  
01:34:02 We talked about recruitment.  
01:34:03 So tonight, I invited a young woman that I'm trying  
01:34:06 to recruit to the school.  
01:34:08 I hope Naldene is here.  
01:34:09 So, I can't see, you know,  
01:34:13 and then Jennifer Cruz,  
01:34:15 so who just got accepted,  
01:34:16 I think, yesterday or the day before.  
01:34:19 I'm hoping she accept that acceptance.  
01:34:22 (audience claps)  
01:34:28 But truly, I am grateful for every single person  
01:34:32 who has played a major role in my life,  
01:34:35 you know, and some of them are here.  
01:34:37 You know, as Serge stated earlier,  
01:34:40 it's easy to just celebrate someone  
01:34:43 after something has happened.  
01:34:45 But I just wanted to remind you,  
01:34:47 I don't know how to say, "No."  
01:34:48 I don't know the word quit.  
01:34:50 So, just so you understand,  
01:34:53 I was nominated five times to become trustee, five,  
01:34:57 and on each and every occasion, they said, "No."  
01:35:01 I can remember my good friend, Kim McLaurin,  
01:35:04 her disappointment, when she called me.  
01:35:07 And she says, "I just don't understand."  
01:35:09 And I said to Kim, "It's just simply not our time."  
01:35:13 If it's about service,  
01:35:15 then we just need to continue to do what we need to do.  
01:35:19 So again, it was no surprise  
01:35:21 when Marisa Kelly and Chairman Lamb came in  
01:35:24 and Amy Nechtem was elected,  
01:35:26 then all of a sudden, things change.  
01:35:30 So, I'd like to thank my good friend Kim McLaurin  
01:35:34 for championing the cause of pushing my candidacy.  
01:35:40 I would like to thank my a,  
01:35:41 my good friend, Judge Bolden,  
01:35:45 who as a student, saw something in me  
01:35:49 and asked that I get involved  
01:35:54 and stayed with me throughout the process.  
01:35:58 I would also like to thank my family,  
01:35:59 my mother who's not here,  
01:36:01 my mother who never had the benefit of education.

01:36:08 She never went to school,  
01:36:11 but my two sisters and I have nine degrees between us.  
01:36:14 (audience claps)  
01:36:22 And when I talk to you about friendship and stories,  
01:36:26 when my mother passed,  
01:36:28 the first call that I received was from Serge George.  
01:36:32 Serge was there with me at the wake, at the funeral.  
01:36:36 And he said to me, says, "Ernst, I know you.  
01:36:40 This is not gonna hurt you right now,  
01:36:42 but the first mother's day,  
01:36:45 that's when it's gonna hurt you."  
01:36:47 And 6 o'clock in the morning, who did I get a call from?  
01:36:50 Serge George. He says, "Brother, I'm here for you."  
01:36:54 And that's true friendship.  
01:36:58 My two sisters, Marie and Elizabeth,  
01:37:02 you two have looked up to me when I don't deserve it.  
01:37:07 I thank you.  
01:37:10 (audience claps)  
01:37:11 My friend, (audience claps)  
01:37:15 my friends in the alumni, I'm sorry,  
01:37:17 my friends in the development office, Karen, Colm, Jeff,  
01:37:23 who sat with me before my interview and said,  
01:37:25 "Man, I know you're passionate,  
01:37:28 but maybe you ought to answer these questions  
01:37:30 a different way."  
01:37:31 (audience laughs)  
01:37:32 You know, Caitlin,  
01:37:35 who enthusiastically supported my nomination then,  
01:37:39 my good friend, Donna Grand Pre,  
01:37:41 I don't understand why she keep taking my calls  
01:37:44 because it's always a request about,  
01:37:46 "Please, please, please,  
01:37:48 you know, take a another look at this application.  
01:37:52 You know, this students didn't receive enough money"  
01:37:54 or something, but thank you.  
01:37:57 My two law partners, Jim and Tony,  
01:38:00 without them I cannot imagine practicing law.  
01:38:06 To many others  
01:38:07 that I just simply don't have enough time to thank,  
01:38:11 of course, Kim McLaurin is very near  
01:38:13 and dear to my heart.  
01:38:15 Last, but certainly not least,  
01:38:18 and certainly first is my wife, Marie.  
01:38:22 Marie, please know you are the reason I get up every day.  
01:38:26 You are the reason the sun rise and the moon bows.  
01:38:30 You are my light and my guide.  
01:38:33 For the past 25 years,  
01:38:36 you have allowed me to walk behind you and call you my wife.  
01:38:42 Our union bore two children, Christa and Myles.  
01:38:47 I received credit when most of it are due to you.  
01:38:51 And again, because I tell stories,  
01:38:53 I gotta tell you one last one.  
01:38:56 I remember my very first real estate venture.  
01:38:59 It was a \$2 million purchase, and we had nothing.

