I am so honored by this award and yet humbled by those who have gone before me and those who will follow in shaping our judiciary. I thank the ABA Judicial Division, my good friend Judge Wynn, and my long-time pals from Seattle who nominated me—Llew Pritchard and Tom Fitzpatrick—and Cara Lee Neville from Minneapolis…

When I showed up my first day of law practice—I was a 24-year old Wyoming girl fresh out of Georgetown law school with Joan Baez like long hair and bangs and a slightly fashionable, but frumpy dress—I never could have imagined that one day I would trade that dress for a black robe and that I would be honored by my colleagues in a celebration like today. Someone asked me back then, are you the new Xerox operator? My answer then and now was no, but I’d be happy to copy your papers.

I am pleased that the rule of law was referenced earlier. The rule of law is a lofty concept that is bandied about in speeches and
conversations, but we often don’t consider its meaning. It is more than a catchy, feel good phrase—it is the foundation of our democracy.

Interestingly, on the test to become a US citizen, the following question is asked:

What is the “rule of law”?

- Everyone must follow the law.
- Everyone but the President must follow the law.
- Government does not have to follow the law.
- All laws must be the same in every state.

Of course, we know the correct answer, but the rule of law is more than everyone following the law. It is both the spirit and the reality of a transparent, accessible, and fair justice system. The rule of law reflects our values—democracy, tolerance, fairness and freedom.

Following WWII, there was a sense of confidence and optimism as democracy expanded across the globe and the opportunities for the rule of law seemed without limit. The fall of the Berlin wall in the 1990s heightened that feeling of euphoria. But we are now facing challenges
for the rule of law –both at home and abroad. What are those challenges?

To begin, judicial independence has always been our rallying cry. However, recent attacks on individual judges and on the judiciary as an institution call that bulwark principle into question.

I don’t suggest that the judiciary should be immune from attack. None of us accepted this job thinking it was a popularity contest. Our decisions are difficult and sometimes unpopular, and critique is definitely fair game.

But, when the attacks are political and personal, when the attacks undermine the credibility of the institution, and when the attacks threaten the impartiality of the judiciary, then judicial independence is at risk. When the judiciary is under siege, it strikes at the core of our democracy.

It is true that our primary voice is through our opinions, not through advocacy. But we can stand up for judicial independence without violating the canons of ethics. Chief Justice Roberts did just that when he pointedly said that “We do not have Obama judges or
Trump judges, Bush judges or Clinton judges. What we have is an extraordinary group of dedicated judges doing their level best to do equal right to those appearing before them.” So, I challenge all of us to follow the Chief Justice’s lead and defend what sets the judiciary apart from the other branches—our independence. As we know, the measure is not just what we stand for, but what we stand up for.

Another challenge we face is public perception. A while back someone dubbed us the LUB—the least understood branch. This is paradoxical as our decisions affect millions of people every day. Our cases are becoming more complex as a result of a changing society, ambitious legislation, and advances in technology. We are smack in the middle of turbulent issues ranging from Internet privacy to gene splicing to climate change. Even so, it is important that we continue to emphasize that our role is distinct from the executive and legislative branches. The Constitution, statutes and precedent are our guide. And the public is our audience.

Finally, I focus on the challenge of diversity. We have come a long way since I joined the profession, but sometimes it is discouraging
how far we need to go to bring more women and minorities into the fold. This matters not only because fairness requires diversity, but diversity of backgrounds and views enriches decision making. The appearance of the judiciary is so important because the face of the judiciary is the face of justice. A year from now we will celebrate the Centenary of the 19th Amendment—100 years and still no parity on the bench or at the partner level in firms. The ABA and the National Association of Women Judges should be applauded for their unstinting efforts to change this picture.

I want to turn now to the international arena. Whatever challenges we face in the United States pale compared to those of judges abroad. Think of the Polish judiciary where judges were stripped of their positions through recent legislation, the Turkish judiciary where several thousand judges and prosecutors were arrested without firm charges and many remain incarcerated today, and judges under pressure and attack in Hong Kong,
Some of my colleagues, plus my family, have wondered why I would spend my free time taking a three-day trip to Colombia or a flying turnaround to Vietnam. It is because I believe that planting the seeds of the rule of law will pay off in the long run.

And it is because of my long-time friend Mehmet, a tax judge in Turkey, who is now imprisoned for eight years because he spoke out in favor of judicial independence. His last tweet in 2016 read: Arrest warrants were issued for 2,745 judges and prosecutors INCLUDING ME who were suspended. No more independent judiciary in Turkey.” I last heard from in in early 2018, with a photo of his three children and I think of him often. So today I dedicate this award to Mehmet and his family and the many other imperiled judges around the world.

Chief Judge Marshall wisely said--"To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well." So, I will wrap up my talking and go back to listening.

But I can’t leave without thanking all of my friends and supporters who make it possible for me to do what I do, especially my patient and loving husband Peter. My son, Haruka, couldn’t be here today because,
happily, he is gainfully employed as a software engineer in Seattle. My
thanks to my colleagues from the Ninth Circuit and the district court for
your support over many years; my friends from the California Supreme
Court and the California Court of Appeal; my amazing current and
former law clerks and my judicial assistant who keep me young and
smart; my tennis and walking buddies who keep me fit; my former
partners at Perkins Coie who made practicing law such a joy; and the
many friends who came from San Diego, Seattle, Washington, DC, the
Bay area and beyond-- who mean so much; and to my friends from the
many organizations that have made my judicial life so textured. It is
true I am an incorrigible volunteer, but to fix that I have a sign on my
computer that says “Just say no.” But how could I say no to my ABA
colleagues, the many judges from the Federal Judges Association, the
National Association of Women Judges, and the International
Association of Women Judges, the Girl Scouts, and others when they
call.

So, while I try to say no, I will close with one thought—Never say
no to justice. She needs you.
Nineteenth Amendment—Background

52 years of dedicated campaigning, countless setbacks, a never give up attitude brought us the 19th Amendment.

A bit of history--

- The beginning of the suffrage movement is usually traced to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, a gathering of several dozen men and women whose Declaration of Sentiments borrowed the spirit and language of the Declaration of Independence to articulate the many ways in which equal rights for women had not been realized.

- Much suffragist advocacy involved the circulation of petitions, publication of essays, and rousing speeches. Civil disobedience played a role too -- hundreds of suffragists went to the polls to vote knowing full well that it was prohibited. During the Reconstruction Era, they also sought vindication in the courts, but came away empty handed. The Supreme Court twice rejected arguments that the Constitution and the Reconstruction Amendments granted women

- A women's suffrage amendment was introduced in Congress for the first time in January 1878. It took 19 campaigns before there was success.

- In 1882, the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage favorably reported a suffrage amendment to the full Senate for consideration. However, the full Senate did not vote on the proposed amendment for five years--when it did, the amendment suffered a resounding defeat of 16-34.

- It wouldn't be until 1919 that the House and then the Senate voted to approve the amendment. At the time, there were 48 states, so the amendment required ratification by 36 states to meet the Constitution's three-fourths requirement.

- But the count was one short-- With the eyes of the nation and history upon it, by a 49-48 vote, the Tennessee legislature voted to ratify -- the deciding vote was cast by a 23 year old representative who reportedly opposed suffrage, but heeded his mother's command: I know that a mother's advice is always safest for her boy to follow and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification.

- The west had led the way with Wyoming being the first territory and then the first state to ratify the amendment, followed by other western states.

- The November 1920 presidential election was the first to be held after ratification in August 1920. Thanks to the 19th Amendment, 8 million women voted in that election. Girl Scouts were at the polls to babysit while their mothers voted and the rest is history.