

Clerkship Podcast

Episode 2 – Muhammed Faridi, Hyatt Howard, Juliana Bennington, Chris Wilds

FARIDI In our prior episode, we heard a bit about what clerking is and what it entails. So we thought that we should shift the focus this time around and ask why is it that someone may want to clerk or they may not want to clerk. Before we dive into the subject, why don't we introduce ourselves? I'm Muhammad Faridi. I'm a partner here in the litigation department at Patterson Belknap and prior to joining the firm, I clerked for a federal district court judge in Brooklyn, in the Eastern District of New York. The judge's name is Jack Weinstein, and it was quite an experience for me and we can talk a little bit about that later. Hyatt, want to introduce yourself?

HOWARD Sure. Hello, everyone. My name's Hyatt Howard. I'm a rising sixth year litigation associate here at Patterson Belknap. And I clerked for the Honorable Judge Michael Shea in the district of Connecticut for a year. And I'm looking forward to talking about my experiences with everyone today.

BENNINGTON My name is Juliana Bennington. I am a first year associate here at Patterson Belknap. I've just started having graduated from Columbia Law School. I will be clerking next year with Judge Richard Clifton on the 9th Circuit and the year following that with Judge Analisa Torez on the Southern District of New York.

WILDS My name is Chris Wilds. I'm a 2015 graduate of Columbia Law School, a rising fifth year litigation associate here at Patterson and I clerked on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals for Judge Johnny B Rollinson.

FARIDI So why do we go right to the -- I think one of the main reasons why people choose sometimes not to clerk, at least in my mind, that's the earnings associated with clerking. When you clerk for a federal or state judge, you are making substantially less money than you would make at a private law firm of our size. A law firm in New York City, for instance, typically pays first or second year associates somewhere around a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. And when you're clerking, the salary may range for anywhere between \$60,000 to \$75,000 a year. So was that a concern for you Hyatt? What do we begin with you?

HOWARD Sure. Happy to kick things off. And I think when I thought about making the transition, because I was in private practice at the time and had been for about two years from transitioning from private practice to clerking. I really thought of it as an investment. And I think it's an investment in my career professionally. And I'm sure we'll kind of get into the particulars of all the ways in which a clerkship pays more than itself over the years. But even in the short term, thinking about the financial remuneration, you know there are several firms that offer, you know, very competitive bonuses because they value the clerkship experience. So you may in the year or two years kind of take a hit financially, but it's more than made up in coming back to private practice or even outside of private practice, just having the experience.

BENNINGTON So I haven't clerked yet and it was definitely something I weighed going in and deciding to apply. If you were going from private practice to a clerkship and you have student loans, it's a lot to give up. And that's a real factor that a lot of people consider. But I think like everyone else is saying, there's a lot that clerkship does for your career and also for you as an individual and as a lawyer that outweighs that burden. But it is a real factor that a lot of people consider. And some things that I also looked at was potentially not clerking in a metropolitan hub to defray some of the costs of living during that year; to try to make that hit maybe a little bit less.

WILDS What Hyatt and Juliana have said it's really interesting and it's something that I've heard in conversations with other law students when I was a law student. For me, the cost didn't really factor into my equation. I was coming from a public interest job and so clerking was actually a bump up in my salary. I appreciated the added salary from a federal clerkship, but I did understand that for a lot of my classmates and other folks who were thinking about going to firms and who had worked at firms, that the difference in salary was a significant consideration. My advice to them then and still is that it does pay for itself in the long run, and it's something that it's definitely a consideration, but it shouldn't be the end all be all of your decision.

FARIDI And I think in the year that you're clerking, you will feel the pain, particularly if you're living in a metropolitan area—where rent is very high, cost of living, generally speaking, is very high. And you have student loans to pay off and the repayment for most student loans begins effectively the day that you graduate. But there are, as I understand it, some student loan companies that will give you a deferment. You're going to continue to accrue interest on the balance that you're gonna be carrying forward. But as Chris said, many of the law firms give you a very competitive bonus when you begin there, including ours, when you begin thereafter clerking. And you can obviously take that bonus and use it to pay off the accrued balance on the loans. Why don't we talk a little bit about what is it that made each of you individually want to clerk? You know that there's probably a lot of reasons. Why do we focus on the first or the biggest reasons why you want to clerk? Why do we begin with you first, Chris?

