



BOSTON COLLEGE

'A NEW AND GLORIOUS BEGINNING'

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE CONDOLEEZZA RICE URGES BC GRADUATES TO FULFILL THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT ACCOMPANY EDUCATION

CHESTNUT HILL, MA -- U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice brought her trademark energy and dynamism to Alumni Stadium on Commencement Day, sounding inspirational themes for the Class of 2006 while at the same time challenging its members to live up to the responsibilities that accompany the privilege of education.

"You've had a wonderful opportunity to become educated people," Rice told 3,234 graduates at BC's Commencement exercises on May 22. "But what really matters is not what you have learned and not what was said to you on this day but what you do with all the days ahead of you. May God speed you on your way."



Rice, the first African-American woman to hold the post of US secretary of state, spoke of five key obligations that graduates will face as they begin the rest of their life's journey. Chief among those, she said, was the need to work to advance human progress by rejecting the barriers of race, religion, culture and gender that have traditionally divided humanity.

"I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, a place that was once quite properly described as the most segregated city in America," Rice said. "I know how it feels to hold aspirations when half your neighbors think that you're incapable or uninterested in anything higher."

"In my professional life, I've listened with disbelief as it was said that men and women in Asia and Africa and Latin America and Russia and in the Middle East today did not share the basic aspirations of all human beings. Somehow it was thought these people were just different, and by that it was meant unworthy, unworthy of what we enjoy."

"It is your responsibility as educated people to reject these prejudices, and to help close the gaps of justice and opportunity that still divide our nation and our world," she said.



The former Stanford University provost was one of four distinguished individuals receiving honorary degrees at the ceremonies. The other honorees were Catholic Relief Services President Kenneth Hackett '68, Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants Director Pierre Imbert and Sister Elizabeth S. White, RSCJ, long-time faculty member at BC and Newton College of the Sacred Heart.

PHOTO: Clockwise from top left: Condoleezza Rice, University President William P. Leahy, SJ, Pierre Imbert, Sister Elizabeth White, RSCJ and Kenneth Hackett.

University President William P. Leahy, SJ, in welcoming remarks, urged graduates to strive to uphold the Jesuit, Catholic values that have been with Boston College since its founding in 1863.

"This institution has sought to be a place where people can come together to learn and be nourished by one another, to prepare to give to others and to be a haven for good in our society," he said.

As you graduates receive your diplomas today, you leave the relative tranquility of 'the Heights' for a world that needs individuals of intelligence and character more than ever." Fr. Leahy said. "The demands and possibilities ahead will require much of you, not only calling on you to use the intellectual gifts that were sharpened during your time at Boston College, but also asking you to make wise, moral decisions and invest yourself in bettering our own country and the international community in which you will live and work."

Rice, who holds a master's degree from the University of Notre Dame, began her 20-minute speech by acknowledging the uneasiness she felt as a die-hard Fighting Irish football fan addressing the Eagle faithful on their home turf.

"For decades I have to admit I have been on the other side of what has become known as the Holy War between our Catholic colleges, and for decades I have watched in frustration as Boston College has consistently ruined some of Notre Dame's best seasons," Rice said to loud cheers and laughter before she congratulated the Eagles on a successful first season in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Rice told graduates that their first obligation as educated individuals was to find and follow their passions, saying: "You have the opportunity to spend your life doing what you love and should never forget that many do not enjoy such rare privilege."

Indeed, she went on to explain how she had originally trained to be a concert pianist but began to have doubts that she would excel in that field. It wasn't until she walked into a course on international politics - taught by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's father - that she realized her true passion was Russia.

"Needless to say, this is not exactly what young black girls from Birmingham were supposed to do in the early 1970s, but it just shows you that your passion may be hard to spot, so keep an open mind and keep searching," she said.

Rice said the second duty of an educated person was a commitment to reason, and she urged graduates to reject the "false comfort of a life without question" and to continually examine their opinions and attack their prejudices.

"There is nothing wrong with holding an opinion and holding it passionately, but at those times when you are absolutely sure that you are right, go find somebody who disagrees," she said to applause.

Rice said graduates also must remember the less fortunate and acknowledge that merit alone did not see them through to Commencement.

"There are many people in this country and this world who are just as intelligent, just as hardworking, and just as deserving of success as you are. But for whatever reason - maybe a broken home, maybe poverty, maybe just bad luck - these people did not enjoy all the opportunities that you have had at Boston College," she said.

"Don't ever forget that. Never assume that your own sense of entitlement has gotten you what you have or that it will get you what you want." The fourth duty Rice cited was the need for educated people to stay optimistic in the face of setbacks.

"For all of our past failings, for all of our current problems, more people now enjoy lives of hope opportunity than ever before in all of human history," she said. "This progress has

been the concerted effort not of cynics but of visionaries and optimists, of impatient patriots who dealt with our world as it was, but who never ever accepted that they were powerless to change that world for the better."

A protest against Rice that was anticipated and encouraged by many on campus appeared overshadowed by support from the thousands of parents and students gathered inside the stadium. Some 50 students out of more than 3,200 stood and turned their backs as Rice was presented with an honorary Doctor of Laws degree, but all protesters remained seated during her remarks, which drew an unprecedented four standing ovations.

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