

>> PRESIDENT CLINTON: President Simone, it's great to be back and I thank you for the degree, for your extraordinary remarks, and for 15 years of service. I like being with Presidents who aren't term limited.

[Laughter]

Provost McKenzie, Mr. Hering, Mr. Morley, members of the Board of Trustees, Brian O'Shaughnessy, my great friend, Tom Golisano, who his initiative investment led to our raising \$10 billion in 10 years, that's the best he ever achieved.

[Applause]

Vice president Mayberry, I think we should give another hand to Lizzy Sorkin. I thought she was amazing in her speech and I thank you very much.

[Applause]

Mr. Sasakawa, your long personal crusade to eliminate Leprosy from the lives of millions and millions of families means a lot to me. The last center for the study of Leprosy in the United States is near my native State of Arkansas and northern Louisiana, in a town named for the man who was my campaign manager in 1992, his family, in Carville, Louisiana. I have studied leprosy all my life. I know something of the burden you have lifted for millions, and we are all very grateful to you.

[Applause]

President Simone, I thank you for mentioning the support that Hillary has attempted to give RIT.

I have to tell you, I called her this morning to tell her that Tom and I were having breakfast and about to come over here and she was complaining, she said she was very jealous of me.

She was going to get on a plane and fly to Iowa.

And I said I'm glad you're running for President and I'm going to Rochester.

I'll have a good time today.

So I'm delighted to be here.

I feel rather like I did when I first made my first public speech as an elected official in January of 1977, more than 30 years ago.

I had just turned 30 years of age.

I was the Attorney General of my state.

I was asked to go to a civic club officers' banquet.

There were 500 people there.

The dinner started at 6:30.

All 500 people were introduced, except for four.

They left mad.

[Laughter]

There were about 20 speakers.

As I was introduced to speak at 9:30 then, the man who was introducing me was so nervous he said, thinking he was complimenting me, "you know, we could stop here and have had a very nice evening."

[Laughter]

Now, he was trying to say the best is yet to come, but nobody believed it after all that time!

And I'm not sure we haven't already heard the best of today from your President and from your student body President.

But I would like to say a few things to the graduates, to try to put in the context of the world that I see and travel and know the remarks that President Simone gave you about the importance of your education and the importance of giving it to more of our fellow citizens and more people around the world.

The aggregate body of knowledge is doubling about every five years now. Just in the last ten days, I have read that further research into the human genome, which was finally sequenced when I was President, has revealed the main genetic markers of diabetes; and not a moment too soon. It's now estimated that 1 in 3 American children born after 2000 will develop diabetes unless we do something to change our eating and exercise habits. So good for us if we can figure out what causes it and how to turn it back.

And then a couple days after that I read that our astrophysicists identified, rotating around one of the hundred stars closest to our own solar system, a planet which seemed to have atmospheric conditions almost identical to ours, and therefore which might support life.

Very close in terms of the whole size of the universe, but alas, still 20 million light years away, not within the life of any human being.

So unless there is some family in the audience that wants to commit to 3 or 4 generations in space, I suppose we won't know for sure until they come to us. But it's a very exciting time.

It's a time of immense diversity and interaction.

This student body has students from more than 100 countries and every state in America.

Every wealthy country in the world is growing more diverse, religiously, ethnically, racially, and our lives are more interesting than they used to be, certainly more interesting than they would have been.

Just look at this crowd.

This is not the same crowd that a former President would have been addressing 30 years ago.

But all is not well in this world of ours, for all the benefits.

And almost every one of you because of the background you have here will find, if you choose, an economically rewarding future in the global society in which you will live. On the other hand, I think it is unlikely that an event like this will occur in a place like this 50 years from now, unless we change two or three things.

Because the world we live in for all of its benefits is unequal, unstable and unsustainable.

It is unequal because half of world's people aren't part of it.

They live on less than \$2 a day.

I work in Africa, India, China, poorer countries in Southeast Asia, Latin America, we sell AIDS medicine in 66 countries, we have health projects in 25, economic projects, climate change projects all over the world, and I see this.

A billion people live on less than a dollar a day.

2 and a half billion people have no access to sanitation.