WILDS Well, like you said, there are a lot of reasons that I decided to clerk. The first was that everyone that I spoke to had great things to say about their clerkship. And, you know, from colleagues and people that I worked with during the summers, I consistently heard that their clerkship experience was of the greatest legal experiences that they had as a young lawyer. And that's something that I really wanted to experience. And a lot of that dealt with skill development and the ability to learn from a federal judge and had that judge serve as a mentor and give you constructive criticism and feedback on your work product at an early stage in your litigation career, when you're not exactly sure of what it looks like to be a lawyer. And to have a judge be there day in and day out to provide that sort of feedback and mentorship was valuable for me, and it's something that I sought out when I applied for clerkships.

FARIDI Julianna, you're going to be clerking. What is it that made you want to clerk?

BENNINGTON For me, it was mostly the intellectual curiosity. I think clerking is a rare opportunity where you get to see how the decisions are made when you're still very young in your career. And so being able to kind of pull back that veil and see what's happening; how the decisions are made on the briefs I'll eventually be filing happens was just such a great experience I couldn't pass it up.

HOWARD And like Julianna was saying, I think what really led me to clerk is this desire to have a wider exposure to different substantive areas of the law and more so than that, a real desire to enhance and hone my writing skills. And during the course of your clerkship, you will spend both at the district level, the appellate level, you will spend quite a bit of your time writing and honing your writing and getting critical feedback, as Chris mentioned from your judge with regard to your writing. And I can't say that as I've come back to private practice, the one skill that I kind of go in day in, day out and continue to refine is my writing skills and my judge, and through his feedback, really set me up for a position to kind of continue to grow that skill and to use it in many different ways from just writing emails to writing briefs.

FARIDI You know one of the things that I notice having clerked, having been an associate at the firm, having worked with other clerks and now as a partner supervising the work of other associates who have clerked at the firm, is that clerking gives you a very good foundation to being a good writer. But there is a significant difference between writing as a clerk and honing your skills, writing skills as a clerk and writing as an advocate. And, you know, sometimes I do notice that some individuals struggle with that. So if you're writing a brief as an advocate on behalf of the client at a law firm, there is sometimes a tendency among the junior lawyers to write it, perhaps in the same manner that you were writing something for the judge. Perhaps in a more neutral manner and not as an advocate. But that being said, it does give you a very good foundation as to how to set up a legal argument. What are the issues that you should be thinking about? The arguments that the other side has raised or will raise? And how do you address those arguments or anticipate those arguments in your writing. Aside from honing your skills, your writing skills, what about in terms of marketability? Does clerkship make you more marketable to employers? What has your experience been? Why don't we begin with Hyatt?

HOWARD I would absolutely say yes. I mean, hands-down, underscore, that when I went back on the market and I was both looking at government jobs, private jobs, employers were all very excited to see that I had clerked. And I think they were excited to see that because they know first, some of the reasons we've been discussing today, understand that I've had an experience—an insight into how a federal judge thinks and approaches making decisions. And it's nice to be able to tell your clients if you happen to appear before that judge or practice in a district before judges whom you might have clerked—who had worked there before—hey, look, we've got a team here who kind of has the inside scoop on how that judge might think about issues. So absolutely, it's a great marketing tool.

WILDS And I would say that, you know, that that change in sort of how employers look at you starts, you know, it's almost as soon as your clerkship starts. I recall being in

chambers and almost daily receiving mail from law firms who were interested in having clerks apply. So it's not something that you have to wait for, you know, your clerkship to end, to experience. Once you start clerking, you realize that employers are really interested in having you apply. And it's really up to you to really choose where you want to go in and where you want to spend the next few years of your legal career.

FARIDI I'll tell you as a partner at the firm that having clerks here makes it very easy for us to sell ourselves to our clients. We're a litigation powerhouse. Most of our clients come to us for the most significant and largest litigations that they may be facing. And it really makes us stand out when we're able to tell our client that, look, we're gonna staff your case with someone who has-- not to someone but everyone who has clerked for a federal district or appellate judge or a state Supreme Court judge. And from our standpoint and from the standpoint of our clients. That makes you a better lawyer perfectly for the reasons that Juliana articulated. Because you have been inside a judge's chambers. You've seen how decision-making in the judge's chambers works. What types of arguments these judges are likely to find to be compelling or not compelling. And that is a great way for us to market ourselves to our clients.

