**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LIZZA ISLER**

Hello everyone! Today has been a long time in coming, especially for me, and I am both proud and humbled to have the opportunity to stand here before all of you, my graduate degree safe in my hands, as I say a few words. (**If there are any people in particular you would like to acknowledge, do so here**). I would like congratulate my fellow graduates for achieving their own personal milestones today and I would also like to acknowledge some of the people who have encouraged and supported my commitment to my studies. To \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I would like to acknowledge you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

We, the graduates, are here to celebrate and acknowledge our unique accomplishments, but as we step before you, our stories and experience are within us, dwelling inside, not necessarily revealed. Each one of us, whether we do or don’t wear our challenges “on our sleeves” have had to navigate twists and turns in our own journeys, but the privilege and joy of attaining knowledge and a greater understanding of the world around us, is worth all of it. My particular journey has taken a somewhat circuitous route and while I enjoyed the ride, and learned along the way, it’s been a while.... you see, I received my undergraduate degree in 1993, waited over twenty years, and began to pursue my graduate degree in 2015. I continued to lead a fruitful life in that interim time (**give a brief example of what you were doing**) as I \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and although I thought I had made very good use of those in between years, **NO ONE** believed I would actually be able to achieve the goal to complete my graduate studies.... and stand before you today.... but I did, and I am, and it proves the power of determination. Even though I was a conditional student when I “reopened” this chapter, I showed that I meant business....and I am proud to say I graduated with a 4.0 grade point average, the highest in the class. (**If you want to make a little joke you can say**) ... See... I **TOLD** you I was serious!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

Benjamin Franklin taught us, “An investment in knowledge pays the best interest,” and his contemporary, First Lady Abigail Adams, said, “Learning is not attained by chance- it must be sought for with **ardor** and **diligence**.” I can tell you that whether I actually realized it or not, at the time, I was quietly guided by both of those principles. I was born and raised in the Philippines, a country where education is **not** a privilege. It’s a country in which the social classes are divided into roughly three sectors: rich, poor and very poor. My family is in the poor category. Although we may have lacked material assets, thankfully I come from a family that truly valued the importance of education. While my maternal grandfather was a handyman and my maternal grandmother was a seamstress, they were determined to instill those educational values into their children and **ALL** four of them went to college and got their bachelor’s degrees. My father grew up with the same focus instilled in him. He knew how essential it is to have a firm knowledge base and worked very far away from home, in another country, so that he would be able to send my siblings and me to great schools. I am where I am today because of the priorities and determination of my parents and the values they received and shared with me.... against all odds, we are the living embodiment of their hard work and love of learning... that education is wealth and no one can take hat away from you.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative to be educated.... to understand our history, our global background.... why things were the way they were and are the way they are. Life certainly is **NOT** getting **LESS** complicated... we are under siege... between global conditions and technological advances, it’s crucial to know how to parse the information coming at us and to figure out how to navigate in this world in order to be viable and constructively engaged in life.

To paraphrase Krishnamurti, the Indian philosopher, “There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.” Education leads us from the darkness into the light. While it is true that, “We don’t know what we don’t know,” that revelation is the first step to learning.... to curiosity. We also must be careful to connect with our inner passion for education. Sitting in a seat having information and data hurled at us does not comprise a comprehensive education. We, and our children and **THEIR** children must be taught to find the interest and the curiosity to **KNOW** about life, history, and how to prepare for the future. It may have taken me over twenty years to get back to school to work and attain this graduate degree, but I **PROMISE** you, I understand so much more clearly about **WHY** education is so important. A solid education allows us to put the pieces together... to understand how the influences of history and culture and scientific exploration impact the lives each one of us lives. People ...students... don’t necessarily become smart by osmosis but when that inner curiosity is awakened, realizations begin to make sense.

We must be very careful... we are being watched ... by our kids and by the young people coming up in the “ranks.” ... and what we do today will be the roadmap for future generations. It is up to us to show how important it is to learn and how critical it is to make sure that our voices are heard so that we can all be engaged in the productive advancement of our society and the world. Thank you again for this honor... it’s now time to continue to partner our our generation and future generations to learn and grow. Thank you !!