A billion never get a clean glass of water.

Even in the United States, we have had six years of economic growth, but no increase in median wages, and a 4 percent increase in the percentage of families with a full-time worker falling below the poverty line and losing their health insurance.

While productivity is up, corporate profits are up, growth is up.

So it's an unequal world.

Secondly, it's an insecure world obviously because all the benefits that we share of being connected make us more vulnerable to destructive force, because we're connected.

Whether it's terror or weapons of mass destruction or the specter of a global disease epidemic, like Avian influenza, which we don't yet have a vaccine or a cure.

And, finally, this is an unsustainable world because of global warming, which now virtually everyone accepts as a reality.

I was just -- I flew here overnight from Austria, where I went to receive help from the AIDS work I do around the world.

But before that, I made a series of speeches in Scandinavia, including in a town in Norway inside the Arctic Circle where the sun never sets at this time of year, and they were all talking about the changes in the climate they could already see. I remember Hillary and Senator John McCain took senators to an island where there is the world's northernmost village, studying the change in the climate.

If this keeps going, we will lose land.

Over the next 50 years the rise in the oceans will take away 50 feet of Manhattan Island, where my office is.

Now, I'm in the middle of the island, I'll be fine.

But consider whole island nations like the Maltese, where I worked after the Tsunami, will be buried.

Agricultural production patterns will be changed.

And all of this is going to happen at a time when we are already short of resources.

I wish our universities would give as much attention, frankly, now, to resource depletion as to climate change, because we are cutting down too many trees, we're losing too much topsoil; we're losing drinkable water at a time when there is already a shortage.

Most biologists believe plant and animal species are disappearing at the most rapid rate in 150,000 years.

Meanwhile, the population is growing from the level from 6 and a half to 9 billion people in the world, mostly in the countries least able to handle it.

So please, all of you, whether you're a Republican or Democrat, have some sympathy with the US Congress while they're debating this immigration Bill.

The fundamental problem is the population is growing in places that can't support the population.

So people who love their children or want to care for their parents have to go somewhere else to try to make a living.

And if they don't, there will be more war, more upheaval, more explosion, and all these trends are going to get worse unless we deal with them.

So all of you I say what should you use your education for?

You have to use some of it to deal with inequality and insecurity and unsustainability all over the world and not just here, because we are interdependent.

Now, I want to make just two points about this.

It is important what you do, because citizens can have more power to do public good and solve public problems than ever before.

I saw that when the tsunami hit south Asia, Americans gave \$30 billion. 30 percent of our homes gave, half of them over the Internet.

A couple years ago when I made my annual trip to the New York state fair with

Hillary, I was walking my nephew down the Midway and a lady came up from behind the game booth, where you throw things at targets and try to win stuffed animals.

Bush and I had just agreed to help the people in the Katrina area.

So this lady came out with a khaki shirt, in Syracuse, and she said: Here is \$50.

I want you to spend this in the Bush Clinton Katrina fund to help those poor people down in New Orleans.

And then she said an astonishing thing, this woman didn't have a degree from RIT; she is working behind the booth in Syracuse.

She said: I'm sorry to give you the money in cash, but you can see I'm working.

I don't have time to send it over the Internet.

How much money could she be making?

Not much.

But she knows that if there are enough people like her who care about the same thing, they can change the world.

So I say to you whether you leave here as a scientist, an engineer, one of those high tech whizzes that I saw when I visited here in 2005, trying to break computer codes so they could teach the defense department how to build codes that could not be broken, whatever you wind up doing, whether you're going to be an artist -- a young woman gave me today a portrait that was done by 60 other artists.

They all got a little piece of me there, a little square.

And it was a remarkable likeness.

I never saw a picture done by 60 different people before.

Whatever you do, you must also be a citizen.

You must find some way at home or around the world to deal with the inequality, the insecurity, the unsustainability of modern life if you want your grandchildren to be in a place like this 50 years from now.

What you do matters.

And the last thing I wish to say that may seem a little naive at a university graduation, but the older I get the more idealistic I get.

I think how you think and how others see you thinking will have a very great deal to do with the life you have and the life your children and grandchildren have.

Consider what you celebrate today at RIT.

