

CAPTION FILE

Syracuse University

Itanwa Orinwa

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communication accessibility and may not be a totally
verbatim record of the proceedings.

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>> HI, EVERYONE, HOW ARE YOU?
I GOT TO -- I GOT TO START.
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY WOULD LIKE
TO ACKNOWLEDGE WITH RESPECT THE
ONONDAGA NATION, FIREKEEPERS OF
THE HAUDENOSAUNEE, THE
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ON WHOSE
ANCESTRAL LANDS SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY NOW STANDS.
NOW
PLEASE WELCOME JORDYN PEGUES
AND
BRIANA GILYARD FOR THE SINGING
OF THE BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM.
LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING
TILL EARTH AND HEAVEN RING
RING WITH THE HARMONIES OF
LIBERTY
LET OUR REJOICING RISE
HIGH AS THE LISTENING SKIES
LET IT RESOUND LOUD AS THE
ROLLING SEA
SING A SONG FULL OF THE FAITH
THAT THE DARK PAST HAS TAUGHT US

SING A SONG FULL OF THE HOPE
THAT THE PRESENT HAS BROUGHT US
FACING THE RISING SUN OF OUR NEW
DAY BEGUN
LET US MARCH ON TILL VICTORY IS
WON
STONY THE ROAD WE TROD
BITTER THE CHASTENING ROD
FELT IN THE DAYS WHEN HOPE
UNBORN HAD DIED
YET WITH A STEADY BEAT
HAVE NOT OUR WEARY FEET
COME TO THE PLACE FOR WHICH OUR
FATHERS SIGHED?
WE HAVE COME OVER A WAY THAT
WITH TEARS HAS BEEN WATERED
WE HAVE COME, TREADING OUR PATH
THROUGH THE BLOOD OF THE
SLAUGHTERED
OUT FROM THE GLOOMY PAST
TILL NOW WE STAND AT LAST
WHERE THE WHITE GLEAM OF OUR
BRIGHT STAR IS CAST
GOD OF OUR WEARY YEARS
GOD OF OUR SILENT TEARS
THOU WHO HAS BROUGHT US THUS FAR

ON THE WAY
THOU WHO HAS BY THY MIGHT LED US
INTO THE LIGHT
KEEP US FOREVER IN THE PATH, WE
PRAY
LEST OUR FEET STRAY FROM THE
PLACES, OUR GOD, WHERE WE MET
THEE
LEST, OUR HEARTS DRUNK WITH THE
WINE OF THE WORLD, WE FORGET
THEE SHADOWED BENEATH THY HAND
MAY WE FOREVER STAND
TRUE TO OUR GOD
TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND
THANK YOU.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

LISTEN, THAT WAS AMAZING.
I WISH I COULD SING LIKE THAT.
REAL QUICK, MIC CHECK REAL
QUICK.
YEAH!
HOLD ON, I DON'T THINK Y'ALL
REALLY HEARING ME RIGHT NOW.
I SAID YEAH!
OKAY, OKAY, OKAY, I'M FEELING
THE ENERGY, FEELING THE LOVE,

I'M FEELING THE LOVE.

GOOD EVENING TO THE BEAUTIFUL
FACES HERE TO CELEBRATE ALL OF
OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS THIS
EVENING.

CAN WE ALL GIVE OUR GRADUATES A
WARM ROUND OF APPLAUSE?

MY NAME IS TYSEAN CANADA.

I'M A GRADUATING STUDENT FROM
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND
COMPUTER SCIENCE.

I'M ALSO A SYRACUSE NATIVE, SO
SHOUT OUT TO SYRACUSE!

I WILL BE YOUR EMCEE TONIGHT.

ITANWA ORINWA,

OUR STORY, OUR SONG,

IS A GRADUATION CEREMONY
DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING THE
ACHIEVEMENTS OF SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY GRADUATES OF COLOR.

ITANWA ORINWA WAS FOUNDED IN
2002 AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY BY

A

GROUP OF DISTINGUISHED BLACK
STUDENTS.

THE MISSION IS TO CREATE AN

ANNUAL OBSERVANCE HONORING ALL
DEGREE CANDIDATES WHO IDENTIFY
AS BEING PART OF THE AFRICAN
DIASPORA.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS CELEBRATION
IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE
HISTORICAL

PLIGHT OF OUR PEOPLE'S PURSUIT
TO AND THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION
SYSTEMS AND TO PROVIDE A
HISTORICAL VOICE AND STORY THAT
CAN BE A LEGACY FOR GENERATIONS
TO COME.

TODAY'S CEREMONY WILL INCLUDE
STUDENT TESTIMONY OF THEIR
EXPERIENCES, KEYNOTE
ADDRESS, STUDENT PERFORMANCES
AND DISTRIBUTION OF AUTHENTIC
KENTE STOLES TO OUR HONOREES.

BEFORE WE GET STARTED, I WANT TO
GIVE A FEW SPECIAL SHOUTOUTS TO
SOME PEOPLE FOR MAKING THIS
EVENING POSSIBLE:

I WANT TO GIVE A HUGE THANK YOU
TO THE INTERCULTURAL
COLLECTIVE, MULTICULTURAL

AFFAIRS, 119 EUCLID, AND THE
BLACK GRADUATION COMMITTEE.

IT WAS THROUGH YOUR VALIANT
EFFORTS THAT THIS CEREMONY
WAS MADE POSSIBLE.

BLACK GRADUATES, TODAY IS YOUR
DAY.

ALL THE WORK AND EFFORT YOU PUT
IN PAID OFF, AND YOU EARNED THIS
DEGREE.

TODAY IS A DAY TO BE PROUD OF
YOURSELVES!

LET'S HEAR IT FOR THE CLASS OF
2023!

I WANT TO LASTLY GIVE A HUGE
THANK YOU TO EVERY PARENT.

WITHOUT THE LOVE AND
NURTURE YOU GAVE TO EACH AND
EVERY ONE OF US, WE WOULDN'T BE
HERE TODAY.

LET'S HEAR IT FOR OUR PARENTS.

AT THIS TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO

--

INTRODUCE DR. MARY GRACE
ALMANDREZ, VICE PRESIDENT FOR
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, OFFICE

OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, TO
GIVE THE OPENING REMARKS.

>> MARY GRACE ALMANDREZ:
MAGANDANG GABI SA INYONG LAHAT.

BUENAS NOCHES A TODOS.
GOOD EVENING, GRADUATES,
FAMILIES, LOVED ONES, AND
COLLEAGUES.

I GROUND MY REMARKS IN THE WORDS
OF BELL HOOKS:
TO CREATE A CULTURALLY DIVERSE
ACADEMY WE MUST COMMIT
OURSELVES FULLY.

LEARNING FROM OTHER MOVEMENTS
FOR SOCIAL CHANGE, FROM CIVIL
RIGHTS AND FEMINIST LIBERATION
EFFORTS, WE MUST ACCEPT THE
PROTRACTED NATURE OF OUR
STRUGGLE AND BE WILLING TO
REMAIN BOTH PATIENT AND
VIGILANT.

TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE WORK
OF TRANSFORMING THE ACADEMY SO
THAT IT WILL BE A PLACE WHERE
CULTURAL DIVERSITY INFORMS
EVERY

ASPECT OF OUR LEARNING, WE MUST
EMBRACE STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE.
INDEED, OUR GRADUATES HAVE
STRUGGLED AND SACRIFICED IN
ORDER FOR ALL OF US TO GATHER AT
THIS PLACE ON THIS EVENING.
ITANWA ORINWA, OUR STORY,
OUR SONG, IS A CELEBRATION OF
COLLECTIVE BRILLIANCE,
PERSISTENCE, AND RESILIENCE.
OUR GRADUATES ENDURED MULTIPLE
UNFORESEEN CHALLENGES
INCLUDING COVID, #NOTAGAINSU,
AND THE DISMANTLING OF
DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION,
AND ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS THE
NATION.
YET, OUR GRADUATES REMAINED
UNWAVERING IN THEIR COMMITMENT
TO COMPLETE THEIR STUDIES AT SU.
STRUGGLE AND SACRIFICE ARE PART
OF YOUR STORY AND YOUR SONG.
TONIGHT WE HONOR NOT ONLY OUR
STUDENTS.
WE ALSO RECOGNIZE THE LOVE,
LABOR, AND SUPPORT OUR

FAMILIES,
FRIENDS, FACULTY, AND MENTORS
THROUGH THEIR JOURNEYS UP TO
THIS POINT.
OUR STUDENTS' SUCCESSES ARE
ALSO
OUR LOVED ONES' SUCCESSES.
WE OFTEN HEAR THAT COLLEGES
CHANGE STUDENTS' LIVES.
I BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS CHANGE
COLLEGES.
THANK YOU, GRADUATES, FOR
CHOOSING SYRACUSE AS PART OF
YOUR STORIES AND YOUR SONGS.
THANK YOU FOR MAKING US DO AND
BE BETTER.
KONGRATS! ;FELICITACIONES!
CONGRATULATIONS, CLASS OF 2023!
WE ARE SO
PROUD OF YOU!
>> TYSEAN:
THANK YOU, DR. ALMANDREZ.
WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, PLEASE
WELCOME SHEA MCMULLEN, AS SHE IS
GOING TO INTRODUCE OUR KEYNOTE
SPEAKER FOR TONIGHT.

>> SHEA MCMULLEN:

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE!

MY NAME IS SHEA MCMULLEN, AND
I'M A GRADUATING SENIOR FROM THE
MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP
AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

I'M HERE TO INTRODUCE THE
KEYNOTE SPEAKER.

BUT, BEFORE I DO THAT, I WOULD
LIKE TO REFLECT ON THE PAST FOUR
YEARS AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.
FOR MANY OF US, IT HASN'T BEEN
THE EASIEST JOURNEY, BUT TODAY
SHOWS OUR RESILIENCE.

WE'VE OVERCOME MANY CHALLENGES,
INCLUDING PROTESTS AND A
PANDEMIC.

AS WE ENTER THE NEXT PHASE OF
OUR LIVES, BE CERTAIN THAT YOU
ARE PREPARED TO FACE AND
OVERCOME ANY ADVERSITY THAT MAY
COME YOUR WAY, JUST AS YOU'VE
DONE TO SIT HERE TODAY.

IT IS MY HONOR TO INTRODUCE OUR
KEYNOTE SPEAKER, A WOMAN WHO
IS THE EMBODIMENT OF

RESILIENCE.

THREE-TIME EMMY AWARD-WINNING
LEGAL JOURNALIST, FORMER
FEDERAL
PROSECUTOR, NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLING AUTHOR, AND A
CO-HOST OF THE VIEW.

AND A SOUGHT AFTER KEYNOTE
SPEAKER WHO EARNS RAVE REVIEWS
FOR HER EVENTS.

HER DEBUT NOVEL, SUMMER ON THE
BLUFFS, WHICH SKYROCKETED TO
#11

ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
LIST.

THE FIRST IMAGINE PROJECT FOR
SUNNY HOSTIN.

SHE IS ALSO THE AUTHOR OF A
MEMOIR, I AM THESE TRUTHS, I'D,
JUSTICE, AND LIVING BETWEEN
WORLDS.

PROVIDE A LOOK INTO THE
CHALLENGES SHE FACE WHILE BEING
RAISED IN HOUSING PROJECTS AND
THE OBSTACLES SHE OVERCAME TO
BECOME A FEDERAL PROSECUTOR AND

HER ULTIMATE PATH TO BECOMING A
SUCCESSFUL JOURNALIST, A SOUGHT
AFTER PUBLIC SPEAKER, HOSTIN
DELIVERED A TED TALK AND SPOKE
IT AND MODERATED PANELS FOR THE
JOURNALISM SKILL, AND THE
NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION AMONG
MANY OTHERS.