HOWARD And one other thing I might add, too, is that judges have a network of clerks. So when you go back out on the market, you might tap into that network and find that a future employer or prospective employer has an attorney there who has clerked for your judge. And that goes a long way just in establishing a baseline commonality and common experience. So I actually ended up hearing about Patterson actually through a clerk who had been a couple years ahead of me who had come here. So I reached out to her and learned about her experience and heard all the great skills development she was gaining. And I decided to throw in an application here.

FARIDI Now you talked about the network Hyatt. Can you speak also about, and I'm going to ask all three of you to speak about, the relationship that you are able and perhaps already developed with the judge that you have clerked with and you will be clerking for in Juliana's case. Are judges able to put you in touch with their networks or are there other types of mentoring opportunities that you can take advantage of with respect to these specific judges that you clerked for?

HOWARD I would say that my judge has been one the staunchest advocates that I have professionally. He goes to bat; I'm able to bounce ideas off of him with respect to my next moves; and he's advised me on opportunities that I may not even be aware of that might suit me based on what he knows my interests are and what my strengths are as well. So I would say that hands down, there are many ways in which a judge can be a kind of a hyper kind of facilitator for your career because they have been very distinguished in their own respective careers, some in government practice, some in private practice. And they've accumulated so many contacts and more often than not, they are willing to open those to their clerks.

BENNINGTON And to jump off of that, that relationship starts even before you clerk. I've already been in contact with my judges. They've offered to put me in contact with people who've already been their clerks. I in fact talked to a former clerk as I was

preparing for a different clerkship interview. And so is a really great opportunity to start developing that relationship with my judges. And to know that I'm already considered to be part of their clerking family.

WILDS One thing that I actually tell a lot of prospective clerkship applicants is during the clerkship application process, when you're interviewing with judges to ask them questions about mentorship and how they value mentorship and what they what they actually think that their role as a judge means towards in relation to their clerks. One thing I can say is my experience with Judge Ronson was an extraordinary experience in large part because she really takes a lot of effort in mentoring her clerks and that starts from day one; providing feedback on their writing, providing, you know, what person to bounce ideas off in terms of, you know, where you're going to go after you leave the clerkship. And it's something that I think is really important for applicants. It's not just that you're applying to judges and they get to choose who's going to work in their chambers as an applicant. You're also looking to see what's going to be a good fit for you and for me mentorship was really important.

HOWARD And Chris raises a really great point that as applicants are going through this process, that it really is it is a two way street. Although law schools and others may feel differently, but you really have to think carefully about whom it is will be a good fit for you personality-wise. And sometimes that might not be the first bite. It might be the second or third.

FARIDI My judge has been on the bench since 1967. And when I clerked for him, he was approaching his 40th anniversary on the bench. And there is nothing in terms of both life as well as professional experiences that he has not encountered in his life before. And he was then, and continues to be, a great mentor and someone who I typically and often call upon when I'm struggling with either a personal issue or a professional issue. And as Hyatt said, you may not be able to develop that type of relationship with the particular judge that you may clerked for. And that's fine and that's fine. It's only a one year or two year gig. And what you want to make most out of it is learn how the process-- the decision-making process in the judge's chambers works and learn how to be a better writer. And ultimately, that's going to make you a better advocate.

HOWARD And when one of those things, I might add too in terms of what clerking it is, a lot of your experiences with the judge and we've been highlighting that, but I've also had fantastic interactions with the clerks' office and staff. And I can't understate just how important those relationships might be as a practitioner if you're running behind with respect to a filing and they close shop at 5:00 p.m.; to have to know someone who can say, well, hey Hyatt you know, it's 5:02 or 5:03, but the door is still open as opposed to closing it because people have long memories. So just a nice reminder to just be courteous to people as you go through this process.

FARIDI So clerkship or the clerkship application process is sometimes like a black box. And when I was in law school, you know, I found that most students did not know about what the process was like. And that was perhaps, you know, only something that I

encountered and maybe others didn't encounter or that was perhaps something that was typical only for my law school. Can you guys speak to what the process is like? Julianna, you just recently went through the process, so why don't we begin with you?

