

I want you to ask yourself these basic questions:  
Who do you want to be?  
What inspires you?  
How would you want to give back?  
And then  
I want you to take a deep breath,  
trust yourself  
To chart your own course  
And make your mark on the world  
Maybe it feels like you are supposed to should go to law school  
But what you really want to do is teach little kids  
Maybe your parents are expecting you to come back home after graduation  
But you are feeling the pull to travel the world.  
I want you to listen to those thoughts  
I want you to act with your mind,  
But also your heart.  
No matter what path you choose,  
I want you to make sure it's you choosing it,  
And not someone else.  
Because here's the thing,  
The road ahead is not going to be easy.  
it never is, especially for folks like you and me.  
Because while we've come so far,  
The truth is that,  
Those age-old problems are stubborn  
And they haven't fully gone away.  
So there will be times,  
When you feel that folks look right past you,  
Or they see just a **fraction** of who you really are.  
The world won't always see you in those caps and gowns.  
They won't know how hard you've worked,  
and how much you've **sacrificed** to make it to this day.  
The countless hours you spent studying to get this diploma,  
The multiple jobs you worked to pay for your school,  
The times you had to drive home,  
and take care of your grandma,  
The evenings you gave up to volunteer at a food bank  
Or organise a campus fundraiser  
They don't know that part of you  
Instead,

They will make assumptions about who they think you are, based on their limited notion of the world.

And my husband and I know how frustrating that experience can be.

We've both felt the sting of those daily slights throughout our entire lives.

The folks who cross the street in fear of their safety;

The clerks who kept a close eye on us in all those department stores.

The people at formal events who assumed we were the help

and those who have questioned our intelligence, our honesty

Even our love for this country.

And I know that these little indignities are obviously nothing compared to what folks across the country are dealing with every single day,

Those nagging worries that you're going to get

Stopped or pulled over for absolutely no reason

The fear that your job application

will be overlooked because of the way your name sounds.

The agony of sending your kids to school that may no longer be separate,

But are far from equal

The realisation that no matter how far you go in life,

how hard you work to be a good person,

a good parent, a good citizen,

For some folks, it will never be enough.

and all of that is gonna be a heavy burden to carry.

It can feel isolating.

It can make you feel like your life somehow doesn't matter

That you're like an invisible man.

As we have seen over the past few years,

These feelings are real.

They are rooted in decades of structural challenges,

That has made too many folks feel frustrated and invisible.

But, graduates

Today, I want to make it very clear that

Those feelings are not

An excuse to just throw up our hands and give up.

Not an excuse!

They are not an excuse to lose hope.

To succumb to feelings of despair and anger, only means that in the end we lose.

But here's the thing,

Our history provides us with a better story,  
A better blueprint for how we can win.  
it teaches us  
That When we pull ourselves out of those lowest emotional depths,  
and we channel our frustrations into learning,  
organisation and banding together,  
Then we can build ourselves and our community up.  
We can take on those deep-rooted problems,  
and together together  
We can overcome anything that stands in our way.  
And the first thing we have to do is vote.  
Hey no, not just once in a while.  
Not just when my husband or someone you like is on the ballot.  
But in every election, at every level, all the time.  
Because here's the truth.  
If you wanna have a say in your community,  
If you truly want the power to control your destiny,  
Then you've got to be involved.  
You got to be at the table.  
You have to vote, vote, vote, vote.  
That's it,  
That's the way to move forward.  
This is how we make progress for ourselves and our country.  
You don't have to be president of the United States  
can start addressing things like poverty, education  
And the lack of opportunity.  
Today, you can mentor a young child,  
Make sure he or she takes the right path.  
Today, you can volunteer at an after-school program or the food pantry.  
Today, you can help your cousins.  
Fill out her college financial aid form,  
So that one day she can sit on these chairs.  
But just like all those before us,  
You've got to do something,  
To lay the groundwork for future generations.  
And here's what I really want you to know:  
You have got everything you need to do this.  
you've got it in you.  
because even if you're nervous or uncertain about what path to take in the  
years ahead,,

I want you to realise,  
You have got everything you need right now to succeed.  
you've got it.  
You've got the knowledge and the skills honed on this hallowed campus.  
you've got families  
who'll support you every step of the way.  
And most of all,  
You've got yourselves  
and all the heart and grit and smart  
That has got you to this day  
And If you rise above the noise and the pressures that surround you,  
if you stay true to who you are  
and where you come from  
If you have faith in God's plan for you,  
Then you will keep fulfilling your duty to the people all across this country.  
And as the years pass,

You will feel the bumps smooth off.  
You will take part in that.  
"never-failing -miracle" of progress.  
you will be flying through the air,  
out of this world - free.