SHE IS CURRENTLY A DEVELOPMENT
FOR A ONE HOUR DRAMA SERIES THE
COUNCIL INSPIRED BY
EXTRAORDINARY POLITICAL AND
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES,
INESCAPABLE VOICE FROM THE TOP
HERB ECHELONS OF NEWS AND
ENTERTAINMENT, SUNNY GIVES
VOICE TO THE MARGINALIZED.

IT IS MY PRIVILEGE TO INTRODUCE
THE KEYNOTE SPEAKER, MY SOROR,
SUNNY HOSTIN.

>> SUNNY HOSTIN:

WELL, GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE.

OH, I CAN'T HEAR THAT.

GOOD EVENING, SU!

ALL RIGHT NOW.

THANK YOU SOROR MCMULLEN FOR

THAT INTRODUCTION, AND WHERE IS
SOROR SIMONE BELLOT?

THERE YOU GO.

WHEN I LEARNED THAT THE PLANNING
COMMITTEE CHAIR WAS A FELLOW
MEMBER OF ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA
SORORITY INCORPORATED, THE
FIRST AND THE FINEST, I WAS SO
PROUD I CAN'T EVEN TELL YOU.

BUT I ALSO KNOW SIMONE HAD A LOT
OF HELP FROM HER FELLOW
COMMITTEE MEMBERS AS WELL AS
SUPPORT OF SYRACUSE FACULTY AND
STAFF AND OTHER REPS OF THE
NATIONAL PANHELLENIC COUNCIL
AND I SEE YOU, DIVINE NINE, I SEE
YOU.

NOW, I HOPE YOU ALL ARE AS PROUD
OF YOURSELVES AS I AM OF YOU.
SOME OF YOU MAY BE THE FIRST TO
GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE IN YOUR
FAMILY.

I WAS.

GREEK LIFE THOUGH ALLOWED ME TO
CONNECT MY PASSION WITH MY
PURPOSE AS A YOUNG WOMAN, AND I

KNOW IT IS DOING THE SAME FOR SO
MANY HERE AT SU.

SO KEEP SERVING, KEEP STRIVING,
KEEP LEADING, KEEP WINNING.

NOW, THE FIRST TIME I HAD THE
HONOR OF SPEAKING AT A COLLEGE
COMMENCEMENT, MY CHILDREN WERE
VERY YOUNG.

I THINK MY OLDEST GABRIEL WAS IN
MIDDLE SCHOOL.

HE'S NOW 20, FINISHING HIS
SECOND YEAR AT HARVARD, IT GOES
BY REAL FAST, I'M PICKING HIM UP
TOMORROW, AS A MATTER OF FACT.

SO IN JUST TWO YEARS GABRIEL
WILL BE SITTING WHERE YOU ARE
SITTING NOW, WEARING A CAP AND
A GOWN, AND A BEAUTIFUL STOLE,
EQUIPPED AND READY TO TAKE ON
THE WORLD, AND HE IS MOST
EXCITED ABOUT HIS BLACK
GRADUATION.

IN THOSE EARLY COMMENCEMENT
SPEECHES I SPOKE AS A BIG
SISTER, AS A MENTOR, BUT TONIGHT
I WANT TO SPEAK TO YOU AS A MOM.

AND I LOVE THE SYRACUSE
CELEBRATES YOUR GRADUATES ON
THE SAME WEEKEND THAT WE
CELEBRATE OUR MOTHERS.
WOULD YOU JOIN ME IN WISHING ALL
THE BEAUTIFUL MOTHERS,
GRANDMOTHERS, SURROGATE MOMS,
GOD MOTHERS, AUNTIES, PLAY
COUSINS, A VERY HAPPY MOTHER'S
DAY!
AND I'M NOT FORGETTING THE DADS
OUT THERE.
OUR DADS, OUR GRAND DADS, OUR
GODFATHERS, OUR UNCLES, PLAY
UNCLES, OUR PLAY COUSINS,
BECAUSE YOU KNOW WE HAVE THOSE
TWO, IT TAKES A VILLAGE.
THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS.
SO FOR A HOST OF REASONS I'M VERY
HAPPY TO BE WITH YOU.
I WISH THERE HAD BEEN A BLACK OR
LATINO GRADUATION WHEN I
ATTENDED BINGHAMTON.
AS AN AFRO LATINO I WOULD HAVE
GONE TO BOTH.
TO THIS DAY, WHILE WE HAVE

AFFINITY GROUPS, MY ALMA MATER
DOESN'T YET HAVE CELEBRATIONS
THAT GIVE GRADUATES THE SPACE TO
HONOR THEIR COMMUNITIES AND
COMMEMORATE THEIR UNIQUE AND
ALL TOO OFTEN UNIQUELY
CHALLENGING JOURNEYS AS THEY
ADVANCE FROM INCOMING FRESHMEN
TO ALUMNI.

THE FOUNDERS OF ITANWA ORINWA,
OUR STORY, OUR SONG, CREATED
SOMETHING TRULY SPECIAL HERE IN
2002.

TRULY SPECIAL THAT DOESN'T
EXIST EVERYWHERE.

AND YOUR CLASS HAS COLLECTIVELY
CREATED SOMETHING SPECIAL IN
REACHING THIS MILESTONE.

I WAS TOLD THE THEME FOR THIS
YEAR'S CELEBRATION IS BLACK
RENAISSANCE, BOY, DID I LIKE
THAT.

WHERE ARE MY FELLOW BEYONCE
FANS, DO WE HAVE ANY?

UH-HUH.

ANY OF YOU GOING TO THE CONCERT?

BECAUSE SHE TOLD -- SHE TOLD
Y'ALL TO QUIT YOUR JOBS AND THE
TICKETS ARE REAL EXPENSIVE.
MY 16-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER THINKS
SHE AND HER FRIEND ARE GOING AND
GETTING GOOD SEATS.
BUT I HAVE NOT BROKEN THE NEWS
TO HER YET.
BUT JUST AS BEYONCE DREW ON THE
RICH LEGACIES OF DISCO AND DANCE
HALL TO THEN REALLY CREATE
SOMETHING IN MY VIEW UNIQUE,
NEW, HOLDING HER OWN, THIS
CLASS, THE CLASS OF 2023, DID
THE SAME HERE AT SYRACUSE.
ENTERING A UNIVERSITY, RESHAPED
BY COVID, YOU TAPPED INTO
COMMUNITY, YOU SHOWED UP FOR
YOURSELF, YOU SHOWED UP FOR
OTHERS, AND WHEN MANY WOULD HAVE
BACKED DOWN, YOU STOOD UP.
AND NOW YOU'RE NOT JUST KEEPING
YOUR SHARED STORY ALIVE, YOU'RE
SINGING IT AS ONLY YOU CAN.
SO THAT EVERYONE WHO FOLLOWS IN
YOUR FOOTSTEPS WILL HAVE NOT

ONLY THE PERMISSION, BUT THE
MODEL TO DO THE SAME.

THAT CERTAINLY SOUNDS LIKE A
BLACK RENAISSANCE TO ME.

SO PLEASE GIVE YOURSELVES A
ROUND OF APPLAUSE.

NOW, CREATING SPACES WHERE WE
CAN THRIVE AND BOTH BE SEEN
FULLY AND JUST BE IS SOMETHING
OUR PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS HAD TO
DO.

THE SAD IRONY IS THAT THE VERY
FOLKS WHO EXCLUDE US, WHO TRY TO
MARGINALIZED -- [INDISCERNIBL
E] -- OURS.

RIGHT?

I MEAN, WE HAD TO BUILD IT.
JUST LAST WEEK I WAS READING
INSIDE HIGHER ED, THERE WAS A
PIECE PUBLISHED TITLED
CONSERVATIVES RAIL AGAINST
SEGREGATED GRADUATIONS.

OUTLETS FROM FOX NEWS TO THE
DAILY MAIL ARE TARGETING THESE
CELEBRATIONS AS PART OF THEIR
BROADER ATTACK ON CLAIMING TO

CREATE A MORE INCLUSIVE
SOCIETY.

THEY SAY THAT CEREMONIES LIKE
THIS BEAUTIFUL GATHERING,
QUOTE, CONSTRUCT ARTIFICIAL
BINARIES TO DIVIDE STUDENTS
INTO US AND THEM.

BUT WE KNOW BETTER, DON'T WE?
I KNOW BETTER.

WE KNOW THAT FAR FROM DIVIDING
STUDENTS, CELEBRATIONS LIKE
THIS HELP STUDENTS TO HOLD FIRM
TO THEIR SENSE OF SELF, WHILE
ALSO RECLAIMING YOUR HERITAGE
AND TRADITIONS SO THAT THEY
BECOME A LEGACY, AN INHERITANCE
THAT BOLSTERS YOU LONG AFTER YOU
WALK ACROSS THAT STAGE ON
SUNDAY.

IT WILL FOLLOW YOU.

IT WILL.

NOW, SHEA TALKED ABOUT MY BOOKS
THAT I WRITE AND INTENTIONALLY
CHOSE TO EXPLORE HOW IMPORTANT
HAVING THESE SPECIAL COMMUNAL
SPACES CONTINUES TO BE FOR BLACK

AMERICANS IN MY NOVEL, SUMMER ON
THE BLUFFS, WHICH IS SET ON
MARTHA'S VINEYARD, SUMMER ON
SAG HARBOR, WHICH JUST CAME OUT
MAY 2ND, MY THIRD BOOK WILL TAKE
PLACE IN HIGH LAND BEACH,
MARYLAND, WHERE FREDERICK
DOUGLASS WHAT HAD SUMMER HOME IN
THE LATE 1800S.

WE HAVE CARVED OUT THESE SPACES
FOR OURSELVES SINCE THE LATE
1800S.

NOW, WHAT MANY PEOPLE DON'T KNOW
IS THAT THEY EVEN EXISTED.

AND INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, WHEN
I PITCHED MY IDEA TO THESE
PUBLISHING HOUSES, TWO OF THEM
TOLD ME THAT THERE WAS NO MARKET
FOR THOSE BOOKS.

THEY ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER
BLACK WOMEN READ.

SUMMER BEACH READS IN
PARTICULAR.

I'M PROUD TO SAY THE SUMMER ON
THE BLUFFS SOLD OVER 20,000
BOOKS IN A WEEK.

I'M PROUD TO SAY SUMMER ON SAG
HARBOR JUST SOLD 11,000 BOOKS IN
LESS THAN A WEEK AND IS ALSO NOW
ON THE NEW YORK TIMES BEST
SELLER LIST.

BECAUSE WE -- SELLER LIST.

BECAUSE WE NEED THESE SPACES.

THESE SPACES ARE KNOWN NOW AS
HISTORICALLY BLACK BEACHFRONT
COMMUNITIES.

THERE'S A NAME FOR THEM.

HBBCS.

IT'S A FEDERAL DESIGNATION.

ISN'T THAT GREAT?

THESE COMMUNITIES DIDN'T BEGIN
THAT WAY.

LAWYERS, DOCTORS, NURSES,
TEACHERS, ENGINEERS, CIVIL
SERVANTS, NONE OF WHOM COULD GET
LOANS FROM WHITE-RUN BANKS,
JOINED FORCES TO UNDERWRITE
MORTGAGES THAT ALLOWED THEM TO
PAY FOR THEIR HOMES SLOWLY, SOME
BEGINNING WITH JUST \$100 DOWN
PAYMENT.

INSTEAD OF SENDING THEIR

CHILDREN TO SUMMER CAMP, WE WERE
EXCLUDED FROM THOSE TOO, BY THE
WAY, PARENTS INVESTED IN
PROPERTY, LITTLE BY LITTLE,
YEAR BY YEAR.

THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE
DOING MY RESEARCH I FOUND
REPORTED IN THE 1950S AND '60S,
SOME OF SAG HARBOR'S FIRST BLACK
HOMEOWNERS BOUGHT KITS FOR
GABLED ROOF AND WRAP AROUND
PORCHES FROM SERIES CATALOGS
AND THEN ASSEMBLED THEM WITH
HELP FROM FRIENDS.

I SEE SOME OF YOU ALL LOOKING AT
ME LIKE WHAT IS SERIES ROEBUCK.
ASK YOUR PARENTS ABOUT THE SEARS
CATALOG AT THE RECEPTION.

I KNOW THERE'S SOMEONE HERE
WHOSE MOM GOT HER DRESS FROM THE
SEARS CATALOG OR A SUIT FROM
THERE.

AND IF YOUR FAMILY WAS POOR LIKE
MINUTE, YOUR MOTHER MADE YOUR
CLOTHES FROM THE MCCALL'S
PATTERNS.

BUT THESE COMMUNITIES WERE
BUILT AND NURTURED OVER DECADES
SO THAT THE RESIDENTS COULD HAVE
A SANCTUARY FROM THE RACISM AND
OPPRESSION THEY HAD TO FIGHT
EVERYWHERE ELSE AND.

TODAY THEY ARE INCREASINGLY
UNDER THREAT, I'M SAD TO REPORT.
BANKS THAT WOULDN'T LOAN TO
BLACK FAMILIES THEN ARE NOW
POURING MONEY INTO DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS THAT WILL RAZE
HISTORIC HOMES IN THESE
COMMUNITIES TO MAKE WAY FOR
LARGER, MODERN HOUSES THAT WILL
ALMOST CERTAINLY BE BOUGHT BY
WHITE FAMILIES.

AND WHILE THEY MIGHT SEEM
DIFFERENT, THE FIGHTS, BLACK
FAMILIES MUST WAGE TO HOLD ONTO
LAND THE FIGHTS BLACK AND BROWN
STUDENTS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
INSTITUTIONS MUST WAGE TO HOLD
ONTO THE SACRED SPACES YOU HAVE
CREATED HERE, THEY'RE ACTUALLY
CONNECTED IN MY VIEW.

BECAUSE BOTH ARE SAD REMINDERS
THAT OUR SOCIETY CONTINUES TO BE
TRACKED IN CYCLES OF PROGRESS
AND PUNISHMENT, BREAKTHROUGH
AND BACKLASH OR AS I LIKE TO SAY,
BLACK LASH, SINCE WE HAD A BLACK
PRESIDENT, A MAN ABOVE REPROACH
OF EXCELLENCE AND THEN WE GOT
THE ORANGE MAN.

SO THE -- THE -- HE WHO SHALL
NOT BE MENTIONED.

AND THE FUNNY THING IS THAT IT
SEEMS THAT THERE WAS FAR TOO
LITTLE PROGRESS AND
BREAKTHROUGH IN THE LAST CYCLE,
YET WE'RE FACING MASSIVE
PUNISHMENT TODAY.

YOU TURN ON THE NEWS, IF YOU
DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER YOU MIGHT
THINK YOU WERE LISTENING TO A
BROADCAST FROM 50 YEARS AGO.

FIGHTS OVER WHICH PEOPLE GET TO
BE CITIZENS AND WHICH PEOPLE
DON'T DESERVE TO BE CITIZENS.
FIGHTS OVER WOMEN'S BODILY
AUTONOMY AND ECONOMIC FREEDOM.

FIGHTS OVER WHETHER OUR CHILDREN CAN GO TO SCHOOL, READ WHAT THEY WANT TO READ, OR TO THE MALL OR PLAY HIDE AND SEEK WITH THEIR FRIEND OR KNOCK ON A NEIGHBOR'S DOOR WITHOUT BEING SHOT.

FIGHTS OVER WHETHER A PERSON IN CRISIS CAN ASK FOR HELP ON A NEW YORK CITY SUBWAY TRAIN AND NOT GET CHOKED TO DEATH.

FIGHTS OVER WHETHER WE'RE GOING TO BE A NATION THAT EMBRACES AND CELEBRATES EVERYONE'S HUMANITY OR A NATION THAT CONTINUES TO DEHUMANIZE AND DEGRADE ANYONE WHO ISN'T WHITE MALE CISGENDER AND STRAIGHT.

NOW, THOSE FIGHTS AREN'T ONLY ON THE NEWS, THEY'VE ALSO HIT CLOSE TO HOME, I LEARNED.

I LEARNED JUST DURING YOUR TIME HERE AT SYRACUSE THE CAMPUS HAS BEEN ROCKED BY MULTIPLE HATE CRIMES, TARGETING BLACK, QUEER, JEWISH, AND ASIAN STUDENTS.

AND THAT SADDENS ME.
SO YOU KNOW BETTER THAN MOST
THAT THESE FIGHTS ARE ALL
CONNECTED.
BUT SU I CAN TELL YOU SOMETHING
ELSE, SO ARE THE ANSWERS.
THAT'S BECAUSE THE ANSWERS
BEGIN WITH YOU.
THEY BEGIN WITH YOU DOING OUT IN
THE WORLD WHAT YOU DID HERE.
CREATING A RENAISSANCE,
CULTIVATING A REVIVAL.
IT'S CONSTRUCTING A REBIRTH.
I BELIEVE THAT YOUR GENERATION,
EVEN THOUGH MY CHILDREN SCARE
ME, IS GOING TO TAKE US INTO A
FUTURE WHERE THE OLD
DEFINITIONS AND BATTLES FADE
AWAY.
I BELIEVE THAT TRULY IN MY SOUL.
A FUTURE WHERE LOVE SPEAKS MORE
LOUDLY THAN HATE.
AND WHERE EMPATHY AND
GENEROSITY HOLD SWAY, NOT
BIGOTRY AND BIAS.
I SEE IT IN ABOUT MY CHILDREN AND

HOW THEY APPROACH ALL THE FIGHTS
AND CONTROVERSIES THAT IDENTIFY
OUTLINED, BECAUSE FOR ME,
SOMETIMES I WANT TO MEET ENERGY
WITH ENTERING.

IF YOU GO LOW I WANT TO BECOME
SMALL LIKE AN ANT AND GO TO THE
EARTH'S CRUST.

MY CHILDREN, THEY DON'T DO THAT.
I THINK THAT YOUR IMAGINATION,
WHICH HAS BEEN SUPER CHARGED BY
YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH
TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA OF EVERY
KIND IS MATCHED BY YOUR COURAGE
AND YOUR COMPASSION.

AND THAT COMBINATION IS GOING TO
ROCK THIS EARTH'S VERY
FOUNDATION, I BELIEVE THAT TO BE
TRUE.

SO BEFORE I LET YOU GO, I WANT
TO SHARE THREE PIECES OF
MOTHERLY ADVICE THAT I HOPE CAN
BE GUIDEPOSTS, LAMPS, IF YOU
WILL, ON YOUR JOURNEY.

THE FIRST IS THAT I HOPE YOU WILL
STRIVE TO BE FULLY PRESENT IN

EVERYTHING YOU DO AND NOT ALWAYS
BE IN THE PHONE.

NOT ALWAYS IN THE PHONE, OKAY?
PLEASE.

PLEASE.

MY KIDS CAN'T BE ON THEIR PHONE
BECAUSE I CUT THEIR SCREEN TIME,
THAT'S WHY THEY DON'T LIKE ME
SOMETIMES.

THE SECOND IS THAT I WANT YOU TO
MAXIMIZE YOUR POWER WHEN YOU ARE
IN THE ROOM.

AND THE THIRD IS THAT EACH OF YOU
MUST DECIDE WHO YOU WILL NOT BE.
BE TOTALLY PRESENT, MAXIMIZE
YOUR POWER, DECIDE WHO YOU WILL
NOT BE.

NOW, THERE IS A VIDEO ON SOCIAL
MEDIA THAT YOU MAY HAVE SEEN
RECENTLY, I'VE WATCHED IT
SEVERAL TIMES, BECAUSE IT
STRUCK ME SO.

IN IT DR. MAYA ANGELOU IS
PEEKING WITH THE WRITER MAY HAVE
ADVICE NICHOLSON, HAVE ANY OF
YOU SEEN THIS?

THEN I'LL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU, THE
CLIP IS ABOUT A MINUTE AND A HALF
LONG AND AT THE START NICHOLSON
TELLS DR. ANGELOU THAT SHE
SEEMS TO BE FEARLESS, AND SHE
SAYS IT AGAIN, YOU SEEM TO BE
FEARLESS, AND DR. ANGELOU SAYS
SOMETHING PROFOUND.

SHE SAYS, I'M AFRAID ALL THE
TIME, BUT I'M NOT AFRAID OF
ANYTHING.

I'M AFRAID ALL THE TIME, BUT I'M
NOT AFRAID OF ANYTHING.

SHE SAYS SHE'S NOT AFRAID OF
LIFE AND THEREFORE SHE'S NOT
AFRAID OF DEATH.

ONCE SHE ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT
SHE WOULD DIE, THAT REALIZATION
LIBERATED HER TO ALWAYS BE
PRESENT IN THE NOW.

TO GIVE HERSELF FULLY TO ANY
CAUSE OR ANY ENDEAVOR.

I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME
DR. ANGELOU'S HELPED ME GET
THROUGH ONE OF THE TOUGHEST
TIMES MANY MY CAREER, REPORTING

ON THE MURDER OF TRAYVON
MARTIN -- [INDISCERNIBLE] --
PRETENDING TO SOUND LIKE
SOLODAD O'BRIEN, I BLEW OUT MY
HAIR TO LOOK LIKE HER, I SPOKE
LIKE SOLODAD O'BRIEN, BECAUSE I
FELT THAT THAT WAS WHAT WAS
ACCEPTABLE.

NOW, I WAS HONORED TO BE THE
FIRST NATIONAL REPORTER TO
COVER AND STAY ON THAT STORY.
BECAUSE BEN KRUMP IS MY FRIEND
AND HE CALLED ME WITH IT AND HE
GAVE IT TO ME AND HE TRUSTED ME
WITH IT, I WAS ALSO HONORED TO
BE INVITED TO SU.

IT SHOULD BE SAID I BELIEVE HAS
THE BEST JOURNALISM SCHOOL IN
THE COUNTRY, TO SPEAK ABOUT THE
RESPONSIBILITY WE HAVE AS
JOURNALISTS DURING TIMES OF
NATIONAL CRISIS.

I WAS JOINED BY TWO MOTHERS OF
THE MOVEMENT, MY NOW FRIEND
TRAYVON'S MOTHER AND MICHAEL
BROWN'S MOTHER AS WELL OF COURSE

AS BEN KRUMP AND MY THEN CNN
COLLEAGUE.

AND AS I TOLD THE AUDIENCE THAT
NIGHT IN GOLDSTEIN AUDITORIUM,
I HAD TO FIGHT WITH MY PRODUCERS
JUST TO GET CLEARANCE TO TRAVEL
TO SANFORD, FLORIDA, FOR THE
TRIAL.

THE SAD FACT IS CNN WASN'T
MAKING A JOURNALISM CALL, THEY
WERE MAKING A BUSINESS
DECISION.

I WAS TOLD THAT REPORTING A
BLACK BOY'S MURDER BY A
VIGILANTE WOULD NOT GET THEM
RATINGS BECAUSE IT WAS A LOCAL
STORY THAT HAPPENED ALL THE
TIME.

THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD.

IT'S HEARTBREAKING ACTUALLY TO
EVEN SAY IT OUT LOUD.

