

CONGREGATION OF THE COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
(UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON)
HELD AT THE GREAT HALL
25TH JULY, 2015

GUEST OF HONOUR'S ADDRESS
BY NENE A. O. AMEGATCHER
CHAIR, ADVISORY BOARD OF THE COLLEGE OF
HUMANITIES

Acting Chairman & members of the University Council
Vice Chancellor
Pro-Vice Chancellors
Members of the Advisory Board of the College of Humanities
Registrar
Members of Convocation
Members of the University community, Staff & Students
Alumni
Invited guests
2015 Graduating Class Members
Distinguished Ladies & Gentlemen

I am truly grateful for the exceptional honour done me not only to be with you for the congregation of the College of Humanities of the premier university-arguably the finest university in the country, but to share this auspicious moment with the students and families of the graduating class of 2015. I thank the Vice Chancellor and his team for the honour which I accept with a

deep sense of humility and responsibility. I see this as an opportunity to sow a seed into the lives of our fresh graduates. I was in your seat in 1977 and then 1980, and I fully well understand the adrenaline surge you are experiencing now, and your legs feeling like jelly, in turns.

Dear members of the 2015 Graduating Class, congratulations for your hard work. Yes, you made it in spite of the challenges and pressures associated with academic work. Some of you had a two-year course, others three and four years for Bachelors degree programmes and others have also spent four years and beyond for the PHD. You deserve all the praises being showered on you because **YOU MADE IT**. Give your fellow graduands a good handshake or hug and say to each other: **YES WE MADE IT**.

This is also a good time to show gratitude to family members, lecturers and friends who supported you through your studies. My dear graduands let me ask you to rise and give a resounding applause to all those who helped you reach this important milestone in your life.

While preparing for my speech today, I contemplated what I would share with you; advice of course, said the inner voice. It is normal with graduation speeches. But what kind of advice can I have for graduands like you who have set upon your adult lives trail? But I can share with you some of the experiences I have gathered since leaving here over 38 years ago and some mantra I strive to live my life by.

I propose to address you on two broad themes – Pain and Rebirth, incongruous as they may seem.

If you want to be fruitful at whatever you put your mind and hand to, you have to make sure that it hurts. Greatness comes from pain. Like the crucible for silver and the furnace for gold, so will the vicissitudes of life after here refine you if you make sure that what you put into your endeavour hurts. It is what separates the ordinary from the exceptional. I use this invaluable allegory as a constant reminder of the purpose of pain and the beauty beyond the pain. The path of least resistance is safe and comforting. But greatness is not borne out of safety. Greatness is borne out of risk and ambition. Anything is possible and we must challenge ourselves, always. Most people's aspirations are too low and that leads usually to mediocrity if not failure. This permeates every detail of our national fabric. We in the service of the nation, civil,

public and private alike, enthusiastically welcome you to join us help build Mother Ghana. The draw-backs in nation-building nowadays are all too evident for us to see. No aim is too high for you. Roll up your sleeves and like Sisyphus: let us together roll the rock of national development up the hill. But unlike Sisyphus, we must prevent the rock from rolling back down the hill.

There is something about humans which is that our potential is limitless. So by all means do not live your lives like a fettered balloon. But I must caution you to live a life free of reproach. Eschew the current craze of the pursuit of political office for monetary and material advantage. There is something unique and great inside of you. Identify it and nurture it. Take your time and study the high achievers, especially our forebears who selflessly charted the path for the creation and advancement of our dear country. As the sages say, there is nothing new under the sun. Assure yourself that, “if they could do it, human as they are so can I”. As the songster Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones, better known as Nas puts it (and your generation is much more familiar with Nas than I am), “I know I can be what I wanna be. If I work hard at it, I’ll be what I wanna be.”

Let the humanity in Humanities resound loudly by your deeds.

