Penn President Amy Gutmann's Baccalaureate Remarks given in Irvine Auditorium on Sunday, May 17, 2015.

Baccalaureate Welcome 2015

Parents and families, friends and colleagues, welcome to Penn's Baccalaureate Ceremony! My warmest congratulations to the great Class of 2015, whom we're gathered here to honor.

Commencement weekend is a wonderful and exciting time. These are days of well-earned celebration filled with many traditions, some of which are quite ancient.

One such tradition—the Commencement ceremony itself—was in ages past nothing short of an endurance test. More than two hundred years ago, Penn's Class of 1789 filed into a sweltering hot church house on Race Street for a Commencement that lasted *two whole days*.

Photograph by Stuart Watson

Amy Gutmann

It was July, and the graduates sweated through not one or two, but *17 speeches* in all. Some were in Latin.

I think I see some of you sweating now at just the thought.

Fortunately for all of us, our traditions have evolved, and we've learned a thing or two. We know now that when it comes to Commencement weekends, briefer is better and suffering does not refine the spirit.

This baccalaureate ceremony we celebrate today, however, is a tradition intended to uplift the soul. This is a quieter and more intimate opportunity to reflect.

Our students—this remarkable Class of 2015—have learned and grown and advanced in so many ways in the past four years. I have been fortunate and proud to share their journey and watch them grow. I know they are a potent force for good that we are about to send into the world.

This is our opportunity to give thoughtful attention to all they are capable of achieving—and our heartfelt thanks for all they mean to all of us.

Members of the Class of 2015: an ending is in sight, but so too is a thrilling beginning. Know that wherever you go, whatever good you do, you'll always have a home and a family here at Penn.

So, on behalf of everybody at the University of Pennsylvania, I applaud you for what you have achieved.

I salute you for the good that you will do.

And I'll go ahead and accept your thanks for not delivering my remarks in Latin.

Congratulations and enjoy.

Baccalaureate Address given Sunday, May 17, 2015 in Irvine Auditorium by Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, Executive Vice President of the Rabbinical Assembly.

Defining Success

Photograph by Stuart Watson

Julie Schonfeld

Faculty, Trustees, Parents, Friends, Graduates:

The purpose of this day is to celebrate the many successes that you, the graduates, have already achieved and to look ahead to your future successes.

To fulfill that purpose, we need to know how we define success.

I know how I was told to define success.

When I arrived at an institution much like this one we were handed a directory of the headshots and addresses of everyone in the class; those are the ancient origins of Facebook.

In the front of the book, taking barely a paragraph was a list of what were obviously considered the only statistics we needed to know for the incoming class of 1987—how many high school football captains, valedictorians and class presidents were among us.

Our University President gave a welcome speech which, looking back now, surprises me in its inconsistencies.

We were told of what we could expect from our college years, the laudatory aspects of the education that we were preparing to receive. All this was shared with pride; *it would be fair to call it a self-congratulatory pride* in our adulation for the spirit of inquiry and human creativity.

But we were also told to look around at our classmates, where we would find future senators and congressmen, CEOs of companies, judges of high courts, winners of Pulitzer and Nobel prizes.

It was a mixed message that the totality of human experience was being laid at our feet, but that all you needed to know about us could be divined by counting valedictorians in the Facebook, or guessing who would become the richest and the most famous.

I am now 28 years from my own graduation and 32 from my arrival on campus. I want to offer my sincere thanks to the faculty and trustees of the University of Pennsylvania for giving me this opportunity to deepen my already growing mid-life crisis.

I still want the signifiers and trappings of a conventional definition of success. I still work for them, I draw self-esteem from the ones I have attained and to be honest, I hope I still attain more.

But if I stop cultivating in myself an ability to see that most of life's successes are occurring outside those definitions, I am missing out on most of my opportunities to make something of my life for myself, for others around me and for the generations that will come after me.

Judaism's view of success tends to center around moderation, what is called in Hebrew the *shvil hazahav* or golden mean.

I want to share two texts from my tradition, one that challenges our narrow definitions of success (and here my interpretation is influenced by the work of my teachers, Rabbis Gordon Tucker and Tamar Elad-Appelbaum) and a second one, a counter-text, that describes the unanticipated negative consequences of cultivating in ourselves only altruism without the expression of our personal desires.