BENNINGTON I did. I just went through the process. I applied as a 3L. So I did not go through the most recent iteration of the plan, though I am aware it's back and some judges are following it, some circuits are some circuits aren't. So if you are subject to the plan, be aware of it. If your school is following it or the judges you are applying to or following it, make sure you know all your deadlines.

FARIDI So let me ask you, what is the plan?

BENNINGTON That's a great question. The plan is an idea where the judiciary has decided to try to have all applications for second year students open on the same day, which is an attempt to kind of level the playing field. So that way everyone's applying to judges on the same day as opposed to having someone who might have insider information knowing that a judge is accepting positions earlier--being able to put in their application earlier. This is the reboot of it. My understanding is that there was an iteration in the past and eventually it kind of fell apart because people no longer listened to the plan. Hopefully this one will be a little bit more successful in trying to again equalize the playing field so everyone can apply on the same day. I believe that was early July this year. But what that also means is that you need to make sure that all of your application materials are together on that day or well before and that you're ready to go on that day, which can be a very nerve-racking, especially when you're starting this process and you're not really sure what all those things are.

FARIDI So what does a typical clerkship application packet look like? Understanding that some circuits and some judges may have their own particular requirements, but what is in the main a typical clerkship packet?

BENNINGTON Your typical packet is going to include your resume, a cover letter, your transcript--sometimes just law school, sometimes undergrad as well. It will also normally include at least one writing sample and a couple letters of reference. Judges have different requirements for things like the writing sample and so you need to have a couple ready to go. Some want a persuasive writing sample and some want a non-persuasive, more objective writing sample. Some want to writing sample that's not been edited at all by anyone. Some are okay with something that you maybe collaborated with somebody on if it's all your own work. So if you wrote half of a brief and someone else wrote half of it brief, that would be okay. As far as references go, what you also need, some will want all law professors, some will want law professors and one person who you've worked for. So it's important to, at the beginning of the process when you're starting to think about this, start you know thinking about who could be a reference for me, what could be a writing sample. And then as you go through the process of creating a judge list, which I personally found to be very stressful and overwhelming, keeping note of those things as you're looking at all their profiles. That way you kind of have a master list of what everyone's looking for when you're ready to start compiling your applications.

FARIDI Let's talk about that judge list. Did you guys-- each of you have a judge list?

WILDS I did a very long list. I was told to apply broadly. That's something I took to heart. And I thought that it was pretty good advice because you never know where opportunities will pop up. You never know what judges will be interested in you as an applicant. And so some students I think would focus in on maybe a handful of judges. And I think that that's very ambitious because, you know, there are a ton of law students and applicants who are applying for judges. And it may not be that you're not a great applicant, but there's just a limited number of spots. And so I had a very long judge list that was sort of a mix of me doing my own research online, speaking to folks who had applied to judges before, speaking to professors who knew judges and knew of openings with different chambers. So my list was sort of developed out of all those different places.

FARIDI Hyatt, what factors you took into account in putting together your judge list?

HOWARD So kind of on the flip side of Chris, I applied very narrowly because I have a wife who at the time and still continues to work in the Bronx. So we needed to be in a place where she could commute from wherever we were living to the Bronx. So I focused kind of pretty narrowly on a couple different districts in and around the New York area. And that was perhaps my top most concern in terms of developing my judge list. But beyond that, I mean, in terms of judges, district and appellate; I kept it broad. But as far as geography it was more narrow scope.

BENNINGTON And I did a bit of a mix, so I started with kind of my dream locations to live in--so New York. I'm born and raised in Hawaii, so I put all the Hawaii judges on there. And so I kind of started with that. And then I started looking at other things. People who went to my law school who were judges and I grabbed them. I looked at judges whose cases I'd seen come down where I really like the reasoning, and I put them on there too. I asked friends who had just gone through the clerkship process for their lists that I knew we had similar ideas of what we wanted out of a mentorship relationship, and so I added theirs to my list. Then I started to actually have calls with some former clerks and whenever I'd be on a call with someone and ask them about their judge, but also ask them about other people that sat with their judge--if it was a circuit or other people in the courthouse if it was a district and kind of got their read and people will be very honest with you when you ask them the questions. And so that helped me kind of emphasize some judges and maybe remove a couple of judges.

