**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SAFARI SEKIYOBA**

Hello my name is Safari Sekiyoba. Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, professors, administrators, distinguished guests, and most of all, to my fellow graduates, I want to thank all of you for allowing me a few moments to share some thoughts. It is an honor and a privilege to be given this opportunity to state the three things that I think matter to me in life... a life that most people would look at and think that its trajectory and circumstances were impossible to overcome. Mine has been a life that defines that destiny is individual and unique to each person, and although circumstances may arise that threaten to damage or break us, human spirit and sheer will have the power to bring triumph.  As I prepared to share with you today, I began to reflect... to think of my roots, my struggles, and the kind of determination I had to find in order to do more than survive... with all of the forces in life that tried to threaten me, throughout each experience, there was hope and there was the knowledge that if I continued to persevere, things would turn out okay... believe me.... the elements and political conditions proved to be very strict teachers... but they taught me well. The elements that keep me going are **reflection, limits and mission**.

To me, the first component in living a well examined and worthwhile life is **REFLECTION**. As I look back on my roots and the conditions I had to survive in order to get here, I’d like to give you some idea of what formed the foundations that contributed to who I am today. I was born and raised in the Democratic Republic of Conge (**Is this supposed to be Congo? I don’t think we need to repeat**) in the village called Bunagana located in the eastern part of the country. Saved by the grace of the almighty GOD from the civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi that claimed millions of lives, including my very own grandparents, I am very grateful to be able to stand here to speak to you. The truth is that I am very grateful to be alive. Why does this matter? Why am stating this? As I reflect back to where I come from, to where I am, to where my path will lead tomorrow, I am convinced that we all have our own destiny that is awaiting discovery. As each day unfolds, that path grows.  Looking back to the village where I was born... to the high school I attended (though I never completed my studies there)... looking back to the different colleges I attended, and looking now at this present moment; there is one common theme that is obvious to me, and that is that I had many companions who were on the same bus with me. While outwardly it looked as if together we were traveling on the same road, deep down inside, we all have a different destiny. Most of those who traveled with me in my youth are not here with me today. Some of them reached their purpose sooner and some of us have not reached our destiny yet.  Along the way to our own self-discovery, we encounter the fate that is waiting on us. The road might be bumpy. The distractions may be many, however, one must understand that destiny is something that you cannot get rid off. As once said by Steve Jobs, “You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards.” If we are really intuitive... if we are paying attention, we discover the signposts along the way, and in reflection, as we look back, those are the dots, when connected, that form the silhouettes of our lives.

The thought of **LIMITATIONS** carries different meanings. To some, limitation means the inability to accomplish the desire of their heart. To others it is the obstruction between the point of departure to the point of the destination. To me, there is no existence of limitations. If there were any, I would not be speaking to you today. Limitations exist only to the extent one allows them to influence one’s purpose.  As said by Henry Ford **“**Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right.” Standing before you today, i represent a living testimony derived from the word impossible to possible. I don’t know how many of you have heard this, but it was the actress Audrey Hepburn who said, “Nothing is impossible. The very word itself says, **I’M POSSIBLE**.” When I arrived in this land of great opportunity, I was blessed by the almighty GOD by reminding me that anything I set my mind on to accomplish, I am well able to achieve. I can remember that at a certain moment in my scholastic history that I had to answer to my teacher with “Never mind” or “I am ok” when the teacher asked if I had any questions. The two answers, “Never mind” and “I am ok” were perhaps not as accurate as they sound, but it was all I could respond because I had no clue of what the teacher was stating. Because my command of the English language needed to be strengthened, after all, it **IS** my **eleventh** language, I didn’t want to call unnecessary attention to my limitations. There were other “bumps and bruises” along the way as well. My road to arrive to where I am today was not always smooth... in fact it **RARELY** went without its challenges. I got knocked down from time to time but never **stayed** down. When twenty said “**NO**” to me, one said, “**YES**.”. Thank GOD for Brandman University (A Chapman University System) for saying yes to me and to others also in need of patience, cooperation, understanding, and **A CHANCE**. Because of that **ONE** “Yes” from Brandman, today several lives are changed, and that creates a ripple effect... because of that **ONE** yes, several individuals are equipped to make the world a better place.... and that will multiply **GEOMETRICALLY**.

Phil Wright once said “Good leaders look for ways to help their team improve performance. Great leaders **INSPIRE** their team to **WANT** to succeed, to achieve excellence! How do great leaders do this? By inviting their team to become players, instead of spectators, in the organization’s values, mission, purpose and vision” I am not quiet sure what brought you back to pursue your education after you graduated from high school. I surely hope you chose to go back to school with a purpose to earn a degree and to use it wisely (If so, congratulations!).  My hope is that as you and I have earned our degrees, we will make the most use of it. Today we are given the opportunity to impact the world for the better. If you examine our world around us, you will discover that we are living in challenging times... times where the morals and values of this great nation have been put to the test. These are times in which the notion that all men are created equal is being questioned and subverted. These are times in which the American dream that gave **ME** the opportunity to be standing before you today is subject to the threat that our values may no longer be the ideal. You and I, the class of 2018 have been given the opportunity to revive the American Dream. In case you may have forgotten exactly what this means, let me remind you what that is... “The ideal that **every** US citizen should have an equal opportunity to achieve success and prosperity through hard work, determination, and initiative”

To conclude, completing our degree programs from Brandman University is an opportunity for each of us to take the lead in order to fulfill our **MISSIONS** in life. Life is a game and in order to win, people must work **TOGETHER**, in a team. You cannot win the game of life all alone. We have been given opportunities to work in cooperation in every circumstance in order to make world a better place. Whether through education, marketing, preaching; whatever team you may find yourself in, remember to always reflect on your **mission,** hold your purpose close, challenge yourselves each day to be, learn, and do a little more, and know that there is no such thing as limitations.

I could not possibly stand here before you without acknowledging one person in particular. Dr. Hanisch, the Dean of the School of Nursing at Brandman, has been a mentor and a guide, and has shown me what leadership, knowledge, compassion, and wisdom **REALLY** look like, **IN FACT**, I must admit, Dr. Hanisch, that when I grow up, I want to be **JUST LIKE YOU**!!” Congratulations to all of my fellow graduates, and thank you all!!