(continued on next page)

Address by Julie Schonfeld *(continued from previous page)*

Because we come from many backgrounds and traditions, I want to make a special note that while these ideas do originate in a religious context, I share them here as part of an ethical tradition and not from a religious point of view.

The first text is from *Ethics of the Fathers*, chapter 4, a text that dates back nearly 2000 years:

1. Ben Zoma would say: Who is wise? One who learns from every person.
2. Who is strong? One who overpowers her inclinations.
3. Who is rich? One who is happy with his portion.
4. Who is honorable? One who honors her fellows.
5. Ben Azzai would say: Run to pursue good deeds, and flee from bad ones. For the reward of a good deed is a good deed, and the reward of bad deed is another bad one.
6. He would also say: Do not scorn any person, and do not discount any thing. For there is no person who has not his hour, and no thing that has not its place.

The text does not ask who has knowledge or who has power, but who has wisdom and who has strength.

To the first question, "who is wise?" we learn that, "the wise person learns from everyone"—in other words, the measure of wisdom is not how much we know, but how much space we create within ourselves to be filled with what we can learn from other people. Wisdom is what comes in the aftermath of overcoming internal obstacles to learning from other people—whether biases, resentments, fears or even infatuations.

The answer to the second question, "who is strong?"—the person who overpowers her inclinations—tells us that strength is also the by-product of clearing away space within ourselves. If wisdom allows us to hear the guidance of other people, then strength makes us available to use that guidance—strength keeps our impulses from making our decisions for us.

To the question of "who is rich?" the text identifies the one who is happy with his portion. Shortly after my college graduation I visited the well-appointed home of a friend whose mother had hung a framed needlepoint above the kitchen stove.

It read: "You can't be too rich or too thin." Needlepoint and the kitchen stove—symbols of abundance and self-sufficiency were arranged to remind the family that there could never be enough wealth nor enough self-imposed privation to satisfy some outside judge from whom the walls of that home offered no protection. Would there ever be any success for my friend that would be, from her mother's view, enough? Would they ever be satisfied with their portion?

The text from *Ethics of the Fathers* gives us a path to real success that many faiths and philosophies have found to be enduring—we find satisfaction when we see the infinite value in others.

We find satisfaction when we come to know our staggering ability to improve the lives of other people.

All of this would seem to have us solidly on a philosopher's path to a successful life, were it not for a puzzling counter-text that weaves its way through several rabbinic stories.

According to the Biblical creation story, everything created on the first five days is described as "good" but the human being, created on the sixth day, is described as "very good."

Rabbis come to interpret "very good" as referring not only to our altruistic side, which they called the *yetzer hatov* or good inclination but also, to our selfish, self-aggrandizing side, which they called the *yetzer ha-ra*—or evil inclination. In fact, the rabbis taught that those selfish and self-aggrandizing characteristics, when balanced with the good, are essential not only for each of us personally, but for the human community as a whole.

In *Bereshit rabbah*, a commentary on the creation story, we read the following words: "Were it not for the evil inclination, a person would not build a house, would not find a spouse, would not have children and would not engage in a profession."

The University of Pennsylvania issued more than 6,000 diplomas this year, including more than 2,600 to those who earned undergraduate degrees.

Not only the ancients, but moderns have also explored this idea. Episode 6 in the original *Star Trek* is titled *The Enemy Within*. It opens with Captain Kirk beamed back to the Enterprise through a faulty transporter that separates him into two identical physical beings, one all good and the other, whom they refer to as the imposter, all bad. This "bad captain" wanders the ship, behaving much as you would expect, lying, drinking and assaulting the crew. But the crew soon sees that the good captain, separated from the part of himself that is all impulse and desire is no longer, functionally, a good captain and that the "bad captain" is no imposter, but a very real part of what makes their leader who he is.

The good captain progressively loses the ability to make any decisions, even as stranded crew members are dying outside the ship. Finally, when the good captain faces no choice but imminent death, he embraces the bad one and they are joined together in the transporter. Only when the two halves are reunited is Captain Kirk able to resume command and save the lives of his crew.

How can the part of us that is bad be good?

The philosopher Martin Buber explained the Biblical commentary that I read as follows: "It is as if the Creator gave two impulses to a person to act as two servants who can fulfill their functions completely only with genuine cooperation. By isolating [the evil impulse from the good], he turns what was supposed to serve him into his opponent. Thus a person is not supposed to beat down the evil inclination within, but to unite it with the good inclination" (M. Buber, "Depictions of Good and Evil," *The Face of Man*, p. 345).

