

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS - Marian Anderson

President Hatcher, Honored Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen --

It is not a very fine thing to start off by making an excuse, but it would be unfair of me to have you think that I am a speaker in the sense of those you have been hearing from time to time during your stay here at the college. However, we did accept to say a few words and that we will try to do.

Watching this procession, one could not help but think of the hours of planning, of sacrifice, on the part of those which made this day for you possible. Mothers and fathers and relatives who may have contributed in one way or another may not ask more of you than you make the best of what you have been able to learn here. You have before you your whole life, and it will bring to you in the end what you put in it from now on. If it has not been sincere, you cannot expect sincerity in return. For those of you who have done your work with a great deal of happiness, and who have enjoyed the friendship of those around you, in the busy life which you are planning for yourself when this day is over, why not have other associations with people whom you can help and from whom you can get benefit? There are so many wonderful things in life which do not cost money at all and will give you the greatest satisfaction in the world. It is of these things that I think most particularly, because in life so many of us are carried away with the business of being able to live.

Your life can have a very great and distinct meaning, and when you have sought your place in it, it would be also good to find that thing away from your work which will complement and do all of the things for you that work will later on not fill. Many of you have up until this time been rather dependent on someone else, and now you are ready in a sense to assume a responsibility which up until now you may not have felt the weight of.

There are many things in this world in which you will find a great satisfaction if you give to them your attention. I speak now particularly about an experience, or about experiences, which we have had on some of our trips outside of the United States. I know that you love this country, and it [too] can be no better than what you put into it. [There are] places away from these shores where we are trying to do a great work. It might be not a bad thing at all if some of you might make yourselves a present of a trip to see how people live in other parts of the world and to find out what they think of us and why. We were in many instances very distressed that we were not known in some quarters as we should be. We have set for most of the world a very definite pattern, and if it is in our papers emblazoned on the front page that which is spectacular, you will find the same type of thing on the front pages of papers in other countries, and these things are not always the most flattering. Those of you who have any inclination at all to be of service to this country outside of these borders, might find it a field in which you could give a tremendous amount of service. We are as you know ever on view, and what we do is big news, and it would be nice if it never had to be the kind of news that we would want to run away from when we were questioned about it.

Each of you, regardless of how you feel about the all-over picture and what you may have to do with it, yours is just as important a part as anyone else's, for like a picture, it cannot be complete without every part doing its particular work.

I would therefore say to you in this your very great day, probably the greatest up until this time, one of the finest things you can do for those who have helped to make this day possible is to find your place as soon as you may, and to do with it the best that's in you to do. There is none among you who cannot find support for what he or she would like to do, and there is an all probability a place for each of you to fill. But know this--your joy will come very often from that which you

have been able to do for someone which he could not do for himself. You are well prepared. You can be better prepared in heart and soul. And in whatever you do, let that part of you play an important part, and know that the Greatest of All Beings looks upon you to bless the good things which you do.

I wish it were possible for me to express to you exactly the things which would mean most to you when you leave this college, but you will all come into contact with many things which do not today present themselves. Would you not then in your dealings with any and everyone try to leave that person, or those persons, in the same way that you would like them to leave you. To understand and to be understood means to have a basis upon which to build any kind of structure that you wish to make. And if you wish to have understanding and patience, there's none to whom one could more fervently recommend you than to Him above.

And so to you today I would say that I wish for you the great things in life that you wish for yourselves, and I hope that what you wish for yourselves and for this country of ours will be that which He can bless. Remember that we are nothing without Him. No one of us can stand alone. When this we know, and for His guidance we pray, and with the knowledge that He has the whole world in His hands, we ask His blessings upon each and every one of you that you may have a full, rich life of wonderful service. May God bless you all.