FARIDI Did the judges political leanings or judicial philosophy play a role in the list that you put together? Was that a factor?

WILDS Well, it was part of that is sort of thinking about what would be a good fit for you. But my advice for applicants would be not to limit their search too much by who the judge was appointed by because that doesn't always tell you the entire story. And you'll be surprised that judges who are appointed by certain political parties, you may

think one thing and you get there and have a very different read on that judge. So I would say that that's something to look at when you're applying, but again I don't think that should be the determining factor in terms of developing your judge list.

FARIDI What about in terms of a trial judge or an appellate judge? What goes into that consideration? Why is it, Julianna you're gonna be clerking for both judges, so maybe you can speak to this.

BENNINGTON So there are a lot of differences in the trial level from what I've heard. You guys can correct me. It's faster pace. You're seeing a lot of motion practice. And with the appellate level, it's a little bit more philosophical. And you're looking more at where this falls within the law. You have longer amounts of time to think and mull over things. And so I wanted to have both of those experience because I hope to be able to practice both at the trial level as well at the appeals level. So having both of those was of quite a bit of interest to me. But they are different and you can look at different things at different levels. So some district court judges, they handle all the criminal adult matters themselves. So that's also something when you're building judge lists to look at; is looking at if you're really interested in criminal law. Will my judge allow me to work on criminal matters or maybe should I be applying to appellate court where I'm probably going to see some criminal matters?

FARIDI And there are specialized courts in our country. There's the patent appellate court in D.C. There's also the court of international trade at the federal level. And then you have the Article 3 courts and then you have you have specialized courts in the state court systems. Is there a particular reason one may want to apply to a specialized court versus a court of general jurisdiction?

WILDS Well, I think for applicants and students who maybe know that they have a particular interest in a certain area, working for a judge on a specialized court may appeal to them a bit more than students or applicants who, like myself, wanted a more generalized experience. I wanted to see a number of different substantive areas during my clerkship, and that was something that I thought about going in. And, you know for me, a specialized court wouldn't have provided the same experience. But I can see where some students who have a set interest and know that they want to work in a certain area of the law may find it working in a specialized court very appealing.

HOWARD And to Chris's point, you know, there are students who kind of go in with that very defined interest into the federal circuit. For example, I had a friend go there who was set on being a patent lawyer. She had studied engineering, did the federal circuit, and now she's out of patent law--decided she wanted to do something completely different. And I think that can be informative too, and helpful you know. As we go through our-- as Chris and I and Juliana will, and Mohammed has, gone through their clerkships. You kind of can check the box on certain practice areas and say, you know, thanks, but no thanks.

BENNINGTON One other type of courts that are worth looking into our tribal courts, which can offer a very interesting experience because they do have a different type of

system. It can be a whole different constitution that you're working under, and that can be another area to also explore.

FARIDI And might be useful if you want to focus on let's say tribal law or Native American issues. We've spoken a lot about why you should clerk, where you should. What about some of the obstacles in getting a clerkship? Did you face any challenges, and if so, what were some of those challenges? Julianna, why don't we begin with you?

BENNINGTON I think one of my main challenges was I felt like the process of applying was really overwhelming and I felt a lot of imposter syndrome going through it. And a lot of kind of fear of failure or fear that I wouldn't get hired by anybody; which did not happen in the end luckily. But I think that the process can be very overwhelming and it can be very hard to put together that judge list--to think you're ready to submit that writing sample, to ask that professor to be a recommender. And it's a scary process. And I think that it requires you putting yourself out there. And that was a big obstacle for me. I started thinking about applying my 1L summer and only got it together in March.

FARIDI So Hyatt and Chris, both of you guys worked in the profession for at least a couple of years before you clerked. Why? Why do that? Why work and then clerk as opposed to clerk and then enter the profession?