01:39:03 And I look over the numbers and everything,  
01:39:06 and listen, back in 1991, '92, '93 or whatever it was,  
01:39:11 \$2 million was a lot of money  
01:39:13 and probably still is today.  
01:39:16 And I looked over the numbers.  
01:39:18 I took the book to bed with me  
01:39:21 and I'm looking at all the cap rates and everything.  
01:39:23 And it got to be 11:30 at night.  
01:39:26 Marie turned around and she says, "Buy the damn building."  
01:39:30 (audience laughs)  
01:39:31 I said, "Are you sure?"  
01:39:31 She says, "No, but I'd like to go to sleep."  
01:39:33 (audience laughs) So,  
01:39:37 so I went out,  
01:39:39 I bought the building for \$2 million.  
01:39:41 That's probably worth, you know, 10 times more today.  
01:39:47 So again, Marie,  
01:39:49 I remain grateful for all you do for me and our children.  
01:39:54 I don't want to take too much of your time.  
01:39:56 I just would like to congratulate all the honorees tonight.  
01:40:02 I'd like to say, thank you to SUBAN,  
01:40:05 the selecting committee once more.  
01:40:07 It is truly an honor to receive this prestigious award.  
01:40:12 I'm certain I don't deserve it, but I thank you anyways.  
01:40:15 (audience claps)  
01:40:47 <v ->I left my phone up here.</v  
01:40:48 I was supposed to text my son  
01:40:49 and tell him he better be watching.  
01:40:51 (audience laughs)  
01:40:54 Because I'm gonna quiz him when I get home.  
01:41:03 Ernst, let me just say this.  
01:41:07 This has been long overdue.  
01:41:14 I know so many people,  
01:41:16 and this is not scripted.  
01:41:17 I'm sorry. I have to say this.  
01:41:22 I know so many people that Ernst has helped,  
01:41:28 lawyers who had a hard time  
01:41:32 or graduates who have passed the bar  
01:41:34 and had a hard time finding work  
01:41:37 or found work and didn't like it, and you know,  
01:41:39 were kind of in a state of limbo  
01:41:41 and Ernst always gave them a place to work.  
01:41:47 I mean, countless, I know countless people.  
01:41:49 I say, "Where you work?"  
01:41:50 And they say, "Up here,  
01:41:53 Ernst Guerrier's law firm"  
01:41:57 I'd say, "Wow."  
01:41:59 And you know, I thought about it.  
01:42:02 And I realized the significance of that,  
01:42:06 especially back then,  
01:42:11 when it would be harmful to someone to, or, you know,  
01:42:20 a negative on them,  
01:42:21 if they had gaps in their employment history.  
01:42:26 So, to have someone to give you a job,

01:42:29 to give you something to do  
01:42:31 where you could say, "Fill that space,"  
01:42:33 was extremely, extremely important, Ernst,  
01:42:36 and you deserve all the accolades, all the awards.  
01:42:40 I mean, we're so grateful for you.  
01:42:42 You know that I am.  
01:42:44 I'm grateful for your wife  
01:42:45 and her cooking.  
01:42:46 (audience laughs)  
01:42:48 So I know I need to close. Folks are hungry.  
01:42:51 You gotta use the bathroom. I know I need to go.  
01:42:54 So, I took some notes.  
01:42:56 I left my phone up here  
01:42:57 when Ernest was talking.  
01:42:59 Linda and Serge talked about, what is Black excellence?  
01:43:02 All the honorees talked about ancestry.  
01:43:08 A couple of folks mentioned that we stand on the shoulders  
01:43:11 of our ancestors and talked about their grandparents  
01:43:15 and how they inspired them and spoke, right?  
01:43:20 Spoke into them.  
01:43:24 We talked about action.  
01:43:28 Help someone today, Serge, I'm sorry.  
01:43:32 I know I should call you Justice Serge Georges.  
01:43:36 The Js are just jacking me up.  
01:43:38 So, forgive me. (audience laughs)  
01:43:43 We didn't get where we are by ourselves.  
01:43:46 That was a common theme.  
01:43:49 Policies, practices, create change,  
01:43:54 first, lean in, be uncomfortable,  
01:43:59 and the power that we have to help others and make change.  
01:44:05 I want to congratulate all the awardees and recipients,  
01:44:07 again, thank you to President Kelly and Linda  
01:44:10 and all the speakers this evening.  
01:44:13 And so, I did have some scripted nuggets  
01:44:18 that I wanna leave you with,  
01:44:19 some points to ponder about Black excellence.  
01:44:24 Black excellence is an ancestral declaration.  
01:44:27 We talked about that.  
01:44:29 It is hats off to our ancestors,  
01:44:31 those who have come before us,  
01:44:32 who sacrificed and paved the way.  
01:44:35 Black excellence, at least in my view,  
01:44:38 is a clap back to historical and sometime present exclusion,  
01:44:45 to racism, to prejudice and all the inferiority  
01:44:48 and stereotypes imposed on the Black community.  
01:44:53 We talked a little bit about this too.  
01:44:55 Black excellence is Black representation,  
01:44:57 and that matters.  
01:44:59 Black excellence elevates  
01:45:01 and amplifies Black representation,  
01:45:03 which enables the up and coming generations  
01:45:05 to aspire to greatness.  
01:45:09 I have three points.  
01:45:10 This is my third.