The Talmud, a compendium of ancient discussions, describes those selfish parts of us as "the yeast in the dough." Used in proper amounts and with the proper care, these impulses enable us to do bolder things that have the potential to accomplish more good than our goodness alone could do.

Class of 2015, go ahead and pursue all kinds of success. Build houses and buildings and businesses, make discoveries, invent things, fall in love and find many ways to raise up not only your own children, but a whole generation. Pursue conventional success, but remember it not the only kind of success. The other success, found in *Ethics of the Fathers* and many other philosophies and faith traditions, is necessary for real success, for each of us and for society as a whole.

Our first text ends with the phrase: "Do not scorn any person, and do not discount any thing. For there is no person who has not his hour, and no thing that has not its place." And not only the graduates, but also the family and friends who are here today, the faculty and trustees, this is true for all of us, no matter what success we have achieved and what we yet desire. If we can learn from every person, partner our impulses to our altruism and cultivate gratitude, our hour and our place lie ever before us.

Congratulations and *mazel tov*.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Penn Commencement Address given on Monday, May 18, 2015 by Penn President Amy Gutmann at Franklin Field.

Crossing Borders, Leaping Boundaries

Welcome, everyone, to the 259th Commencement of the University of Pennsylvania!

Chairman Cohen, Trustees, Ambassador Power, honored guests, alumni, families and friends: I give you the great Class of 2015!

The University of Pennsylvania is a community where everything is nearby and where everyone interacts. Graduates, you have spent your time here within a few minutes walk of everything important: your classmates, your professors, Penn's libraries and laboratories…the Greek Lady. Your life at Penn has been shaped by *proximity*.

Living as I do, on campus in the President's house, surrounded by so many of you, I know just how energizing proximity can be. Michael and I have even found ourselves loudly energized by your proximity…at three or four in the morning!

Your Penn experience also reveals a profound insight: diverse individuals interacting in close contact strike sparks of creativity. New ideas arise in each of us from unexpected connections. When diverse people live and work closely together, societies also make unexpected leaps to new discoveries.

But what differentiates energizing proximity from stifling overcrowding? Why does one grouping give us the Harlem Renaissance or Tin Pan Alley, while another only sterile monotony or urban despair? The difference often stems from our welcoming exposure to the world.

Those who see only 'my street, my family, my tribe' may only see a future that looks exactly like their past. Creativity booms when people joyfully expose themselves to a larger world.

Exposure—I have observed—is a funny thing: you can die from it; you can be arrested for it; or it can enrich your life immeasurably.

Your experience at Penn has been this joyful, yet challenging, kind of exposure, enriching your lives through a global perspective. Your campus home has been a map of the world in miniature. No fewer than 90 countries are represented among the members of the Class of 2015. You transcend oceans and mountains. You cross borders built by geography and society. You leap boundaries made by history, ideology and faith.

When I talk about bringing the world to Penn and Penn to the world, I'm describing something infinitely more profound than time zone differences and jet plane travel. I'm imagining the future. And I'm talking about you.

[Video]

Yes, this may be the only Commencement speech ever to include the theme song from *Game of Thrones*. The contrast is most fitting…

After all, our Commencement speaker will be talking about what she's seen working at the United Nations. One is a tale of the titanic struggle of wills and a world perpetually at the edge of catastrophe. The other is a story about Westeros.

Truly, it is no coincidence that *Game of Thrones* has become a runaway hit. Despite the magic and giants, the white walkers and dragons, we all can identify something real in Westeros. It's the story of a world defined by tribal politics; a world governed through naked power, driven by violent history and ancestral hatred. I cannot help but see in it a world that is uncomfortably close to parts of our own. Its central image is a throne of swords; its central location a 700-foot-tall wall of ice that tries—but fails—to keep the other removed. When you rule on an iron throne, walls and barriers are essential to survival.

By contrast, the time you have spent at Penn has made you adept at crossing borders and leaping boundaries. But iron thrones and walls of ice persist in our world. For as many border crossings as we celebrate, there are many more who seek to close them down.

They seek to rid themselves of those they consider alien, and they insist on focusing inward: my street, my family, my tribe.