HOWARD I think for me there are a few different reasons. But chief among them is that the clerkship application process had gone so far out that I could only apply for a clerkship, you know, three years from when I had thought I wanted to start clerking so all the clerkship spots had filled up. But with that said, some judges, increasingly a lot many judges are requiring some type of work experience before starting in chambers. And it makes you a stronger, I think, applicant, because one of the things I was going to say to the last question is that discouragement can be like debilitating in this context--that you don't hear back from judges, you prepared that long judge list, you send out all your applications and then it's silence and you may not ever hear anything again. And then the questions start to creep in. Is it me? Am I good enough? As Juliana was saying, are my grades good enough or my writing? Do I have the right recommenders? And to be honest, it's just as Chris was saying, there are a lot of highly qualified applicants and there are just sometimes too many, and just limited spots. And for myself personally, I applied and didn't get any bites. Now I just applied again. And then on the second time it was for whatever reason, the cycle when my application came up, there were just so many more hits on my application. So to all the students out there who might still be waiting to hear back, just keep the faith, you know, be persevering you know, because the door might open later than you think, but it will open.

WILDS Right. So similar to Hyatt, I applied at a time when the plan was not in place. And for that reason, I was only able to secure a clerkship one year out from law school, and so I had a gap year and I actually secured the clerkship before I found out what I was going to be doing for that year, which was a bit scary at the time. But I did find a job and I found a fellowship doing something that I really loved. And during my clerkship, I realized how important that one year of working was to developing skills as a lawyer. There were many times during my clerkship when I realized that some of the

experiences that I had during my, you know, just one year of working benefited me during the clerkship. And so although, you know, not having a plan sort of forced me to take a clerkship one year out, I think it worked out for the best. And as high as that, a lot of judges see that and more and more are requiring that their clerks have some sort of professional experience. And I think it's a great a great way to jump into the legal world, work for a few years and then clerk, because you go in with at least some foundational knowledge about the way that the law works.

FARIDI See, I clerked a bit before you guys did. And at that time I think it was more common for judges to hire people right out of law school. And I clerked for a judge who was known for, and I think is still known for, hiring people right out of law school. And that's because he is of the philosophic philosophical view that when people enter the profession, they somehow get jaded within the first couple of years of practice. And he wanted the freshest minds, the brightest minds out of law school who were not jaded by what they may encounter in the profession. So there are still some judges who hire people right out of law school. And it's worth applying to them. But that is, I think, the exception rather than the rule for now. And hopefully with this new plan in place, there is a floor that all judges use and it will hopefully open up opportunities for everyone as opposed to just a few. What do we talk a little bit about the clerkship interview? Can you all walk us through your experience during the interview process? Chris, want to go first?

WILDS So without giving away too much about the interview process, I will say that I think judges tend to have very different interview styles. I've actually, and this sort of goes back to a previous question, interviewed during my application process with a number of judges and I did strike out with a few judges for different reasons. Some wanted applicants with more experience. Some, you know, just decided to go with someone else. I'm very happy that that happened because I ended up with the greatest clerkship ever with Judge Ronson. But what I will say is, you know, the interview was unlike anything else that I've done in my law career and legal career, applying for jobs. It really is about the fit of the person applying. And I think the thinking behind it is you'll spend long nights and long weekend sometimes in chambers. And the judge and not only the judge, but the clerks want to know that this is the type of person that I won't mind spending long hours working with. So for me, I met with and interviewed with the judge, my judge's career clerk and the current term clerks who were clerking for my judge. And I know this from my experience clerking with Judge Ronson, that the judge really values the opinion of everyone in chambers. And so your interview starts the moment you step into the door and maybe even before you step into the building because you don't know who's watching and who you're interacting with. So from the second you walk into the building, everyone you interact with should be considered someone that you're essentially interviewing with because the judge may go and speak with, you know, her secretary or may speak with the security guard downstairs and say, what did you think of that young woman, a young man, when they when they walked in the door? And if, you know, your experience with them was a negative one, that's something that the judge may find out. So at all times, remember during their interview that, you know, you are interviewing and it's a great opportunity. So you want to make

the most of it. And as Hyatt said earlier, you know, be courteous. It can go a long way. And you never know when it could help you out.

BENNINGTON Well, I had two very different interviews; one was in person and one was over Skype. And that was an interesting experience because my judge that sits in Hawaii you was very kind to offer a Skype interview as opposed to an in-person interview. And I know one of my fears and accepting that Skype interview was will this be awkward? Will I look bad or not committed for not flying 5000 miles to do an interview? And I can tell you, I got the clerkship. So if a judge offers you something and it makes more sense for you both financially and otherwise, feel free to accept it. Skype or video was not awkward at all. We had a great conversation. After the judge and I talked, he left the building as he said, and had his clerks come in and sitting around his desk to talk to me on Skype as well. So I just wanted to say that it doesn't really matter the format. It really is the fit. And that conversation you have with the judge and connecting with the judge and seeing if you can work with them for a year and you do meet both with their term clerks and anyone else in the office as well as the judge for that same reason. To see if that will work.

