

**Stanford Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Tirien Steinbach
Remarks at Event Featuring Fifth Circuit Judge Duncan**

Dean Steinbach: I had to write something down because I am so uncomfortable up here. And I don't say that for sympathy. I'm just saying I'm deeply, deeply uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable cuz this event is tearing at the fabric of this community that I care about and am here to support. And I don't know and I have to ask myself and I'm not a cynic to ask this: Is the juice worth the squeeze? Is this worth it?

::Audience snaps::

Judge Stuart Kyle Duncan: Like I said, this is a setup.

Steinbach: It isn't a setup. But for many people in this law school who work here, who study, here and who live here, your advocacy, your opinions from the bench, land as absolute disenfranchisement of their rights and [inaudible].

::Audience snaps in approval. Duncan tries to interject::

Steinbach: Please let me finish.

Audience: Let her finish! She's speaking! Let her finish!

Steinbach: And it impacts directly... they're people, humans, and their families. And I'm uncomfortable and it's uncomfortable to say this to you as a person. It's uncomfortable to say that for many people here, your work has caused harm. Has caused harm.

::Audience snaps::

Steinbach: And I know that must be uncomfortable to hear. I know that must be ...

Duncan: [Inaudible]

Steinbach: Let me please finish. And I want to give you space to finish your remarks too, Judge Duncan. I'm also uncomfortable because many of the people in the room here I've come to care for and in my role at this university my job is to create a space of belonging for all people in this institution. And that is hard and messy and not easy and the answers are not black or white or right or wrong. This is actually part of the creation of belonging. And it doesn't feel comfortable and it doesn't always feel safe. But there are always places of safety. And there is always an intention from this administration to make sure you all can be in a place where you feel fully you can be here, learn, grow into the amazing advocates and leaders and lawyers that you're going to be.

I'm also uncomfortable because it is my job to say: You are invited into this space. You are absolutely welcome in this space. In this space where people learn and, again, live. I really do, wholeheartedly welcome you. Because me and many people in this administration do absolutely believe in free speech. We believe that it is necessary. We believe that the way to address speech that feels abhorrent, that feels harmful, that literally denies the humanity of people, that one way to do that is with more speech and not less. And not to shut you down or censor you or censor the student group that invited you here. That is hard. That is uncomfortable. And that is a policy and a principle that I think is worthy of defending, even in this time. Even in this time. And again I still ask: Is the juice worth the squeeze?

Duncan: What does that mean? I don't understand...

Steinbach: I mean is it worth the pain that this causes and the division that this causes? Do you have something so incredibly important to say about Twitter and guns and COVID that that is worth this impact on the division of these people who have sat next to each other for years, who are going through what is the battle of law school together, so that they can go out into the world and be advocates. And this is the division it's caused.

When I say "Is the juice worth the squeeze?" that's what I'm asking. Is this worth it? And I hope so, and I'll stay for your remarks to see, because I do want to know your perspective. I am not, you know, in the business of wanting to either shut down speech, because I do know that if they come for this group today, they will come for the group that I am part of tomorrow. I do believe that.

And I understand why people feel like the harm is so great that we might need to reconsider those policies. And luckily they're in a school where they can learn the advocacy skills to advocate for those changes. I hope that you have something to share with us that we can learn from. I hope you can learn too while you're in this learning institution. I hope you can look through the spectacle and the noise to the people holding the signs. The people who are here to learn. The people just like you who absolutely are fighting for, working for freedom. Just to be free, to be themselves. That is what they are here for.

They are here because they feel harmed not just by your speech. If it was just words that would be one thing. You have authority, and you have power to make decisions that impact the lives of millions. And I hope if you learn anything that you can listen through, if you can listen through your partisan lens, your hyper-political lens and just look and see human beings who are asking you to take care, and like all guests on our campus, we ask that you come with good intentions and respect.

And I do want to hear your remarks, and I do want to say thank you for protecting the free speech that we value here of our speakers and of our protesters, and I want to remind you all of one thing: I chose to be here today. You all chose to be here today. Many people go before Judge Duncan who do not necessarily choose to be there. And they have to listen to everything he says. Literally thousands of people. You have a choice. You do not need to stay here if this is not where you want to be. You can stay if this is where you want to be right now. But make that choice.

If you do choose to stay here, I do think we should give space to hear what Judge Duncan has to say, and I hope that also you will take the question and answer and comments section to say what you need to say and ask the questions you need to ask. I'm really grateful to be in this institution. I look out and I don't ask, "What is going on here?" I look out and I say, "I'm glad this is going on here."

Updated: 3/11/23