You learn together, you mastered technologies, you have rational arguments, you look at evidence, you learn from each other, and you appreciate your differences.

How much of the world is dominated by patterns of thought and action directly opposite to what you have come here to pay tribute to, to political and religious, even emotional fundamentalism designed to divide rather than unite, to crush argument, to seize power rather than to empower people?

How you think matters.

And how people see you thinking matters.

I don't know how many times when I was President and I was trying to convince people to make peace in one area of the world or another, someone would tell me, I hate it that we're doing this, but we have to because of the way they behave.

How much behavior in the world today, how many tribal wars, how many ethnic and religious conflicts are being driven by people who justify their conduct based on what someone else did to them or how they made them feel ashamed?

I don't care if you've got a Ph.D. and if you've been to outer space and back, every time for the rest of your life, you remember this, every time for the rest of your life you say,

do, or feel anything because you say: I have no choice,, because of how destructive people were to me, or because I had this problem or that problem, you give up your freedom.

You are only a free person when you recognize that every moment of every day, no matter what happens to you, no matter what is said to you, no matter what is done to you or your crowd, you still are free to decide how to respond.

That's why Gandhi was a free man and a great man.

[Applause]

That's why Mandela is recognized for the enduring greatness, not of his sacrifice, but of the way he responded to his sacrifice.

Not just inviting his jailers to his inauguration, but putting the leaders of the political parties that supported apartheid in his government, because he said if I want us to go forward together, that means them, too.

He was a free man because no one could make him hate or kill or react.

He got to decide.

And I hope more than anything else for your freedom, for your freedom with your family and friends, for your freedom at work, your freedom in your community and your freedom as a citizen of the world, free to recognize the fundamental truths of the modern world that what we have in common is more important than our interesting differences.

It is interesting to me that to me the most important scientific discovery in recent years, the sequencing of the human genome, told us more about what we have in common than our differences.

Look around this crowd today, look at all the differences in gender, in race, in age, in size, in skin color, in thought pattern, in political philosophies, in religious conviction. According to the scientific research, all of our differences genetically are found in one tenth of one percent of our makeup.

We are 99.9 percent the same, every single living soul here today and around the world.

[Applause]

Now, why then do most of us, me included, spend 99 percent of our time thinking about the one tenth of one percent of us that is different?

I try to go to Mandela every year around the time of his birthday.

He is getting older and older.

And I learn something every time I go.

And we have a youth service program we put together in South Africa, where black and white children work together in the communities to help educate people.

But his tribe, the Sosa, have a word for the philosophy that guides his life that I pray will guide yours, a way of thinking about other people and our mutual relationships.

It is called Ubuntu.

In English it means "I am because you are." I cannot exist apart from you, because we're stuck with each other, whether we like it or not.

We better make the most of it.

By finding some time to think about the 99.9 percent and before we think we have to do something destructive because of a difference rooted in the one tenth of one percent, if we could just stop every single one of us for the rest of our lives and count to ten and dwell on the 99.9, what a different world it would be.

In one part of the central highlands of Africa, where I have AIDS projects, a typical greeting goes something like this, when people meet each other.

One person says "hello, good morning, how are you."
Instead of doing what we do in America, we say "I'm fine, how are you," or "I'm fine, I hope you are."
You know what the answer is when someone says "good morning, hello, how are you?"
In English, the answer is "I see you."
You think about all the people in the world that we never see.
I tell you half the world's people live on \$2 a day.
You may think I don't know any of them.
If I say to you there are one in four people who will die this year from AIDS, TB, Malaria, infections related to dirty water, you say I don't know any of them.
How many people do we not see?
When you leave here today, do you know what kind of job we are leaving for the people who have to clean the chairs up and pick up after us.
Do you have any idea what they make or how they support themselves or their children, or whether they believe anyone ever sees them?
How you think about your life in relations to others will determine how you use what you know and what you do as citizens.
I pray that you make everything you can out of that one tenth of one percent of your genetic makeup that makes you a unique, God given marvel. But I pray, also, that you will walk away from so much of today's madness by remembering the other 99.9 percent and never get to the point where you do not see all the others.
Good luck and God bless you.
[Applause]

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