You are the antidote. Because you have embraced the world at Penn, you stand ready to move the world beyond hostility and hatred. And a good thing too. Your global perspective is what our world needs to confront its many challenges. As border crossers, many of you are already setting out to deliver clean water and affordable health care to underserved communities—and thank you for that. You setting out to provide universal education and leadership opportunities for girls and boys alike—thank you for that. You are organizing broad coalitions in defense of immigration reform so that our national borders are not barriers to economic and social justice—and yes, thank you for that as well. And that's just the start.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Amy Gutmann

By exposing yourself to a world of differences, you will continue to make great innovative leaps.

My own life began with a leap, though I was not around to witness it. It is the year 1934, in Nazi Germany, and one young man chooses to flee the only home he and his family had ever known. That young man was my father.

He traveled to India; he started a business; he began life anew. He might have remained in India for the rest of his days, but after 14 years, he took another leap. This time, to the United States for a cross-country trip, where he met a young woman from New York City. A wedding, a newly wed jaunt together to India and back, and the outcome stands before you today. When I talk to you of the life-enhancing consequences of leaping boundaries and crossing borders and a global perspective, I know whereof I speak.

In 2006, I went back to where my story began, to India. I wanted to visit the house where my father lived so many years ago.

I was welcomed in by a prominent Indian doctor living there now with his family, and he shared stories with me from when he was just a child. Some of his stories were about a man from Germany.

'I remember your father,' the doctor told me as I sat on the couch with his wife and children. 'He was a very nice man and very good at business. But he spoke Hindi with a foreign accent. So, naturally, I thought he was secretly a spy.'

Truth in point: When we live globally, we must expect the unexpected.

Today each of you crosses a very special border—between your years as a student and your worldly achievements yet to come. The unexpected awaits you. And no one can tell you exactly what will come.

But I can tell you this: We here today are sure of your abilities, confident of your opportunities and very proud of the good you now go forth to do, crossing borders and leaping boundaries!

So I ask everybody—from all corners of the globe, and across all borders—to stand together with me now. Moms and dads, spouses and partners, grandmas and grandpas, sisters and brothers, family and friends, our honored guests, trustees and faculty, please stand and show our 2015 Penn Graduates just how proud we are.

Thank you.

Remarks by Reed Pyeritz, William Smilow Professor of Medicine and Genetics, chief of Division of Medical Genetics, Perelman School of Medicine; and Incoming Chair of the Faculty Senate

Welcoming Uncertainty

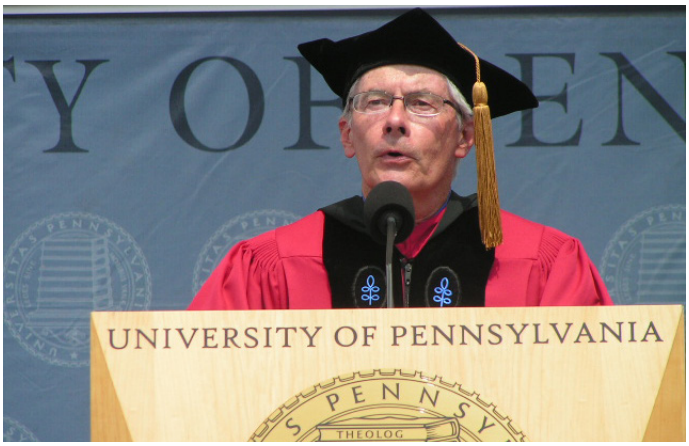
President Gutmann, Provost Price, members of the Board of Trustees, colleagues, parents, relatives and friends, and most importantly, Graduates! Five days ago, I became the Chair of the Faculty Senate of the University of Pennsylvania. I note with pride that Penn is one of only three of our peer Ivy institutions to support an independent senate representative of the entire university. So, on behalf of the 4,555 members of this faculty, give or take a dozen, I begin by quoting the name of the ship that in 1682 brought William Penn to the American Colonies: "*Welcome*"!

In addition to educating and mentoring you this academic year, Penn Faculty have employed gene therapy to cure hereditary forms of human blindness, developed a topological insulator that may one day lead to a quantum computer, discovered even more cancers that can be treated effectively with chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy, won a MacArthur 'genius' award, won several Guggenheim Fellowships and expanded the horizons of Penn to Beijing and beyond.

