

## A JOINT AMBITION

Good evening everybody,

Fellow students, professors, alumni, friends,

For those of you that I have never had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Oliver, I am from England, and I am a law student.

First and foremost, I would like to congratulate everyone on finishing the year. Although it has gone quickly, it has by no means been easy. I feel that I have grown a lot over the last year in terms of both knowledge and experience. I hope that you all feel the same.

I would also like to thank Marita, without whom this experience would not have been possible. Marita, you have drawn together experts from all over the globe for us all to benefit from their knowledge and experience. You are spearheading the Animal Law website, a project that I have the honour of contributing towards, and that plays a significant role in this movement. In addition to this, you found the time to act as an ambassador for animals abroad, introducing this area of law to university students in Japan, and surely preparing them to be pioneers for the cause in their own country, the way you have done for us. These things, among many others. This level of success may only be achieved, I believe, through a lifetime of passion and commitment. Your efforts toward animal law are a testament to precisely that.

I would also like to thank Begoña. You've been an integral part of the organisation of this Master for us, and it is clear that your work extends far beyond that which we see through the weekly emails. I am still waiting for my student ID card to arrive, but perhaps there's not much point in having one now anyway.

Thank you to everyone else who has contributed towards making this course possible, and, by extension, played their role in stimulating this movement that is so important to us all.

I chose to participate in the Animal Law and Society Master because I wanted to set myself up for a career in law that aligns, as close as possible, to my strongest personal convictions. Academically, I am a law student and aspiring lawyer. But additionally, and of huge importance to me, I am a vegan, and a strong believer in the potential of and need for change regarding the way animals are treated in the modern age. I have learned that arming oneself with awareness and knowing how to deal with the typical arguments that we, as animal advocates, are confronted with on a daily basis, is perhaps the best things one can do, on a personal level, to bring about such change. The wealth of knowledge that I have acquired over the past year has done nothing less than provide me with these necessary tools, and has, indeed, put me in an excellent position to best advocate for change.

As a student, I have, in the past, faced the all-too-common problem that I am sure many of you have also encountered; 'without work experience, I cannot find work, yet without work, I cannot gain experience'. One of the strengths of this course has undoubtedly been the wealth of connections that have been introduced to us, a creating an interlinked web in which we are all now a part. We have had the privilege of learning from professional and experienced scientists, lawyers, veterinarians, ethicists, and philosophers, among others. This, I believe, is one of the greatest benefits that could possibly have come from the programme, for in this business, power comes from unity.

One of the key things that brings us here together tonight is, I feel, a joint ambition. I bring this up because I would like to comment on how wonderful it has been to be around people who share a similar vision to mine. This is an uphill battle, and it can be disheartening to realise that we spend most of our time interacting with and surrounded by people who view our opinions as radical, biased, pointless, or just

plain crazy. I would like to thank everyone here for being good company and providing a space of comfort and ease, and a much needed break from having one's fundamental life choices questioned and criticised on a daily basis. But while we do face many with attitudes that differ from ours, from my experience, it is most important, and, indeed, most effective, to remain humble under such circumstances, choosing information over aggression, calmness over anger, rain without thunder.

Finally, I would like to encourage everyone to stay in contact, to work together, and to keep stimulating the momentum that has been gained in this past year, keeping the dream of a cruelty-free world alive. As I am sure you are all aware, there are myriad ways to improve the lives of non-human animals, all of which, I believe, are of equal value. It is crucial to play to your own strengths, remain committed, and, most importantly, to follow passion along whichever path it may lead.

Thank you and congratulations once again to everyone here. I wish you all a wonderful summer and a prosperous future.