WILDS? Yes and as Julianna mentioned earlier, it's important to do your homework on the judges. Spend some time speaking with their former clerks to understand what their process is. And you also want to be sure to understand why you're there. You know, the number one question is why do you want to clerk? And there might be several answers that your career office can give, that your professor can give; but why is it that you want to clerk. Think carefully about that and make sure that you have your story and that you're ready to share that story with the judge and the rest of his team.

FARIDI Yeah you know, I remember my clerkship interview as if it was yesterday and walking into the chambers of this judge thinking that I had gotten the interview either because of just mere luck or just accident--that he actually meant to call someone else and he ended up calling me. And, you know, one thing to keep in mind is that at the time you walked into the interview, the judge has already decided that you are capable, you are intellectually capable to work for that particular judge. Now, it's just trying to figure out-- the interview is mostly at least in my mind, is designed to figure out is this person going to be a good fit for this particular chambers? And that's contingent upon the personality of your judge, what she or he may like, the work ethic of that judge. And judges sometimes like clerks who embody them in some ways. It's also contingent upon the personality and preferences of the judge's deputy and the secretary, because you will be working alongside with them for a year or two years if it's a two year clerkship. And it's also contingent upon the personality and preferences of the clerk who the judge may have already hired, who might be your co-clerk. Or sometimes judges like to stagger clerkships. So you may be beginning a clerkship in September and you may be working alongside someone who may have begun working there in January. And they may go up until January and you may go until the following September. So you got to keep all of this in mind. You're gonna have to go in with an open mind with the understanding that it's not just the judge who you're seeking to impress and seeking to bond with, but all of the other constituencies within the chambers. So, you know, as I think Chris and both Hyatt and Julianna--all three of you guys have said--be courteous

to basically every single individual who you come across in chambers enroute to chambers because you never know. Any--?

FEMALE I think we're gonna do quick wrap-ups. You want to do any last words?

FARIDI Any last words or pearls of wisdom that you guys may want to share with our listeners?

WILDS So I think one thing that I would say is, you know, never get too high or too low on yourself. It's a long process and perseverance really comes into play. You'll apply to maybe many judges. As Hyatt said, you may not hear from many judges, but you may hear from one judge and it only takes one judge to get a clerkship. So stick with it and prepare for the interviews. Once you go through the interview process, I recall walking out of interviews and having no idea whether I got the clerkship or not. And you know, lo and behold, you do get a clerkship. So stay not too high, not too low, balanced and persevere through what is a very difficult but rewarding process.

BENNINGTON I have two, one similar to what Chris just said is: you never get the clerkship you didn't apply to. So get your materials together and put them out there. It's scary, but you can do it. The second one is: have questions. Ask them to your peers who are going through the process. They can be a great support network as to who've done clerkships, who have clerkships. Ask them to the judge when you're in chambers for interviews and ask them to whatever support you have at your law school. But come with questions. It's normal to have questions going through this process. And it shows that you're ready to be a clerk if you have a lot of questions.

HOWARD And I would just add to the great collective wisdom, that it's important to make sure that when you apply your application materials are flawless. There should be no typos. So have friends read over it. They may not be able to contribute to your writing sample, but have them look over it and ask them, you know critically, does this makes sense, my sentence structure? And receive that feedback and incorporate it and just kind of underlining the point that's already been made throughout--keep on keeping on. You know, keep knocking on the door.

FARIDI And look I want to just piggyback on what all three of you have said. The road to a clerkship and then also the road in our profession, it's a long road and you're going to have disappointments. Sometimes you may not get a clerkship with the judge or with the court that you're seeking to clerk for, or you may not get any clerkship. And that's fine and that's fine. And, you know, just keep in mind that it's a long road and you're going to have disappointments, but you're gonna have to continue to move forward. And ultimately you know of course, clerkships make you, at least in our view, a good lawyer, a better lawyer. But you could be a great lawyer without having clerked. So just keep that in mind.