Tradition demands that I accomplish three tasks as quickly as possible: first, cite the number of faculty members; second, mention Benjamin Franklin, and third, bestow some advice on the graduates. Having accomplished the first two requirements, let me move to the most important.

Today all of you graduates should be full of optimism, likely tinged with a bit of uncertainty about your futures, which is perfectly acceptable. I urge you to maintain that optimism and make it a self-fulfilling prophecy. Many of you perhaps believe that you have surmounted uncertainty: you have a job; you know where you will live (even with Mom and Dad); and, you have established friendships that you believe will last a lifetime (some personal wisdom interjected here—some will, and you will be glad that some will not). Attaining what you think you want, especially early on, seemingly eliminates uncertainty. You have learned what it feels like to achieve success, like the day you received the fat envelope from Penn Admissions. And today you receive something even more important from Penn.

I mention uncertainty with some personal, professional interest, as that concept is a focus of my own research. I am a medical geneticist, and I have been struck by the irony that, as we are able to scrutinize our individual genetic codes in ever more precise ways, down to one nucleotide change out of 6.4 billion possibilities, we have more and more difficulty interpreting any given variation. This irony gives me and my genetic counselors considerable heartburn, but is typical of the health sciences today. This may sound antithetical to your parents' expectations; we faculty were expected to teach the truth and rid you of uncertainties. However, we are notorious for telling our first-year medical students that one-half of what we will teach will be viewed as incorrect in ten years; unfortunately, we just do not know which half. I have no doubt that you, like most humans, have an affinity for certainty. But if you permit me to quote Oliver Wendell Holmes, a graduate of the Penn of the North, '…certainty generally is illusion, and repose is not the destiny of man.' I can literally point to one such illusion. Gaze over the south wall of this stadium and you will see Penn Tower. Next year at this time it will be gone, eventually to be replaced by a new bed tower for the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. Nonetheless, I trust that you have learned and accepted that many certainties do exist: evolution happens; the climate is changing; the universe expands; the Higgs boson exists; vaccines are good; and regardless of who wrote them, there are Shakespearean plays and sonnets. It is also certain that you, as graduates of this great University, can confront countless substantial and important issues in the years ahead.



Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Reed Pyeritz

Among the nearly 300,000 living Penn alumni, whom you will soon join, some achieved extraordinary success within the past few months: publishing an acclaimed book on the sinking of the Lusitania; being elected president of a Federal Reserve Bank; winning an Academy Award; and being named dean of our School of Nursing. While these types of accomplishments may seem out of reach at the moment, take small steps along a selected path. If things do not evolve as you initially hoped, you can always change your plan, *but only if you have one*. Moreover, if you ever consider underestimating yourself, seek help. In conclusion, the faculty members of Penn offer our sincerest congratulations on your many successes.

See *Almanac's* website: *www.upenn.edu/almanac* for a Commencement slideshow including the 2015 Procession along Locust Walk and the University's ceremony in Franklin Field on May 18.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Penn Commencement Address given on Monday, May 18, 2015 at Franklin Field by Ambassador Samantha Power, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

Serving Community and Changing the World

Thank you, Provost Price.

President Gutmann, trustees, faculty, alumni, friends and family, and Class of 2015—has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? It is an indescribable privilege to share this remarkable day with you.

Graduates, you made it! You've got your families and loved ones—people who have been in your corner for as long as you have been breathing—here to hail you. Some even up in the cheap seats. You're surrounded by some of the greatest friends you will ever make—people who will have your backs for decades to come. I'm reminded of the William Butler Yeats poem, which ends beautifully: "Think where man's glory most begins and ends. And say my glory was I had such friends." In many ways, these bonds are every bit as great an achievement as the diploma you may frame.

One of my greatest achievements is up here on stage with me today. I got to marry your Law School graduation speaker, professor Cass Sunstein, my best friend. Cass's graduation speech yesterday was about *Star Wars* and the law—I hear some Jedi knights in the back—and our six-year-old, Declan, insists that his Dad's speech is way better than mine. But I'm hoping I get the votes in the over-six crowd. Cass may be the most cited law professor in the world and the co-inventor of Nudging, but in my house he's better known as the man who will climb onto any roof and into any pond—no matter how gross—to retrieve wiffle balls crushed by Declan, our aspiring Major Leaguer.