BUT THAT'S WHAT I WAS TOLD.

EVEN AFTER I WAS ABLE TO
CONVINCE THEM TO SEND ME TO
FLORIDA WITH ANDERSON COOPER
PAYING FOR IT, THEY EVENTUALLY

PULLED MY CLEARANCE, TELLING ME
THAT I HAD GOTTEN TOO CLOSE TO
THE FAMILY.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER IS, THAT
IT HAD BECOME A NATIONAL STORY
AND THEY WANTED BIGGER NAMES ON
IT.

AND IT'S INTERESTING HOW THAT
STANDARD OF FALSE OBJECTIVITY
IS ONLY EVER APPLIED TO
REPORTERS OF COLOR, ISN'T IT?
I'M CATHOLIC, YET I'VE NEVER
BEEN PULLED FROM A CATHOLIC
CHURCH SCANDAL BECAUSE I'M TOO
CLOSE TO IT.

EVER.

REPORTERS ARE SUPPOSED TO GET
CLOSE BECAUSE WE NEED ACCESS.
AND IN MY VIEW, AS A MOTHER OF
A BLACK SON, AND A LAWYER, AND
A FORMER PROSECUTOR, THOSE ARE
MY SUPER POWERS.

NO ONE ELSE CAN GIVE THE VIEWERS
THAT PERSPECTIVE.

SO WHAT DID I DO?

WHEN THEY PULLED ME?

LIKE YOU, CLASS OF 2023, I
BECAME CREATIVE.

I STAYED IN FLORIDA ON MY OWN
DIME.

I TOOK OUT A LOAN.

BECAUSE BET COULDN'T FOOT THE
BILL FOR THEIR REPORTERS TO STAY
ON THE GROUND, I BORROWED THEIR
PRESS PASS, SO I COULD REPORT
FROM THE COURTROOM.

AND WHEN BET COULDN'T GIVE ME A
PASS, I BORE REED TELEMUNDO'S
PASS, THE AFRO-LATINA THING
WORKED OUT FOR ME.

I CALLED HOME EVERY EVENING, AND
AFTER I TOLD THEM GOODNIGHT, I
WOULD WORK INTO THE EARLY HOURS
FIGHTING BACK TEARS AND
RESOLVING TO NOT BACK DOWN UNTIL
MY JOB WAS DONE.

EVEN IF IT MEANT PUTTING MY
FUTURE AT RISK AT CNN, I TOLD THE
STORY WITH THE CARE,
INTELLIGENCE, AND INSIGHT THAT
IT DESERVED.

THAT ALL OF OUR STORIES DESERVE.

MY FATHER THOUGH WHO IS FROM
GEORGIA CALLED AND SAID, BABY
GIRL, YOU'RE DOING THAT JOB BUT
YOU'RE GOING TO LOSE YOUR JOB.
I DID NOT LOSE MY JOB.

I WAS AFRAID ALL THE TIME, BUT
I WASN'T AFRAID OF ANYTHING.

AND I GOT AN REMY FOR SOME OF
THAT -- EMMY FOR SOME OF THAT
REPORTING.

NOW, THINK THAT LIVING FULLY IN
THE PRESENT LIKE DR. ANGELOU
ENCOURAGES IS THE ONLY WAY TO
CREATE THE FUTURE I ALLUDED TO
EARLIER, THE ONE I KNOW YOU'RE
GOING TO FORGE, CLASS OF 2023.
THE PAST IS SHUT TO US,
UNFORTUNATELY WE HAVE NO POWER
TO CHANGE OR REWRITE IT, AND THE
TRAGIC FACT REALLY IS THAT OUR
HISTORY IS BEING ERASED.

WE ARE EXPERIENCING WHAT I AM
DESIGNATING A PAPER GENOCIDE.
THEY CALL IT ANTIWOKE AND
ANTICRITICAL RACE THEORY, BUT
REALLY IT IS A CONCERTED EFFORT

TO ERASE OUR HISTORY AND OUR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

BECAUSE AS OUR ANCESTORS KNOW,
WE BUILT THIS JOINT FOR FREE, WE
BUILT THIS COUNTRY ON OUR BACKS
FOR FREE.

AND WE HAVE TO CONFRONT THAT.
WE ALSO NEED TO ACCEPT THAT THE
FUTURE IS BEYOND OUR CONTROL,
DESPITE WHAT YOU THINK IT WILL
ARRIVE ON ITS OWN TIME IN ITS OWN
WAY DOING ITS OWN THING, OUR
TASK IS TO DEVOTE OURSELVES
FULLY IN HERE AND NOW.

WE HAVE ONE PRECIOUS LIFE AND
DR. ANGELOU'S WORDS ARE A
REMINDER TO NOT MISS A SECOND OF
IT.

NOW, THIS -- THIS I THINK IS
REALLY IMPORTANT, MAXIMIZING
YOUR POWER IN THE ROOM.

BEING FULLY PRESENT WILL
TRANSFORM HOW YOU MOVE IN ROOMS.
IT WILL TRANSFORM HOW YOU MOVE
IN THE WORLD.

IT WILL ALSO DETERMINE HOW YOU

MOVE WITHIN SPACES OF POWER,
SPACES THAT YOU WILL FIND
YOURSELF IN SHORTLY.

HOW MANY OF YOU BELIEVE IT'S
IMPORTANT TO BE IN THE ROOM
WHERE IT HAPPENS?

NOT ENOUGH.

THIS GATHERING THOUGH IS PROOF
OF HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR US TO
CREATE OUR OWN SPACES.

I WILL TELL YOU MY FRIEND CARLA
HARRIS, I DON'T KNOW IF MANY OF
YOU KNOW HER, SHE WAS APPOINTED
BY PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA TO
CHAIR THE NATIONAL WOMEN'S
BUSINESS COUNCIL, TOLD ME
SOMETHING ONE DAY YEARS AGO AS
I STARTED MY CAREER, THAT
STOPPED ME IN MY TRACKS.

CARLA SAID THIS: SUNNY, EVERY
SINGLE DECISION MADE ABOUT YOUR
CAREER IS MADE WHEN YOU ARE NOT
IN THE ROOM.

YOU THINK YOU CAN WALK INTO A
ROOM AND SMILE AND MAKE IT
HAPPEN FOR YOURSELF.

BUT EVERY SINGLE DECISION IS
MADE WHEN YOU'RE NOT EVEN THERE.
I WAS LIKE, CARLA DON'T REALLY
KNOW WHAT SHE'S TALKING ABOUT.
BUT SHE'S RIGHT.

EVEN THE DECISION FOR YOU TO BE
ADMITTED TO SYRACUSE WAS MADE BY
ADMISSIONS COUNSELORS POURING
OVER APPLICATIONS AND THEY
SOMEHOW SAW THE POTENTIAL IN
YOURS.

BUT YOU WERE NOT IN THE ROOM.
SO WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

IT MEANS YOU NEED A CHAMPION IN
THE ROOM.

IT MEANS THAT WE NEED CHAMPIONS
IN THE ROOMS, THE ROOMS OF
GOVERNMENT, OF BUSINESS, OF
ACADEMIA, WHERE DECISIONS ARE
BEING MADE THAT AFFECT US AND
OUR PEOPLE AND OUR COMMUNITIES.
NOW, BECAUSE OF THIS COUNTRY'S
LONG HISTORY OF DISCRIMINATION,
THAT CHAMPION IN MANY OF THESE
ROOMS OFTEN DO NOT LOOK LIKE US.
WE'RE SO LUCKY IF THE PERSON

DOES, AND SHARES OUR LIVED
EXPERIENCES.

LET'S SAY THE PERSON DOES LOOK
LIKE YOU.

HE OR SHE NEEDS TO HAVE
POLITICAL POWER TO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE IN YOUR CAREER AND IN
YOUR LIFE.

BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY MUST
ALSO CHOOSE TO SPEND THAT
POLITICAL POWER ON YOU.

AND TOO OFTEN IN MY EXPERIENCE
WE THINK THERE ISN'T SPACE FOR
ANOTHER PERSON WHO LOOKS LIKE US
TO BE IN THAT ROOM.

WE THINK THERE'S ONLY PLACE IN
OUR SPACE FOR ONE.

SYRACUSE, I ASSURE YOU, THERE IS
ROOM FOR ALL OF US.

THERE IS ROOM.

NOT ONLY IS THERE ROOM FOR MORE
OF US WHEN WE BRING OUR PEOPLE
INTO THE ROOM IT'S STRENGTHENS
OUR POLITICAL CAPITAL.

IT HAS A MULTIPLIER EFFECT,
ALLOWING US TO BE ABLE TO BRING

MORE AND MORE OF OUR PEOPLE
INSIDE.

DO YOU KNOW WHY I KNOW THIS?
BECAUSE I WASN'T IN A ROOM WHEN
A DISCUSSION WAS BEING HAD ABOUT
MY UPCOMING CONTRACT AT ABC.
AND THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF
TALENT SAID AND WAS CAUGHT ON
TAPE SAYING, WELL, SUNNY IS FROM
THE BRONX PROJECTS, SHE'S LOW
RENT.

WE DON'T HAVE TO PAY HER WHAT WE
HAVE TO PAY THE OTHERS.

FOR FIVE YEARS I WAS THE
LOWEST-PAID ANCHOR AND HOST ON
THE VIEW, BECAUSE SHE THOUGHT I
WASN'T IN THE ROOM, BUT I HAD A
CHAMPION IN THE ROOM WITH A
VOICE RECORDER.

AND NOW I'M NOT ONLY IN THE ROOM,
I ALSO LEAD THE ROOM WITH MY
PRODUCTION COMPANY SUNNY HOSTIN
PRODUCTIONS, WHICH IS A
DISNEY-BACKED COMPANY BECAUSE I
ASKED FOR REPARATIONS.

AND I WILL TELL YOU, A LOT OF OUR

PEOPLE IN THE ROOM WITH ME NOW.
AND WE ARE SO STRONG TOGETHER.
I REALIZED FROM THAT REALLY HARD
TIME IN MY LIFE IT WAS PROBABLY
ONE OF THE FIRST TIMES I RECALL
CRYING AS AN ADULT, ALONE WE
SURVIVE, WE KNOW THAT, BUT
TOGETHER WE THRIVE.

WE ARE STRONG AS A FAMILY WE
THRIVE.

NOW, THE PROPER VERB THAT GOD
HAS FOR ME IT IS FOR ME IS ONE
OF MY FAVORITES.

WHAT GOD HAS FOR ME, IT IS FOR
ME.

AND IT'S A MESSAGE THAT'S
MINISTERED TO ME THROUGH SOME OF
MY MOST CHALLENGING DAYS.

WHAT GOD HAS FOR ME IT IS FOR ME.
SOMETIMES WHEN WE HAVE TO WORK
HARDER THAN EVERYONE ELSE FOR
EACH ADVANCE AND INCREASE WE
FEEL PRESSURE TO HOLD ON
ESPECIALLY TIGHT, BUT I WANT YOU
TO FEEL -- I DON'T WANT YOU TO
FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TO HOLD ON SO

TIGHTLY.

NO ONE CAN BLOCK WHAT GOD HAS
ORDAINED, NO ONE CAN TAKE WHAT
GOD HAS GIVEN YOU.

AND LET ME SAY IT EVEN MORE
PLAINLY: MANY OF YOU SILTING
HERE IN THIS AUDIENCE HAVE
DREAMS.

THEY SEEM SOME WHAT
UNATTAINABLE.

YOU TELL THEM TO MAYBE YOUR
FAMILY AND YOUR FRIENDS AND THEY
SAY THINGS LIKE, OH, THAT'S
INTERESTING.

THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR
DREAM.

SOME OF THEM WILL EVEN TRY
COMPETE WITH YOU FOR YOUR DREAM.
SOME OF THEM WILL NOT SUPPORT
YOUR DREAM.

THEY WILL TRY TO DISSUADE YOU
FROM YOUR DREAMS.

THEY MAY EVEN TRY TO TAKE THEM
FROM YOU.

BUT DO NOT BE AFRAID.

THE DREAM WAS NOT MEANT FOR

THEM, IT WAS MEANT FOR YOU.
WHAT GOD HAS FOR YOU IT IS FOR
YOU.

NOW, WHEN YOU GET INTO THESE
ROOMS OF INFLUENCE AND IMPACT
AND YOU WILL BECAUSE THIS IS
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY AFTER ALL,
THE WAY TO MAXIMIZE YOUR POWER
IS BY BRINGING MORE AND MORE
PEOPLE INTO THESE SPACES BEHIND
YOU.

SO THE WAY TO RESPOND TO A
HISTORY OF EXCLUSION IS NOT TO
BECOME A GATEKEEPER.

PLEASE DON'T BECOME A
GATEKEEPER.

THE WAY TO RESPOND IS BY BEING
EACH OTHER'S CHAMPION, BEING
EACH OTHER'S CONNECTION, BEING
EACH OTHER'S BOND, SO MANY
PEOPLE HAVE MADE A SPACE FOR YOU
TO BE IN THIS INCREDIBLE ROOM
WHERE IT HAPPENS.

SO WHEN YOU LEAVE SYRACUSE TO I
DIDN'T YOUR NEXT CHAPTER I
IMPLORE YOU AND HOPE THAT YOU

WILL COMMIT TO NOT JUST PUSHING
THAT DOOR OPEN, BUT HOLDING IT
OPEN, EVEN IF IT'S WITH YOUR
FOOT, BOTH IN THE ROOM AND MAKE
OTHERS -- MAKE ROOM FOR OTHERS
TO FOLLOW YOU.

AND FINALLY, WE'VE TALKED ABOUT
THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFTING AS WE
CLIMB, WE TALKED ABOUT THE POWER
OF BEING TOTALLY PRESENT.

I JUST WANT TO SAY A BRIEF FEW
WORDS ABOUT ONE OF THE MOST
IMPORTANT DECISIONS ANY OF US
WILL MAKE BECAUSE IT IS HOT IN
HERE, MY HAIR IS GETTING BIGGER
AND BIGGER.

NOW, HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE HEARD
THIS SAYING, THE TWO MOST
IMPORTANT DAYS IN YOUR LIFE ARE
THE DAY YOU WERE BORN AND THE DAY
YOU FIND OUT WHY?

RIGHT?

MARK TWAIN.

SO THEY SAY.

AND IN AMERICA WHEN A DEAD POET
SAYS SOMETHING, IT MUST BE TRUE,

RIGHT?

-- IMPORTANT AS THOSE OTHER TWO
DAYS.

IT OFTEN COMES BETWEEN YOUR
FIRST DAY, THE DAY YOU WERE
BORN, WHICH, BY THE WAY, IS
BEYOND YOUR CONTROL, YOU SHOULD
NEVER BE WEDDED TO THE
CIRCUMSTANCES OF YOUR BIRTH.

IF THAT WERE TRUE FOR ME, I WOULD
STILL BE IN THE BRONX PROJECTS
AA STATISTIC EVEN PRINCE HARRY
TAUGHT US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT
CIRCUMSTANCES OF YOUR BIRTH.
YOU ARE NOT STUCK AND WEDDED TO
THAT.

NOW, I THINK THIS NEXT DAY IS
BETWEEN THE FIRST DAY WHEN
YOU'RE BORN AND THE DAY YOU
DISCOVER YOUR PURPOSE.

THAT'S THE DAY WHEN YOU DECIDE
WHO YOU WILL NOT BE.

I HAD THAT DAY VERY EARLY IN MY
LIFE.

I FOUND OUT WHO I WOULD NOT BE
ON A LIFE-CHANGING AFTERNOON

WHEN I WAS 7 YEARS OLD.

I WAS WITH MY FAVORITE UNCLE,
UNCLE ED, WHO WAS GORGEOUS AND
A LITTLE BIT OF A LETHARIO, AND
ON THIS PARTICULAR AFTERNOON
WHEN UNCLE ED WAS SUPPOSED TO BE
WATCHING ME HE WAS ALSO
ENTERTAINING A VERY BEAUTIFUL
GIRLFRIEND.

DIDN'T SOUND SO BAD AT THE TIME,
SHE WAS VERY NICE TO ME, SHE
BOUGHT ME STARBURST FROM WHAT I
REMEMBER AND NOW OR LATER, BUT
UNCLE ED'S GIRLFRIEND HAD A
HUSBAND.

AND HER HUSBAND BELIEVED IN
USING A KNIFE TO GET HIS POINT
ACROSS.

AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE DAY
THAT WE WERE ALL SITTING IN THE
APARTMENT AND HER HUSBAND BURST
INTO THAT APARTMENT AND STABBED
MY UNCLE 20 TIMES.

EVERYBODY WAS SHOUTING AND
SCREAMING.

HE RAN INTO THE BATHROOM, I RAN

INTO THE BATHROOM AFTER HIM, I
CLOSED THE DOOR, THERE WAS BLOOD
EVERYWHERE, THANK GOD MY MOTHER
CAME IN, MY GRANDMOTHER CAME IN,
AND RUSHED HIM TO THE HOSPITAL
AND HE BARELY SURVIVED.

NOW, I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO BUT
I CAN TELL YOU THAT I STILL
REMEMBER TO THIS DAY WHAT I WAS
THINKING.

I WAS THINKING, THIS WON'T BE MY
LIFE.

MY LIFE WILL NOT BE ONE COLORED
BY CHAOS AND VIOLENCE.

AND SO TO THIS DAY MY FRIENDS
ALWAYS SAY HOW COME WHEN IT'S SO
CHAOTIC YOU QUIET DOWN?

I'M ACTUALLY THE PERSON THAT
EVERYONE COMES TO WHEN THERE'S
CHAOS.

YOU'VE SEEN IT.

IT'S PROPELLED ME THROUGHOUT MY
YOUNG LIFE, WHATEVER IT TOOK,
WHATEVER SACRIFICES I HAD TO
MAKE, I WAS NOT GOING TO LET
BEING BORN IN THE SOUTH BRONX

PROJECTS A COMMUNITY SHAPED IN
THE 1970S BY VIOLENCE, DRUGS,
ADDICTION, POVERTY TO DEFINE MY
STORY.

SO WHEN YOU ARE WATCHING THE
VIEW AND SEEING FOLKS ACTING
IGNORANT AND POINTING THEIR
VITRIOL TOWARDS ME, AND MAYBE
YOU'RE YELLING AT THE SCREEN AND
SAYING SUNNY, SAY SOMETHING, I
AM NOT RESPONDING TO THAT ENERGY
BECAUSE I'M BEING CALM, AMID THE
CHAOS.

BECAUSE IT IS BENEATH MY
DIGNITY.

WE ARE QUEENS AND WE ARE KINGS.
REMEMBER THAT TAPPING INTO YOUR
INNER CALM IS A TREMENDOUS
SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND IT
INFURIATES PEOPLE.

AND IT'S ALSO BETTER FOR YOUR
BLOOD PRESSURE.

SO HAVE YOU ALREADY HAD YOUR
MOMENT OF DECIDING WHO YOU WILL
NOT BE?

SOME OF YOU, MAYBE NONE OF YOU.

IF YOU HAVEN'T HAD THAT MOMENT,
PLEASE BE READY FOR IT.

I WAS LUCKY THAT I HAD IT THAT
EARLY, ACTUALLY.

THE MOMENT WHEN YOU WILL HAVE TO
DECIDE TO RISE ABOVE CRISIS, TO
STEP BEYOND HEARTBREAK AND SAY
THINGS LIKE, NO, I WON'T SINK TO
THAT PERSON'S LEVEL.

NO, I WON'T REPAY EVIL WITH
EVIL.

NO, I WON'T GO ALONG WITH WHAT
OFFENDS BOTH MY SENSIBILITIES
AND MY SPIRIT FOR THE SHORT TERM
GAIN.

NO, I WON'T GIVE A ONE-TERM
TWICE IMPEACHED CRIMINALLY
INDICTED SEXUAL ABUSER AND
DEFAMER A PLATFORM ON MY NETWORK
TO MAKE MONEY AND RATINGS.

NO, I WON'T DO THAT.

EVERYWHERE WE LOOK IT SEEMS LIKE
THE PEOPLE WITHOUT A MORAL
CAMPUS ARE SOMEHOW MAKING IT
FURTHER THAN EVERYONE ELSE.

RIGHT?

AND IT DOESN'T SEEM FAIR.
BUT A LIFE WITHOUT A MORAL
CAMPUS IS NOT A LIFE THAT I WANT
FOR ANY OF YOU.
NO MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY YOU
MAKE DOING IT.
SURE, YOU MIGHT FOOL SOME
PEOPLE, YOU MIGHT EVEN SNAG SOME
OF THE TRAPPINGS OF WHAT THE
WORLD THINKS OF AS SUCCESS, I'M
LOOKING YOU, GEORGE SANTOS,
YOU'RE INDICTED NOW TOO, BUT IT
IS A HOLLOW LIFE, IT IS UNWORTHY
LIFE, IT'S NOT THE LIFE OF A TRUE
LEADER -- [INDISCERNIBLE] --
SO FULL BECAUSE IT WAS A ROOM
FULL OF FUTURE LEADERS.
SO YOU PROMISE ME, CLASS OF
2023, THAT YOU WILL NEVER SHORT
CHANGE YOUR COMMUNITY BY
CHEATING YOURSELVES AND
CHEATING US.
YOU'VE ALREADY ACHIEVED SO MUCH
AND YOU HAVE AN ENTIRE WORLD OF
POSSIBILITY LAYING AHEAD.
AND I AM SO VERY PROUD OF YOU.

CREATING A BLACK RENAISSANCE

ISN'T EASY.

BUT YOU'VE ALREADY SHOWN THAT
YOU DON'T DO WITH EASY, YOU DO
WHAT'S NECESSARY, WHAT'S
NEEDED, WHAT'S RIGHT FOR
YOURSELVES AND FOR YOUR
COMMUNITY.

YOU HAVE THE COURAGE, THE
COMPASSION, AND THE VISION
NEEDED TO TRANSFORM THIS WORLD,
SHOUT OUT TO THOSE PEOPLE THAT
ARE ON MAYBE THE FIVE OR
SIX-YEAR PROGRAM, TOOK ME FIVE
YEARS TO GRADUATE BECAUSE I KEPT
ON CHANGING MY MAJOR.

I CAN'T SEE -- WAIT TO SEE WHAT
YOUR UNIQUE TALENTS BRING
FORTH.

SO THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK
YOU, CLASS OF 2023.

CONGRATULATIONS.

AND NOW I EXPECT YOU TO GO ROCK
THIS EARTH'S VERY FOUNDATION.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

LET'S GIVE HER ANOTHER ROUND OF

APPLAUSE, PLEASE.

THANK YOU, MS. HOSTIN,
FOR -- VERY MUCH FOR YOUR
INSIGHTFUL AND INSPIRING WORDS.
YOU MENTIONED BEING A FIRST
COLLEGE GRADUATE IN YOUR
FAMILY.

BEING THE FIRST OF MANY THING IS
I DUTIFUL TASK BUT IT IS NOT
TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

ONE LESSON I LEARNED FROM YOUR
SPEECH TODAY IS THAT BEING GREAT
MIGHT BE UNCOMFORTABLE.