01:45:12 Black excellence is just not about the first,  
01:45:15 and those who accomplish the unimaginable,  
01:45:19 or those who achieve the highest positions  
01:45:23 and get the big accolades.  
01:45:25 Although, they should certainly be recognized,  
01:45:28 like we're recognizing them tonight.  
01:45:33 I think a few of the honorees talked  
01:45:35 about how hard they had to work.  
01:45:38 And as Black people, we're taught from a very young age  
01:45:42 and we're required by the greater society,  
01:45:45 at a very young age, to be a hundred times better,  
01:45:48 to do more, to work harder, work longer.  
01:45:51 We have to be unicorns quite often.  
01:45:55 And it seems that Black excellence for some,  
01:45:58 or for many, means Black exceptionalism,  
01:46:02 of course, striving for big goals and aiming to improve  
01:46:05 and be the best in any arena is, of course,  
01:46:08 admirable and worth celebration.  
01:46:10 After all, that's why we're here today,  
01:46:15 but Black excellence should not be about the individual.  
01:46:18 And I think we've all said that.  
01:46:20 It is not about just you. It's not about me.  
01:46:23 It not about just our individual achievements.  
01:46:26 It's about the community and how we affect the collective.  
01:46:33 Well, I'm gonna define Black excellence.  
01:46:36 Again, Black excellence is power  
01:46:40 and it is how we use that power that matters.  
01:46:44 We have to be intentional, take action,  
01:46:48 be deliberate about using our power  
01:46:50 to uplift the Black community and the community at large.  
01:46:55 Suffolk has committed to doing this.  
01:46:57 There's many programs in place,  
01:47:00 and they have put many programs in place  
01:47:02 and I've read about it  
01:47:04 on LinkedIn and many different places.  
01:47:06 So, let's change the narrative.  
01:47:10 Let's be the change.  
01:47:11 After all, Black people have always been culture drivers.  
01:47:16 Right? We're change agents.  
01:47:18 So with that, as we close the program,  
01:47:21 I ask you to join me in giving back to Suffolk,  
01:47:24 alumni connection and contribution is pivotal,  
01:47:27 and it makes Suffolk the school that it is,  
01:47:31 which is a great school.  
01:47:32 So, give back your time and your talents  
01:47:36 to our wonderful students, serve as a mentor,  
01:47:40 hire them for internships and for jobs,  
01:47:45 support the students financially  
01:47:47 by making a contribution to the SUBAN Scholarship Fund,  
01:47:52 stop by the registration table,  
01:47:54 make your gift or purchase a t-shirt.  
01:47:58 The proceeds of t-shirt purchases will benefit  
01:48:01 the SUBAN scholarship.  
01:48:02 I want to thank you all for being here.

01:48:04 Thank you again for the planning committee,  
01:48:07 the SUBAN leadership committee,  
01:48:09 Caitlin and Anna Maria in the office of advancement,  
01:48:12 we can't thank you enough.  
01:48:13 This wouldn't happen if it were not for you  
01:48:16 and thank you to the sponsors,  
01:48:17 National Grid, that's where I work, by the way.  
01:48:20 (audience claps)  
01:48:22 I told them, I said, "Listen."  
01:48:24 (audience laughs)  
01:48:28 McLane and Middleton and Karen Blum as,  
01:48:32 (audience claps)  
01:48:34 as well as our annual SUBAN scholarship corporate sponsors,  
01:48:38 Toll Brothers and Health Peak.  
01:48:42 (audience claps)  
01:48:45 I encourage you all to make your way  
01:48:47 to the lobby for networking, fellowship, food, and drinks,  
01:48:52 and some music by the Suffolk Jazz Ensemble.  
01:48:56 Thank you.  
01:48:56 (audience claps)