And let's be real: none of you graduates—and none of us on stage—would be here today if we also didn't have a parent, a step-parent, a teacher or a mentor who hadn't made what mattered to us matter to them through the years. So grads, let's give it up to our parents and our loved ones.

Now, looking back on all you've done to get to this point, you should feel a great wind at your backs. And you're going to need it. Because, Class of 2015, the world outside Penn's walls leaves a lot to be desired. That is diplomatic speak for: things are really screwed up!

Violent extremist groups like ISIL are executing civilians and selling girls like cattle in markets. Russia is using military force to lop off parts of a neighbor's territory. Thousands of migrants—most fleeing brutal wars in Africa and the Middle East—are drowning while trying to cross the Mediterranean; thousands more Rohingya and Bangladeshis are fleeing persecution and economic despair in Asia. These migrants have been smuggled or trafficked by people who take their money and then abandon them at sea. It feels, as Shakespeare wrote in *The Tempest*, "Hell is empty and all the devils are here."

Even with all that you've learned in your time at Penn, heading out into a world that looks like ours can feel overwhelming. Intimidating. Paralyzing, even. Where do you start on problems that seem so big and injustices that run so deep? How do you go about making this broken world even a little less broken?

I had those same questions more than two decades ago when I sat where you are sitting. The challenges that my generation faced also seemed well beyond our reach. And it wasn't as if warlords or dictators were about to stop in their tracks if they saw a liberal arts graduate striding purposefully toward them. While I knew that individuals had in history—and still could—make a difference, it seemed presumptuous—even pompous—to imagine that I could be part of it, that I could be one of them. And if you had told me that I, an Irish immigrant to this country who went to public schools in Pittsburgh and Atlanta, would not only get to be the United States Ambassador to the UN, but also be invited to speak at Penn's commencement, I'd have wondered whether you'd been spending far too much time drinking at Smoke's. So you have, in fact? I was a good athlete, a good friend and a pretty good student, but growing up, I was never known for my patience (a prerequisite for tolerating bureaucracy), for my ability to be diplomatic (generally a feature of practicing diplomacy) or even for my idealism (an absolute necessity for a career in public service).

And yet here I stand before you, having served in the U.S. government for six-and-a-half years, still training, I'll admit, for a black belt in bureaucracy, and having concluded that, in diplomacy, being diplomatic is a tad

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Samantha Power

overrated. But after 23 years in the "real world," and especially, especially, after my time in government, I am more idealistic than I have ever been in my life, utterly convinced that individuals can make a tangible difference in promoting human dignity and in making the world and our communities in this country a little less broken.

Now, I don't know how many future public servants or diplomats are out there today. A few? Good. Hopefully not only the ones who were drinking at Smoke's. But I know that this miraculous, miraculous institution was conceived as a place to spawn a spirit of service. In 1749, when Benjamin Franklin made the case for a college here in Philadelphia, his vision was distinct from that of the handful of colleges in the colonies at the time.

"The Aim and End of all Learning," wrote Franklin, was, "an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one's country, friends and family." That's important. Let me repeat, that "an inclination joined with an ability to serve mankind, one's country, friends and family," was at the root of the founding of this great institution.

A few of you out there may already see yourselves on the road to answering Franklin's call. You may know you have both the "inclination" and the "ability" to serve usefully. But others of you may question whether you have what it takes to serve your community or your country, much less mankind or womankind.

I've spent the past couple decades trying to find the ability to match the inclination. In the process, I've worn a lot of different hats. I've been a war reporter and a human rights defender. A professor and a columnist. A diplomat and—by far most thrillingly—a mother. And what I've learned from all these experiences is that any change worth making is going to be hard. Period. But there are four ways that—no matter the field or the profession, the country or the scale—you can improve your odds of making a tangible difference in a world that needs you.

First, and this is foundational, if you want to change the world, start by "acting as if." Prior generations have put this a different way—"Fake it 'til you make it." But see what happens if you act as if you—your little self—can narrow the massive achievement gap between our nation's rich and poor public schools; maybe, if you set out to do that, if you "act as if," you will find yourself helping tutor a girl in reading or math at the school down the block. See what happens if you act as if you can fight—you can fight—the epidemic of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo;

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Address by Samantha Power (continued from previous page)

maybe you will find yourself volunteering at an abuse hotline across town and offering comfort to someone who has no one else to talk to.