The famed words of Shakespeare's monologue in "As You Like It" ring true even today as you leave the relative comfort of this College into uncertain future in an unforgiving world. He begins thus:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,

The path you are treading hence is well-worn. Many before you have played their part and exited. One Act is ending today. The story of your lives transitions into the next Act this same day. No one can walk out on their own life's story. Whatever you do in life after school and whoever you work for, your commitment and zeal should be the same. For those of us who work with statistics and figures, the lure of manipulation is real; for those of us who lean towards research, policy and public interest analyses, unhealthy opinionating is luring; for the legal fraternity, sharp practice is tempting; in the business field, rogue trading is luring. In every facet of professional or vocational work, the temptation for unfair advantage and undeserved financial gain is present. I am not kidding you; the temptations of the fast and easy life are real at the workplace. There are several chinks in the armour of the

state, and it is all too familiar and enticing to exploit the chinks to one's advantage. It is painful to refrain from fleecing and milking the institutions or who you work for, especially the state. But whenever the temptation arises, remember you are in a fiduciary relationship with your employers across all the disciplines under the College and the state as well. Let the pain of abstinence hit you hard. The more it hurts, the more worthy your devotion to what is right. Challenge your friend and colleague sitting next to you to live a life of honesty and integrity – a life worthy of emulation. Are we not all products of the same College of Humanities? Yet one may be true to themselves and the other not. If you are true to your own self, it is a given that you will be true to your nation. Will you let your scruples trump corruption or will you surrender to it? Reflect.

I urge you, in the name of Mother Ghana, to not let the end justify the means, but rather the means justify the end. Chew on this. What you think about you become. Ask yourself what you are going to allow yourself to become in the real world. Will you allow yourself to become a degenerate or will you allow yourself to become a patriot? I choose to become a patriot, and I urge you to choose patriotism over and over again.

Certainly, there will be times when your best will not be up to scratch. What reasons account for this could be innumerable. But as long as you give it your best shot, you will be content and even grateful for the opportunity to try. You are not ultimately accountable for the entire Project Ghana, unless of course you are the directing mind. You are responsible for your part in it. When you exit the stage, will posterity remember you with kindness? When I have played my part in life's drama and exited the national and world stage for good, I want to be able to go with the contentment that my deeds will serve as my epitaph. I invite you to think alike, dear graduands.

Focus and put in your all. Collaborate and do your part. I trust you know that friends are the best investment you can make. I assure you it is just as important in your working life as in school. Perhaps more important. You are not Titan Atlas of Greek mythology. You are not carrying the weight of the world alone. All together, we can find solutions to the problems that bog our dear nation as we welcome you into its service.

Some of you had straight "A"s. Some graduated "summa cum laude". That deserves special commendation. Congratulations. But in the real world you will not always get "A"s or be on top of your game all the time. The ebbs and flows of your working life

will soon dawn on you. You will experience failure. Don't be afraid to fail. Be afraid not to confront your fear of failure so as to overcome them rather. Just be bold and take the challenges

Play your part as best you can. I couldn't say this enough. Now that you've made your career choice or submitted to it, the future lies before you. It will not be easy but it is clear and holds opportunities. You have to keep working hard. You have gone through Legon. This fact is a paradox, for as you are ending, you are beginning. It is a start. It must be why the Americans call their congregation, Commencement. On this day of your triumphant graduation, a new door is opening for you. It's a hodgepodge of rejection and acceptance. It is inevitable. When you apply for jobs, you will either be rejected or accepted. When you are accepted, you are fine. It is the rejection that should interest us. How do you cope with it? You cannot block the pain much. But pain can bring untold rewards. Rejection might sting but usually it has little to do with you. Very often the employer just requires a different type of person.

I'm excited and hopeful to be in a room with a whole lot of young graduates who make me optimistic about the future of our dear country. The ideals our instructors have imbued and imbibed in us

in the varying disciplines of this college are what we must follow, to build for Ghana a brighter tomorrow. As the hymnist asks;

Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?

When the clouds unfold their winds of strife?

When the strong tides lift

And the cables strain

Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

May I remind you that you are a young generation and our future leaders. You carry our hopes and aspirations. Perhaps today, more than any time, you are graduating at a very opportune time – ever-advancing information technology at your service, the rule of law and democracy gaining roots rapidly. I invite you to press these to your advantage and challenge the status quo.

If you are already carrying undesirable garbage, like snakes shed skin, please shed it and set yourself upon the path of honour, valour and patriotism. Make a conscientious effort to live right by your deeds wherever the service to humanity which you are groomed for takes you; be a nation builder and not a nation wrecker by playing your part as best you can.

Let Legon be proud of you as you advance the cause of society with your exploits. Be proud alumni of the University of Ghana

and the College of Humanities. Graduands let the humanity in Humanities shine forth. I wish you the best. I thank you for your attention.

God bless the College of Humanities

God bless the University of Ghana

God bless our homeland Ghana

And make it great and strong.