**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JOE HINOJOSA**

Ladies and gentlemen, family and friends, faculty, administrators, distinguished guests, and, of course, most importantly, graduates, I want to thank you for that warm reception and for the opportunity to say a few words at this year’s commencement exercises for the Southern Careers Institute, here in Brownsville. (**If there is anyone in particular you want to acknowledge, please do that here**). I’d like to extend a special note of gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for inviting me here today.

I believe in the importance of keeping in communication with as many people... especially young people... as possible. To have the chance to speak at events like these gives me energy... the exchange of ideas and points of view is invaluable... I continue to learn every day from people.... and for that I am grateful. As my own perspectives are broadened, I can’t help but be reminded of a line I once read in a poem... “I am part of all that I have met.” Today, each one of you... and this experience, have become part of me.... your accomplishments open my eyes.... your forward path inspires me to think... your future contributions to the workforce and community give me pride in your achievement and determination. In turn, you will begin to experience the influence and input of all those people that will become a part of you... as you go beyond your community of family, friends, teachers, and fellow classmates, you will find yourselves in new surroundings... filled with employers, clients, and work colleagues. They will be impacted by your presence... by your kindness, your eagerness to continue to learn and be part of a team...by the way you demonstrate what you’ve learned... by the degree you show how you’re willing to accept responsibility and really make a contribution in all of the areas you chose to participate. You will make a difference by showing your respect... by being who you are... and by leading the way for those that will follow in **your** path. The need for skilled workers that have studied in the areas of Occupational Education is growing.... while the world is changing rapidly, one thing that will **not** disappear is the necessity for infrastructure and those that skillfully maintain the essential functions of life.

Today marks a turning point in your lives, graduates. You’ve achieved a goal.... you’ve seen one of the most important commitments of your lives to fruition.... you are experiencing completion in “real time.” As this chapter closes, new ones are set to be written. You’ve all come a long way in building foundations that rely on knowledge, training, and practical application. What you have learned up to this point is a base.... you’ve learned to **learn**.... no matter where you find yourselves in life.. no matter how you use your education from this point on, it is **YOURS**... it can’t be taken away.. it can’t be replaced, but with continued commitment to the quality of your lives and an honest degree of professional commitment, that base knowledge and experience will only grow and bloom and increase in value over time and experience.. The English poet, e.e. cummings said, “It takes courage to grow up and become who you **really** are.” Today’s graduation allows all of us to see the **NEW** you... Congratulations!!!

It is always gratifying to speak to groups of young people... those that stand on the threshold of exciting, life changing experience. Now that you’ve graduated, the next steps are to find your way in the professional world and prepare to take your places and make your mark. While much is made from many people who believe that a college degree is the **ONLY** way to achieve success in this world, practically speaking, I must disagree. The need for Occupational Education... the demand for an eager, enthusiastic, well trained, educated, skilled workforce is so important, especially in this day and age...the importance and irreplaceable functions that you are about to perform, are a critical part of the fiber and fabric of our lives. Many people take those functions for granted. There is such a rush to compete on levels most are unprepared or unwilling to face, that the truly important jobs.. the ones that keep life itself, in motion, go overlooked. Fortunately, that is not the case with this group of newly minted graduates. Thanks to your interest and intuition.... or your practical realizations, you have chosen to follow career paths that are essential, in demand, and necessary in order that the rest of us can function and find our way in this world.

Almost a decade ago, Beyoncé asked the question, “Who run the world???” (**Wait for the laugh)...** Guess what?? Thanks to progress and your choice to attend and graduate from, the Career Institute, the answer has evolved... it’s not just “girls” that run the world... although girls are a HUGE part... it’s **ALL OF YOU**!!! You’ve had the opportunity to learn and participate in, limitless technical and occupational training... and while the world seems to be going “virtual,” “automated,” “robotic,” or “augmented,” there are some trades, skills, and crafts that must be done by actual, trained, skilled **PEOPLE**...Through your studies in a variety of curricula offered here at the Career Institute, our communities will have the chance to advance care and attention at all levels and Industires... from nurses aides to medical billing administrators... from computer support technicians to HVAC technicians, welders, automotive service technicians, business accounting operators.... your thoughtfulness, dedication, and “hands on” practical support, in these areas and much more, will go far in nurturing every level in all segments of life... your building skills will support the booming construction industry. Your automotive technical training will insure that people and things... packages, freight, all sorts of transport related functions can and will be completed. Your administrative skills will be broad spectrum and will see to it that all industries have the capability to code, bill, keep schedules, and make a difference.... and of course.... possibly the most important of the segments that will support all of us... and you... are those gifted people graduating from the cosmetology course!!! After all... work hard... self care... repeat and refresh!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

I hope what I’ve said has given you encouragement.... the truth is that your commitment to take on the responsibilities you’re about to fulfill, gives **ME** encouragement. Sometimes we don’t pay attention to the most basic elements in life. We may think that running water and electricity are our God given rights.... we lose sight of the fact that it takes planning and skills to keep our worlds in “go” mode. It’s the same with occupational careers... what you are about to do is so much a part of our lives.. so ingrained.. so “expected,” that we tend to overlook just how vital your contributions are about to become. I want you to know that I.... and your families, friends, colleagues, and neighbors, want to express our thanks to you. That you have chosen these paths may not come with the bells and whistles of an advanced degree or a doctorate, but they are no less critical to the functioning of life itself. Those other professions wouldn’t be possible without **YOU**. Doctors couldn’t function without nurses aides, billers, pharmacy technicians, and other support workers. I mean, who would read their handwriting?? (**Wait for the laugh**). World class architects would just have pages of interesting blueprints without construction workers, truckers, fabricators, or HVAC workers to bring the vision to life. And most importantly, while Amazon and other online giants may be automating their facilities with high tech robotics... **SOMEONE** has to service and drive the trucks to make all of those **BILLIONS** of deliveries!!! Seriously... I checked. Amazon shipped **FIVE BILLION** packages through Prime in 2018!,, **THAT** will give you an idea of just how busy some of you might be sooner than later!!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

I would like to sincerely congratulate all of you graduating today and thank you for your commitment to support all of us and all areas of our lifestyles, now and well into the future. Here’s to great success and professional achievement and satisfaction!! Thank you all!!