See what happens if you act as if you can promote LGBT rights in countries where being gay is still considered a crime; maybe you will take it upon yourself to convince a grandparent or parent why nobody should be denied the right to marry the person they love.

I bet if you ask President Gutmann, Provost Price, Chairman Cohen, your professors, your parents or the mind blowing other honorary degree recipients here today, they would say that they had done a bit of "acting as if" in their esteemed careers.

"Acting as if" was how I got started professionally. In the 1990s, I was deeply moved by images of mass atrocities coming out of the former Yugoslavia, and I decided to try to help. But what could I, a history major, do that was useful? I decided, ridiculously in retrospect, that my experience covering women's volleyball for my college newspaper was sufficient for me to at least try to become a war correspondent. When I got over to the region, I'd never before interviewed refugees or peacekeepers or anybody, really, besides athletes. But I moved to the Balkans and began observing the journalists around me who seemed to know what they were doing and I did my best to copy them—all the while trying to look professional. And with each story I reported, this became less of an act and more of a reality.

There's always a learning curve when one starts something new. In August 2013, I started my job as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations. Almost immediately, I found myself in some extremely tough, high-wire negotiations with Russia aimed at removing chemical weapons from Syria—a crucial task, given the willingness of the monstrous Assad regime to use such weapons on its own people.

One Sunday morning during the most grueling stretch of the negotiations, I take my son Declan to grab breakfast at a diner. He is four years old at the time and I haven't been able to hang much with him because of these round-the-clock negotiations. And of course, that's the moment President Obama decides to call me on my cell phone. Why do bosses always do that?

The President stresses the importance of these negotiations, and he urges me to find the sweet spot in my negotiating posture. "Don't overshoot the runway," he says. "But don't undershoot the runway, either."

I say, "Understood, Mr. President. I've got this." But I've been in the job for less than a month! And in my head, I'm thinking, "Where the hell is the runway?" But I found it. And I'm here to tell you, "act as if" and you really will figure it out.

My second recommendation—if you want to make change—is for you to make sure you know something about something. The beauty of this is it is completely within your control. You can start by reading more than 140-character-long publications by those who have thought about a problem before you. You can track down experts and pepper them with questions—and then read and learn some more. If you're interested in international issues, you can learn a language—another one on top of the one you already learned here. And when you believe you know something—and may even have arrived at a theory of how change might come—get out to the place where the problem actually lives. Go to the field—whatever or wherever that field may be. The field is where tidy problems get messy, and where you will have occasion to go deep, not wide.

Take my move to the Balkans back in the day—this seemed like an exceedingly narrow early career choice. I signed up for a class in Serbo-Croatian, a language with limited reach, even today in my current job; I read dense history books on the region (a part of the world that is said to have "so much history it doesn't need a future"); and I moved to report on wars that seemed far away to most Americans. Even though I focused on an extremely narrow slice of the planet, by going deep I got up-close exposure to issues that had application well beyond the Balkans—issues that all these years later are my daily bread in working on challenges all around the world—ethnic identity, international justice, humanitarian assistance, refugee returns, peacekeeping, how to reform the UN.

One's theory of change quickly gets challenged, though, when you're out in the real world. I'll give you one example. Last fall—when the Ebola outbreak was exploding in West Africa and dire projections estimated that more than a million people could be infected within a few months—public health experts identified burial rituals as a major form of transmission. That's because local custom is for family members to wash and bury the body of the deceased—a fatal practice when dealing with Ebola victims, whose bodies can transmit the virus for several days after death.

So, the international community's solution was to get the word out on this acute health hazard and dramatically scale up the number of safe burial teams. The trouble was: even having done that, the phones at the safe burial call centers didn't really ring, and people continued to bathe and bury their loved ones. Ebola just kept spreading. Finally, though, by getting out to the hotspots and immersing themselves in the data and the culture, and by listening, epidemiologists and aid workers were able to figure out why people were not calling: it turned out families of victims saw handing over the bodies to these burial teams as a breach of faith. Now, that's the kind of insight one could not get in a UN briefing thousands of miles away—one could only get it by bumping up against the problem in the real world. Armed with this understanding, a Grand Imam in Guinea went on the radio to tell people that safe burials were consistent with Islam, and urged imams of the 12,000 mosques across the country to disseminate the same message. It was a series of adaptive solutions like this one that helped bend the deadly curve of the Ebola outbreak, and will soon help end it.