REACHING ANOTHER PHASE IN YOUR
LIFE MIGHT COME AT THE EXPENSE
OF YOUR COMFORT.

TO CHANGE THE OUTCOME, YOU MUST
CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR.

YOU CAN NEVER BE PREPARED FOR
EVERYTHING.

TRY THROUGH DIFFICULT
EXPERIENCES SHAPE YOUR
GREATNESS, BUT YOU YOU ALL HAVE
WHAT IT TAKES TO BE GREAT.

NOW, DON'T LET ANYONE STOP US
FROM SHINING.

I ALSO WANT TO GIVE A HUGE SHOUT
OUT TO THE STAFF AND FACULTY
OVER HERE IN THE FIRST ROWS ON
THIS SIDE.

ALL GIVE THEM A ROUND OF
APPLAUSE, PLEASE.

THIS IS THE MOST FACULTY WE'VE
HAD IN ATTENDANCE SINCE COVID,
SO LIKE THAT'S BIG, YOU KNOW,
FOR SURE.

FOR SURE.

AND NEXT I WANT TO INTRODUCE --
THIS FIRST PERFORMANCE WILL BE
DONE BY A GROUP WHOSE MOTTO IS
TO "GO HARD OR GO HARD!"

IF YOU NOTICE THE STEP TEAM, YOU
KNOW THAT HE HOW THEY GIVE IT UP.
THEY'RE THE ONLY NON-GREEK STEP
TEAM ON CAMPUS SINCE 2005.

TODAY'S PERFORMANCE WILL
INCLUDE

MEMBERS WHO HAVE BEEN ON THE
TEAM FOR ALL FOUR YEARS OF THEIR
TIME HERE AT SU.

TODAY, WE HAVE THE PRESIDENT,
RAQUELL CARPENTER, THE VICE

-- THE VICE
PRESIDENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS,
DAYEL POPE, THE VICE PRESIDENT
OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, JASPER
WADE.

AND LAST BUT MOST CERTAINLY NOT
LEAST, THE SECOND, ASHLEY
JIMENEZ.

THIS IS THEIR LAST PERFORMANCE
AS MEMBERS.

LET'S GIVE IT UP FOR BLACK REIGN
STEP TEAM!

¶

WE DO NEED SOMEBODY TO TAKE THIS
PODIUM DOWN SO THEY CAN PERFORM.
NEVERMIND.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

CAN WE GIVE IT UP FOR BLACK REIGN
AGAIN, PLEASE?

SO WE LITERALLY JUST WITNESSED
THE GREAT

SUNNY HOSTIN AND THE BIG BLACK
REIGN.

REAL QUICK I WANT TO DO A VIBE
CHECK; THE DJ ABOUT TO PLAY A

SONG RIGHT NOW AND I WANT
EVERYBODY TO GET LIT.
GET UP, GET UP, GET UP, GET UP,
COME ON, IT'S BLACK GRAD RIGHT
NOW, COME ON.

¶

TAKE A -- Y'ALL GOT IT, Y'ALL
GOT IT, Y'ALL GOT IT.
NOW WE GOT THE VIBES IN THE ROOM,
I DO WANT TO INTRODUCE THE FIRST
STUDENT SPEAKER.
THE FIRST STUDENT SPEAKER WE
HAVE TONIGHT IS SOMEONE VERY
SPECIAL TO ME.
BEFORE HE COMES UP HERE, I WANT
TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT HIM.
AIDARUUS SHIRWA, MY
BROTHER -- MY BROTHER AND MY
BEST FRIEND,
CONGRATULATIONS ON ALL YOUR
ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MERIT.
YOU INSPIRE A LOT OF PEOPLE TO
BE BETTER THROUGH YOUR POSITIVE
ENERGY AND VIBES.
YOU'VE DONE A LOT TO PAVE THE
WAY FOR OTHER GENERATIONS OF

BLACK KIDS FROM SYRACUSE TO GROW
UP AND BE SUCCESSFUL.

REMEMBRANCE SCHOLAR, PPIA
SCHOLAR, ENGAGED HUMANITIES
MEMBER, AND THE LIST GOES ON.
TO SEE WHAT YOU'VE DONE THUS FAR
AND THE TRAJECTORY YOU'RE GOING
ON, I JUST WANT TO TELL YOU, BRO,
I'M PROUD OF YOU.

LET'S GIVE IT UP FOR AIDARUUS
SHIRWA!

>> AIDARUUS SHIRWA:

I JUST MET HIM IN THE PARKING
LOT, I DON'T KNOW --NAH, BUT FOR
REALLY, REAL, I'M HAPPY TO BE
INTRODUCED BY SUCH A GREAT MAN,
TYSEAN IS MY INSPIRATION, SO
LET'S HEAR IT FOR TYSEAN CANADA!
LET'S GET TO BUSINESS, Y'ALL.
HOW Y'ALL DOING?

DON'T EMBARRASS MY FAMILY'S IN
THE CROWD RIGHT THERE, COME ON,
HOW Y'ALL DOING?

COME ON!

ALL RIGHT, SO AS YOU ALL HEARD,
MY NAME IS AIDARUUS SHIRWA, I'M

GRADUATING WITH A DEGREE IN
STUDIES AND ECONOMICS, A
LEARNED A LOT IN COLLEGE, NONE
OF WHICH WAS ECONOMICS, ON A
MORE SERIES NOTE

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT THING I
LEARNED IN COLLEGE WAS
ACTUALLY FROM A PUBLIC SERVICE
MENTOR OF MINE, AND IT'S
SOMETHING I THAT I HOPE WILL
EMBODY WHAT I WANT TO SPEAK
ABOUT TO YOU ALL ABOUT TODAY.

HE ASKED ME WHAT WAS THE
EARLIEST SIGN OF A
CIVILIZATION.

THINK ABOUT THAT FOR A SECOND.
I SAID TOOLS, WEAPONS, WRITING.
BUT IT WAS A HEALED FEMUR, HE
SAID.

IN CASE YOU DON'T KNOW, A FEMUR
IS THE LARGEST BONE IN THE LEG,
AND A BROKEN FEMUR CANNOT BE
WALKED ON FOR WEEKS ON END.

HE GAVE ME A QUOTE BY
ANTHROPOLOGIST MARGARET MEAD.
SHE SAID "SUCH SIGNS OF HEALING

ARE NEVER FOUND AMONG THE
REMAINS OF THE EARLIEST,
FIERCEST SOCIETIES.
IN THEIR SKELETONS WE FIND CLUES
OF VIOLENCE.
BUT THIS HEALED BONE SHOWS THAT
SOMEONE MUST HAVE CARED FOR THE
INJURED PERSON, HUNTED ON HIS
BEHALF, BROUGHT HIM FOOD,
SERVED
HIM AT PERSONAL SACRIFICE.”
ESSENTIALLY, THIS MEANS SOCIETY
WAS FOUNDED BY SACRIFICE
SOCIETY WAS CREATED BY
COMPASSION, AND SOCIETY WAS
CREATED BY LOVE.
IT IS LOVE THAT BRINGS LIGHT IN
DARKNESS.
IT IS LOVE THAT CREATES
REVOLUTIONS.
AND IT IS BLACK LOVE THAT IS THE
CATALYST FOR OUR FUTURE.
OF OUR PEOPLE.
BLACK LOVE ALWAYS.
THIS ALSO APPLIED US AS PEOPLE.
LOVE LIFTS US AND TRANSFORMS US

INTO SOMETHING BETTER.

HUEY NEWTON, FOUNDER OF THE
BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND ONE OF
THE GREATEST MODERN
REVOLUTIONARIES, SAID,

"WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE IS NOT
GREAT HATE, BUT GREAT LOVE FOR
OTHER PEOPLE."

IT IS THE BLACK COMMUNITY THAT
HAS ONE OF THE LARGEST CAPACITY
OF LOVE.

BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH WE'RE
PUT IN SOCIALLY-ENGINEERED
COMMUNITIES THAT DIVIDE US,
IN WORLD WHERE WE'RE TAUGHT TO
HATE OUR FEATURES AND OUR SKIN,
IN A WORLD WHERE WE'RE TAUGHT
NOT TO BELIEVE IN OUR DREAMS,
WE'RE STILL ABLE TO LOVE ONE
ANOTHER AND OURSELVES AND FIND
PASSIONS AND BUILD CONNECTIONS
THAT MAKE US BETTER PEOPLE.

FOR THE GREATEST EXAMPLE OF
THIS, I WANT TO TALK ABOUT MY
MOTHER.

SEE YOU RIGHT THERE.

SHE CAME TO AMERICA FROM SOMALIA
IN THE CIVIL WAR, NOT KNOWING
ANY ENGLISH, WITH MY FATHER AND
OLDEST SISTER.

SHE WORKED IN FOOD SERVICE AND
JANITORIAL RIGHT DOWN THE
STREET IN BROCKWAY IN SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY.

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER
SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST
CANCER AND BEAT IT.

AND SHE WENT RIGHT BACK TO WORK.
THEN SHE WENT RIGHT BACK TO
WORK.

OFTEN TIMES WORKING LONG HOURS
FOR 6 DAYS A WEEK.

WHEN I TALKED TO HER ABOUT WHY
SHE HAD SUCH COURAGE WHEN FACING
ADVERSITY,

SHE TOLD ME, "WHEN MY FEET HURT
AND I'M TIRED AT 9 PM, I THINK
ABOUT ABDULLAHI,"

THAT'S MY YOUNGEST BROTHER.

IT WAS HER LOVE THAT MADE HER
THE BEACON OF HOPE FOR OUR
FAMILY.

IT WAS HER LOVE THAT I WAS ABLE
TO GET A FULL RIDE INTO SYRACUSE
UNIVERSITY.

HOLD ON, SOMETHING EVEN BETTER.
AND IT WAS HER LOVE THAT WAS
ABLE TO GET FOUR OTHER OF HER
KIDS INTO SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.
ALSO THAT, ALSO THAT.

HOWEVER, IN RETURN IT WAS MY
LOVE THAT BROUGHT ME THROUGH ALL
FOUR YEARS OF COLLEGE.

SO LET'S HEAR IT REAL QUICK FOR
EVERY BLACK MOTHER WHO
SACRIFICED SO MUCH.

LIKE OUR MOTHERS AND ALL OUR
ANCESTORS,
WITH THE CAPACITY TO LOVE
DRIVING US, WE ARE ABLE TO
CREATE NEW REALITIES WITH WORK,
BLOOD, AND TEARS.

BUT WE MUST REALIZE THIS IS NOT
AN EASY TASK TO LOVE.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY TO LOVE.
ESPECIALLY HARD TO LOVE
OURSELVES.

BUT THAT IS WHAT MAKES LOVE

REVOLUTIONARY.
EVEN WHEN IT FEELS HOPELESS AND
WE FEEL STUCK,
IT IS THE PEOPLE BEFORE US
PUSHING AND ALL THE PEOPLE AFTER
PULLING, DRIVING US FORWARD.
AS WE GO INTO A NEW WORLD, I
REALLY WANT YOU TO INTERNALIZE
THE
QUESTION I'M ABOUT TO ASK YOU.
WHAT DO YOU LOVE?
WHAT DO YOU LOVE SO MUCH THAT IT
PUSHES YOU DAY IN AND DAY OUT?
IS IT YOUR FAMILY, YOUR FRIENDS
OR EVEN YOURSELF.
WHATEVER IT MAY BE, USE THAT
LOVE, WHETHER EXTERNAL AND
INTERNAL, USE IT TO CHANGE YOUR
CONDITIONS AND MATERIALIZE THE
LIFE YOU WANT.
AS MY TIME ENDS WITH YOU ALL
TODAY, I WANT YOU TO LOOK AT THE
PERSON NEXT TO YOU.
HOLD THEM WITH LOVE AND EMBRACE,
NOW COME ON, LIKE FOR REAL, YOU
ALL, START HOLDING EACH OTHER,

COME ON, YOU ALL ARE FAMILY,
Y'ALL ARE BLACK, COME ON, DON'T
PLAY WITH ME.

ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT.

ALL RIGHT, THAT'S BETTER.

THAT'S A LOT BETTER.

I LOVE TO SEE, THAT THAT'S BLACK
LOVE RIGHT THERE.

AND KNOW LOVE ALONE CAN CREATE
HOPE, TRANSFORM REALITIES, AND
MATERIALIZE YOUR DREAMS.

THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH.

ASALAM ALAIKUM.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

CAN WE GIVE ANOTHER ROUND OF
APPLAUSE?

THIS NEXT STUDENT SPEAKER IS A
MAN WHOSE RÉSUMÉ WILL PROBABLY
TAKE THE ENTIRE CEREMONY TO READ
IF I TRY.

WHEN YOU THINK OF FACES THAT
REPRESENT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY,
DAVID BARBIER IS THAT KIND OF
PERSON.

PROUD POSSIBLE SCHOLAR, OUR
TIME HAS COME SCHOLAR, AND

FOUNDER OF THE SHADES OF 'CUSE
ALUMNI INTERVIEW SERIES.

AND I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE WHAT THE
FUTURE HOLDS FOR HIM.

WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, LET'S GIVE
A WARM ROUND OF APPLAUSE FOR
DAVID BARBIER, JR.!

>> DAVID BARBIER JR.:

GOOD EVENING, EVERYONE!

HOW Y'ALL DOING TONIGHT?

I JUST GOT TO START OUT BY SAYING
I'M READING THE ALCHEMIST RIGHT
NOW.

HAS ANYONE READ THE ALCHEMIST,
IT'S TALKING ABOUT LIVING OUT
YOUR PERSONAL DREAM.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHEN YOU WANT
SOMETHING, ALL THE UNIVERSE
CONSPIRES TO GIVE YOU EXACTLY
WHAT YOU SEEK.

SO I HOPE EACH OF YOU FIND
EXACTLY WHAT YOU SEEK.

THERE IS A WHOLE LOT OF MELANIN
IN THE ROOM TONIGHT.

WE AS A PEOPLE COME IN AN
ASSORTMENT OF DIFFERENT SHADES,

LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND
BACKGROUNDS.

I MYSELF AM A PRODUCT OF A
MULTICULTURAL BACKGROUND.

MI PAPA NACIO IN LA BASE NAVAL
DE GUANTANAMO, CUBA Y MI MAMA
SON DE AYITI.

MY DAD IS AFRO-CUBAN AND MY MOM
IS HAITIAN.

I'M SURE MY DADDY IS PROUD THAT
I SAID HE IS AFRO-CUBAN.

WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT WE'D
END UP IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK?
ALL THE WAY FROM MIAMI, FLORIDA.
BUT THAT'S NOT THAT ONLY PLACE
WE'RE FROM.

NEW YORK CITY, PUERTO RICO,
ATLANTA

CHI-TOWN, LA, GHANA, NIGERIA,
HAITI, JAMAICA, THE IVORY
COAST,

THE CARIBBEAN, EAST AFRICA,
BRAZIL.

WE COULD GO ON AND ABOUT WHERE
OUR ANCESTORS HAVE BEEN.

WHETHER THEY INTENTIONALLY

MOVED

OR WERE FORCIBLY REMOVED FROM
THEIR HOMELAND.

WE ARE A TESTAMENT.

WE ARE THE LIVING AND BREATHING
EMBODIMENTS OF THEIR WILDEST
DREAMS.

TODAY WE ARE GATHERED TO
CELEBRATE OUR RENAISSANCE.

A NEW AGE, A TIME OF REBIRTH IS
COMING FOR ALL OF US.

BUT BEFORE OUR RENAISSANCE,
LET'S REMINISCE.

SHALL WE?

FOUR YEARS AGO WE STOOD AT THE
PRECIPICE OF OUR SENIOR YEAR IN
HIGH SCHOOL AND WE LEAPT INTO
WHAT WAS OUR SYRACUSE
EXPERIENCE.

REMEMBER WHEN WE VISITED
'CUSE?

SOME OF US GOT TO DO

"OWN THE DOME."

IT WAS GIVING VERY MUCH HBCU
THAT WEEKEND.

--

A LOT OF US GOT TO MEET EACH
OTHER BECAUSE OF THAT.
WHETHER YOU GOT A HEAD START
THROUGH
SUMMERSTART, HEOP, SSS, POSSE
OR
OTHC.

I'M GLAD THERE WERE PROGRAMS
LIKE THAT TO SUPPORT US.
REGARDLESS, WE WERE DETERMINED.
DETERMINED TO BE OUR ANCESTORS'
WILDEST DREAMS.

REMEMBER WHEN MOVE-IN WEEKEND
HAPPENED?

WILL I LIKE MY ROOMMATE?

WILL I MAKE FRIENDS?

WILL THE FOOD BE SEASONED?

AND OF COURSE, OUR PARENTS HAD
TO GIVE THEIR TWO CENTS ABOUT
OUR DORMS.

"SO, Y'ALL BOTH SUPPOSED TO
SLEEP IN HERE?

OH, THE SHOWER IS PUBLIC.

AIN'T NOT AC IN HERE?

WE FLOCKED TO THE STORE, LOADED
UP ON ALL THE COLLEGE

ESSENTIALS.

SHOWER SHOES, CHECK.

SNACKS THAT I'LL SHARE WITH MY
ROOMMATE BECAUSE I WANT TO BE
NICE, CHECK.

WINTER COAT TO WEATHER THE STORM
AHEAD, CHECK.

WHILE WINTER WAS SOMETHING WE
ALL ANTICIPATED, NOTAGAINSU WAS
NOT.

WE WERE FRESHMEN IN OUR FIRST
SEMESTER TRYING TO FIGURE OUT
WHAT THE HELL COLLEGE WAS
SUPPOSED TO BE AND NOW WE GOT TO
PROTEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE ON
CAMPUS.

SO WE PROTESTED, HAD FRUITFUL
CONVERSATIONS AND WERE MAKING
PROGRESS.

FALL SEMESTER ENDED AND THINGS
WERE LOOKING UP.

SPRING SEMESTER WAS COMING, AND
WITH IT CHANGES THAT WOULD RING
THROUGH THE REST OF OUR
COLLEGIATE EXPERIENCE.

REMEMBER THE PANORAMIC?

THE PANDA EXPRESS?

WHAT WAS IT CALLED?

THE PANDEMIC, YEAH, THAT
HAPPENED.

AS NEWS SPREAD THAT SOMETHING
WAS COMING, WE PACKED FOR SPRING
BREAK, BUT ODDLY ENOUGH, DIDN'T
RETURN UNTIL THAT FALL.

A WHOLE FIVE MONTHS.

SUMMER OF 2020 WE WITNESSED A
RACIAL RECKONING AS AMERICA
GRAPPLED WITH THE HORRID
SYSTEMS

THAT UPHELD WHITE SUPREMACY.

SOPHOMORE YEAR FELT LIKE WE WERE
TRYING TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME.

BETWEEN ZOOM UNIVERSITY, THE
WELLNESS DAYS, AND WEEKLY COVID
TESTING, THAT YEAR WAS A BLUR.

AND THEN THERE CAME A LIGHT.

JUNIOR YEAR WAS HERE.

FALL OF '21, JUICE JAM WAS BACK,
AND THINGS WERE LOOKING UP.

119 OPENED, AND THAT WAS
MONUMENTAL BECAUSE THAT WAS
DIRECTLY A RESULT OF

NOTAGAINSU.

ONE TIME FOR NOTAGAINSU,
BECAUSE WITHOUT THAT WE
WOULDN'T BE HERE.

IF THERE'S ANYTHING OUR TIME AT
SYRACUSE HAS TAUGHT US, IT WAS
RESILIENCE.

THINGS DON'T ALWAYS GO OUR WAY,
BUT WE HAVE TO BE WILLING TO
FIND THE SILVER LINING IN THE
OCCURRENCES HAPPENING IN OUR
LIVES.

WHO BETTER AT THAT THAN US?
REMEMBER WHEN WE WENT ABROAD?
PUT YOUR HAND UP IF YOU STUDIED
ABROAD.

OKAY, OKAY.

WE ARE SO WELL TRAVELED.

SOME OF US WERE DOING WINE
TASTING IN ITALY, RIDING THE
TUBE IN LONDON AND HEARD ONE OF
US EVEN DID SOME SEOUL SEARCHING
IN SOUTH KOREA.

SOUL SEARCHING, HUH.

WE CAME TO COLLEGE SEARCHING FOR
OURSELVES.

FOUGHT THROUGH ANXIETY,
DEPRESSION, CODE SWITCHING.
WE GOT HELP WHEN WE NEEDED IT,
WORKED HARD AT GETTING BETTER,
WE OPENED UP ABOUT HOW WE FELT,
AND HOPEFULLY GOT TO SHARE A
PART OF OURSELVES TO THE SPECIAL
PEOPLE WE'VE MET ON THIS
JOURNEY.

AND NOW, HERE WE ARE AGAIN.
AT THE PRECIPICE OF WHAT IS TO
COME.

REMEMBER WHEN WE WALK THE STAGE,
WE ALWAYS HAVE A HOME IN CUSE.
REMEMBER THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH
TIME PASSES, WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE
THE MEMORIES MADE, BONDS
CREATED

TIED TO THIS ORANGE EXPERIENCE.
I CHARGE EACH OF YOU WITH THIS:
YOUR POTENTIAL IS AS INFINITE AS
THERE ARE STARS IN THE SKY.

WHEN YOU FEEL ALONE, LOOK UP AT
THOSE SAME STARS AND BE REMINDED
OF OUR ANCESTORS.

THEY STAND READY TO GUIDE YOU

ALONG THE ADVENTURE THAT IS THE
REST OF OUR LIVES.

FOREVER YOURS, FOREVER ORANGE,
CLASS OF '23.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

HOW ARE Y'ALL ENJOYING THE
STUDENT SPEAKERS TONIGHT?

LAST BUT MOST CERTAINLY NOT
LEAST, I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE
SOMEONE WHO EMBODIES THE TRUE
ESSENCE OF BLACK EXCELLENCE.

SIMONE BELLOT IS SUPER FEARLESS
AND HER ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND
LEGACY SPEAKS VOLUMES.

AMONGST OTHERS SHE WILL LEAD AND
BE THE CATALYST FOR CHANGE IN
HER COMMUNITY.

BARBRA KURMAN ALUMNI SCHOLAR,
WISE WOMEN OF COLOR IN STEM
SCHOLAR, OUR SENIOR CLASS
MARSHAL -- AND ALSO SERVED AS
THIS

YEARS BLACK GRADUATION CHAIR.
HER IMPACT HERE AT SYRACUSE IS
ONLY A PORTION OF WHAT'S TO
COME.

PLEASE HELP ME WELCOME SIMONE
BELLOT TO THE STAGE!

>> SIMONE BELLOT:

WHAT IF ONE OF OUR ANCESTOR'S
WILDEST DREAMS WAS TO REST?

I LOOK INTO THE AUDIENCE AND SEE
THE FACES OF "BLACK EXCELLENCE"
THAT WE HAVE ALL WORKED SO
TIRELESSLY TO CURATE.

BUT I KNOW Y'ALL,

AND I KNOW Y'ALL DO THE MOST.

