**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SUSAN MARTELLO-GILL**

Hello everyone. It’s wonderful to be here... to see all of you.... to celebrate my fellow graduates... and to acknowledge the mysteries... and sometimes miseries... of working towards completion. (**If you want, you can add**) **AHHHH** the humanity of it all!! (**And wait for the laugh**). This graduation signifies considerable accomplishment for all of us.... and it gives new meaning to be on the other side of the path we’ve worn in getting to this point. Whether graduate, family member, friend or distinguished guest, each one of us in this room is dedicated to our own personal and professional process and I believe our strengths are revealed, not only by earning our degrees, but by understanding and declaring the **degrees** of hard work, struggle, and dedication that were invested in order to be here today. To that end, I want to say that I did not accomplish this in a vacuum..... I am here thanks to the love, support, strength and encouragement of those people that held the light when I was short of that extra “hand.”

When we were younger, it was just a song lyric. John Lennon was onto something when he wrote, “Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans....”. It’s taken me **NINE YEARS** to achieve this ... who can **RELATE**?? (**Wait for the laugh**). Imagine if I hadn’t stretched this out... I’d be **YOUNGER**!!! More **WIDE EYED**!!! Even more **ENTHUSIASTIC**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).... instead.... I’m ... hopefully wiser... more understanding... and more able to appreciate what it’s taken to get here.

Along the way there were those who did their best to light that fire within me... and to keep it going.... (**Name 2 or 3 things that distract you like hobbies, TV shows, other distractions)** ... and I’m **NOT** referring to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Wait for the laugh**). I **AM** referring to those people who poked, prodded, and **PINCHED** me to keep at it when necessary..... people like my wonderful friend and fellow graduate, Erin \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who practiced RELENTLESS FOLLOW UP **RELENTLESSLY**. Erin held the vision of this day when mine was waning. While I got caught up in the “stuff” of life, Erin kept her eye on the goal.... for both of us... “**COME ON!!! We HAVE TO DO THIS**!!! Is seared into my brain in those sweet, mellifluous tones we know so well (**Wait for the laugh**). I must admit, while sometimes I wonder if it’s phantom tinnitus, those words continue to ring in my head.... **incessantly**... for anything else that needs to get done. Thank you Erin!!!

To Dr. Lothian my dissertation chair, I want to acknowledge and thank you for your guidance and support.... while we both knew I had selected a potentially controversial dissertation topic, you focused on, and referred to, the process as a journey.... one that needs to be explored... on so many levels, and ultimately proved to be a life altering and revealing experience. Both you and Erin were true inspirations to me.

While we celebrate our accomplishments and congratulate one another for a “job well done,” each one of us has a mandate, viewed from, and expressed through, our unique filters and points of view. The more we chose to participate in the process of encouraging our own growth, the more we advance understanding, empathy, and the human condition for all. Besides the obvious data and research that served to continue to open my eyes, heart, and conscience to the issues I explored in my dissertation, (**Do you want to name your topic?**), the more I learned about life, myself, and my perceived limitations. To this day, people still quote Robert Browning.... and considering my thesis, let me make a small but necessary adjustment... “A **person’s** reach should exceed **their** grasp....” Erin and I were seven years into the PhD program and, admittedly, we stalled out for a few years... remember Lennon!!! Naturally, my “internal cheerleading squad”... you know... **THOSE** voices... guided me to question my abilities... to wonder if I had it in me to complete the degree... but there was Erin.... her encouragement louder than those “**mental muses**” and she managed to get me going. Let me tell you, now that I’ve completed my PhD and am feeling **UNSTOPPABLE**... for the moment... if I **EVER** decide to trek Mount Everest, I’m pretty sure I know who I’m going to call if I have any hesitations at Base Camp One!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

The truth is, we all face our Everest’s on a regular basis. Each one of us knows our potential exceeds our perceived grasp. We know there’s work to do, and in our own way, we have great power to learn and to support the process of striving towards a healthier, more complete world for everyone. When I surrendered my considerations and dedicated myself to doing the work necessary to complete the course work, I found that I was in fact able to do so. I enjoyed the research process. I want to acknowledge the professors at Seton Hall University, especially my dissertation committee, who were very supportive  and encouraged me to complete the degree.

(**Do you want to acknowledge any family members? If so, you can say**) .... and of course, I want to acknowledge those closest to me, my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and my \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for their love, support, and distractions when I needed them..... and even when I **didn’t**. (**Wait for the laugh**). Every experience, every exchange, every moment we share with others serves to advance our capacity in macro and micro ways. Knowledge really is power... experience advances humanity. I want to acknowledge and thank all of you... for your support, your consideration, your participation, your uniqueness.... and if it ever looks like it’s going to take you **NINE YEARS** to complete a project.... remember the words of our modern Greek god of athleisure, Nike.... “**JUST DO IT**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Thank you all!!