SO THE REAL CHALLENGE IS THIS:
PRACTICE BLACK REST, BLACK LOVE
BLACK JOY AND BLACK HOPE.

THE BEST WAY TO HONOR THOSE WHO
CAME BEFORE YOU IS TO DRAPE
YOURSELF IN ALL THE BEAUTIFUL
THINGS THAT THEY AND YOU HAVE
WORKED SO HARD FOR.

FINDING PEACE IS A PRIVILEGE
THAT I WISH FOR ALL OF YOU.

YOU HAVE TAKEN UP SPACE, MADE
NOISE, AND REWRITTEN THE
NARRATIVE FOR YEARS. REST.

YOU RECONSTRUCTED A CULTURE
THAT

YOU WERE NEVER ABLE TO SEE.
CREATED ORGANIZATIONS,
INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS THAT
WILL OUTLIVE OUR TIME HERE,
AND FOR THAT, I SAY THANK YOU.
THANK YOU FOR SHOWING UP FOR
BLACK PEOPLE EVERY TIME;
FOR CHEERING BLACK PEOPLE ON,
AND FOR SHOWING UP TODAY.
IT TOOK A VILLAGE.
THANK YOU FOR BEING MINE.
SEEING THE WORLD AND MAKING THE
WORLD SEE YOU IS THE GREATEST
ACT OF RESISTANCE.
NEVER STOP.
AND FOR MY FELLOW GRADUATES THAT
MAY NOT BE CELEBRATED IN THE
WAYS THAT THEY DESERVE THIS
WEEKEND, ALLOW ME.
YOU DID THAT.
I SEE YOU, AND WELL DONE.
WITH THE ODDS AGAINST YOU, YOU
GOT UP, WENT TO THAT CLASS, SAT
IN FRONT OF THAT COMPUTER, AND
WENT TO THAT LIBRARY,
NOT BECAUSE IT WAS YOU WERE

SUPPOSED TO DO, BUT BECAUSE YOU
WANTED THIS.

IT'S YOURS NOW, AND YOU DESERVE
EVERY BIT OF PRAISE.

THIS IS YOUR WEEKEND, AND IT'S
ABOUT CELEBRATING YOU.

AND SO IF YOU DON'T SINCERELY
HEAR IT FROM ANYONE ELSE THIS
WEEKEND, I AM SO IMMENSELY PROUD
OF YOU.

MY WISH FOR ALL OF YOU IS TO
BLOOM.

I HOPE THAT WHEN YOU LEAVE HERE
YOU GROW IN THE
DIRECTION OF THE SUN AND SEE
YOURSELF CHANGE IN WAYS YOU
WOULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED.

I HOPE THAT YOU ARE WRAPPED IN
WARMTH AND FIRMLY ROOTED WITH
GREAT FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY
WHEREVER YOU MAY GO.

I HOPE THAT YOU ARE WATERED AND
NOURISHED WHEN YOU NEED IT AND
THAT YOU INTENTIONALLY CHOOSE
YOURSELF, EVEN WHEN BLOOMING
HURTS, KNOWING THAT IN THE PAIN

OF GROWTH THE OUTCOME WILL BE
BEAUTIFUL.

LIKE FLOWERS, YOU CAN SOAK IN
THE RAIN AND SIT IN THE SUN AND
BOTH CAN MAKE YOU STRONGER.

PLANT YOUR OWN GARDEN AND ADORN
YOUR OWN SOUL, WATER YOURSELF
WHEN YOU WILT, AND HONOR
YOURSELF AS YOU THRIVE, BLOOM,
WITH OR WITHOUT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT,

AND GROW IN ALL THE PLACES YOU
NEVER THOUGHT YOU WOULD.

WHEN THE NOISE QUIETS, THE
CURTAINS CLOSE, AND THE CAP AND
GOWN GO INTO A BOX,

I WISH YOU A SAFE RETURN TO
YOURSELF.

TO THE CLASS OF 2023.

IT'S BEEN REAL.

TAKE YOUR REST.

>> TYSEAN CANADA:

CAN WE GIVE HER ANOTHER ROUND OF
APPLAUSE, PLEASE?

NOW, THE TIME EVERYONE IS
WAITING FOR, THE PRESENTATION

OF

THE GRADUATES.

I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE
CHRISTABEL O B SHELDON,
DIRECTOR OF RONALD E. MCNAIR
POST BACCALAUREATE ACHIEVEMENT
PROGRAM, AND
MELVIN SHIHEEM BAKER,
CHAPLIN AT HENDRICKS CHAPEL,
TO PRESENT THE GRADUATES.

I ALSO WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE
ALONZO TURNER, DOCTORAL STUDENT
IN COUNSELING AND COUNSELOR
EDUCATION, AND GRADUATE
ASSISTANT IN MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS, ALONG WITH
KARESS GILLESPIE, ASSISTANT
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT LIVING,
TO HELP DISTRIBUTE THE KENTE
STOLES.

>> GOOD EVENING!

OH, I THINK YOU GUYS ARE GETTING
TIRED.

GOOD EVENING!

WE'RE HERE TO CELEBRATE, RIGHT?
SO WE NEED TO CON SEVEN AS MUCH

ENERGY AS WE CAN BECAUSE IT'S
JUST STARTING.

WE GOT TWO MORE DAYS OF
CELEBRATIONS.

SO WE ARE HERE TO RECOGNIZE OUR
GRADUATES, I'M CHRISTABEL
SHELDON, THE DIRECTOR OF MCNAIR
SCHOLARS PROGRAM, AND?

PASTOR MELVIN BAKER OF
HISTORICAL BLACK CHURCH
CHAPLAINCY, TEN YEARS AGO I SAT
IN THIS SAME ROOM TO RECEIVE MY
MASTER'S

DEGREE -- [INDISCERNIBLE] -- I
AM INCREDIBLY PROUD OF EACH AND
EVERY ONE OF YOU, AND MY PRAYER
IS THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO DO
GREAT THINGS AS YOU VENTURE INTO
THE FUTURE.

THERE ARE A LOT OF NAMES TO READ,
SOME EASIER THAN OTHERS, SO WE
WANT YOU TO ENJOY THIS TIME, BUT
WE WANT YOU TO CONTINUE TO MOVE
THROUGHOUT THIS TIME.

IF I WAS IN CHURCH I WOULD TELL
SOMEBODY TO TELL THEIR NEIGHBOR

TO MOVE THROUGHOUT THIS TIME.

ALL RIGHT?

SO WHATEVER YOUR SWAG IS, LET IT
CONTEND, LET IT GO FROM HERE ALL
THE WAY TO THERE.

IF WE WAS IN CHURCH SOMEBODY
WHAT SAY AMEN.

ALL RIGHT, HERE WE GO.

>> ARE WE READY FOR OUR
GRADUATES?

[GRADUATES' NAMES BEING READ]
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE CLASS
OF 2023!

>> HELLO, HEL WILL HE, HELLO,
HI, A ALL LOOK SO BEAUTIFUL,
HANDSOME, EVERYTHING, ALL OF IT
ABOVE.

MY NAME IS ADORE ELLIS, I'M
GRADUATING FROM THE COLLEGE OF
VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND
I ALSO SERVED ON THE COMMITTEE.
FIRST AND FOREMOST I WOULD LIKE
TO GIVE OUR WARMEST
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS
OF
2023!

GIVE YOUR SELF 'ROUND OF
APPLAUSE.

NEXT, I WOULD LIKE TO THANK MY
FELLOW COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO
HAVE WORKED DILIGENTLY TO MAKE
THIS HAPPEN.

YOUR WILLINGNESS TO DEDICATE
YOUR TIME TO THIS WORK DOES NOT
GO UNNOTICED.

THANK YOU!

I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK THE
DIVISION OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

ALLEN W. GROVES,

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF
STUDENT EXPERIENCE OFFICER.

ROB HRADSKY,

VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE STUDENT
EXPERIENCE.

MARY GRACE A. ALMANDREZ,

VICE PRESIDENT FOR DIVERSITY
AND

INCLUSION, OFFICE OF DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION.

SHERIAH N. DIXON,

DEAN OF STUDENTS.

DR. JAMES K. DYAH-AGYEMAN,

DIRECTOR OF MULTICULTURAL
AFFAIRS.
-- BIG MARISSA, YEAH, BIG
MARCH -- MARISSA
MARISSA WILLINGHAM,
PROGRAM MANAGER FOR 119 EUCLID.
STUDENT ASSOCIATION.
ALL STUDENT PERFORMERS,
BLACK REIGN, YEAH.
AND THE DJ, OF COURSE.
AND OUR
KEYNOTE SPEAKER SUNNY HOSTIN.
BEAUTIFUL.
AS I BRING THIS BEAUTIFUL
CEREMONY TO AN END, I JUST --
[NO AUDIO) -- BUT DO REMEMBER
THE RAIN IS WHAT MAKES FLOWERS
GROW.
THERE IS A REASON WE ARE ALL HERE
TODAY.
WE PREVAIL, WE CONQUERED, AND WE
WON.
TREAT THIS MOMENT AS IF IT'S
IRREPLACEABLE.
IT WILL BE MOMENTS WHERE YOU
WILL DOUBT YOUR SPACE BUT YOU

HAVE TO SPEAK WHAT YOU SEEK
UNTIL YOU SEE WHAT YOU ARE
SAYING.

I NEED YOU TO UNDERSTAND HOW
POWERFUL AND HOW DOPE OUR
GRADUATING CLASS IS, AS A MATTER
OF FACT, JUST CLAP IT UP FOR
YOURSELVES RIGHT NOW.

WE HAVE BECOME THE EXAMPLES WE
NEEDED GROWING UP.

AND I HOPE YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT
MEANS TO BE HERE TODAY.

SO WHATEVER THE NEXT CHAPTER IS
IN YOUR BOOK, YOU ENTER IT WITH
YOUR HEAD HIGH AND YOUR
SHOULDERS BROAD BECAUSE WHEN
YOU DARE TO BE POWERFUL, TO USE
YOUR STRENGTH IN THE SERVICE OF
YOUR VISION IT THEN BECOMES LESS
AND LESS IMPORTANT WHETHER
YOU'RE AFRAID.

SO ENJOY EVERY MOMENT OF THE
SUCCESS BECAUSE THESE LAST FOUR
YEARS WERE VERY PERSONAL.

SO TO THE CLASS OF 2023, CHEERS
TO US AND CHEERS TO WHAT HAS YET

TO COME.

WE WOULD ALSO LIKE TO INVITE YOU
TO JOIN US THIS SUNDAY AFTER
COMMENCEMENT AT THE SCHINE
STUDENT CENTER IN THE GOLDSTEIN
AUDITORIUM FOR THE
MULTICULTURAL GRADUATION
RECEPTION 12 TO 2 PM.

SOME GRADUATES WHO ARE NOT ABLE
TO IF THEY WERE YOUR FRIENDS OR
ANYTHING, PLEASE JUST LET THEM
KNOW THAT WE'LL HAVE THE REST OF
THE STOLES IN THE SCHINE STUDENT
CENTER TO PICK UP.

LASTLY, PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT AS
THE STUDENTS PROCESS OUT TO
REVIEW OUR SLIDE SHOW AND AGAIN,
THANK YOU ALL AGAIN FOR COMING
AND AGAIN, CONGRATULATIONS TO
THE CLASS OF 2023, WE MADE IT!

* * * * *

THIS IS BEING PROVIDED IN A
ROUGH-DRAFT FORMAT. OPEN
CAPTIONING IS PROVIDED IN ORDER

TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION
ACCESSIBILITY AND MAY NOT BE A
TOTALLY VERBATIM RECORD OF THE
PROCEEDINGS.

* * * * *