Now, every individual needs other individuals by their side if they are to make a lasting difference. My third recommendation if you want to serve—along with "acting as if" and knowing something about something—is that you must persuade people to join you in your efforts.

And, to persuade people, you have to meet people where they are. It's what Atticus Finch meant when he told Scout, "You never really understand a person…until you climb in his skin and walk around in it." All advocacy is, at its core, an exercise in empathy.

I'm not talking about persuasion for persuasion's sake; I'm talking about building the coalitions that you need to serve effectively. Few were as skilled at this as Penn's founder. In October 1776, the 70-year-old Franklin was dispatched to Paris to try to win French support for the American Revolution. He immediately set about learning France's different constituencies and what mattered to each of them.

For France's foreign minister, who saw the world in zero-sum terms, realist terms, Franklin drafted a memo arguing how French support for America would greatly weaken France's arch-rival, Britain. When it came to appealing to the French public, Franklin played up the romantic ideal of America's struggle for liberty against tyranny. He also penned anonymous satires lampooning his British enemies in the press. And to win over the elite, he never passed up an invitation to a swank dinner party or salon, leading another American diplomat to complain that Franklin was, "more devoted to pleasure than would become even a young man in his station." But the diplomat missed the point; Franklin was working the room.

When he discovered—after wearing a fur hat one day—that the French saw it as a sign of his American down-to-earth authenticity—Franklin took to wearing it whenever he went out in public. So what if the hat was Canadian? Franklin was working his brand.

The point is not that Franklin was cynical; he was a true believer in the idea of American independence, and he made extraordinary sacrifices in fighting for it. Indeed, when he was in Paris pounding the pavement, his own city of Philadelphia was sacked, his home looted, and the university he founded—your university—turned into a barracks for occupying British troops. The point is that Franklin knew that to win over the French, he had to meet them where they were.

If he had not succeeded—and he succeeded gloriously, winning the support of each key French constituency he targeted—America may well have never won its independence. And Penn might still be a British barracks. Wouldn't that be awkward?

One factor behind Franklin's success was simply that he was in Paris. In Franklin, the French saw the living, breathing embodiment of a revolu-

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tion that otherwise might have seemed far away and insignificant. That brings me to my final recommendation: humanize your cause. Don't take for granted that the worthiness of your cause will win you allies; bring it down to a scale that people can relate to.

This is particularly challenging in times like ours—in which we are bombarded with an endless stream of atrocities, injustices and inequalities, flashing across the big and small screens we live in front of, and coming at us through internet pages that refresh every few seconds with just the latest bad news. It is no wonder our nerve endings are battered and our empathy muscles so worn out.

I face this challenge every day in my job at the United Nations. Even at the UN Security Council—whose job it is to help resolve conflicts—you can often sense the detachment with which diplomats read off their statements and recycle the same empty condemnations, with no expectations of changing the facts on the ground.

Last fall, President Obama managed to help humanize the Ebola crisis with a simple gesture. After a Liberian man, Thomas Duncan, arrived in the United States with the first case of Ebola, some people in our country allowed their fears to get the better of them. Some called for our government to seal the borders, and even to prevent desperately-needed American nurses and doctors from volunteering for the relief effort, though the experts were adamant that the epidemic had to be beaten at its source. And some leaders—including several not all that far from here—imposed policies that called for quarantining everyone who had returned from the region.

It was at the peak of that hysteria, which you all remember well, that President Obama invited to the White House Nina Pham, the Dallas nurse who had been infected caring for Mr. Duncan, and who had just recovered. As Ms. Pham stood in the Oval Office—free of the disease, but stigmatized, as all Ebola survivors were, as a potential carrier—the President did something very simple: he gave her a hug. It wasn't only Americans who saw that embrace; it was the hug heard around the world. When, at the President's request, I traveled to the Ebola-affected countries a week later, people were still marveling about that hug. Victims who had beaten the virus but been cast out by terrified communities felt that America had hugged them too; those who feared, feared less.

Part of humanizing means not only humanizing the bad news, but humanizing those who bring light to the dark places—people who, against all odds, are building that human dignity right back up—no matter the obstacles.

Few groups on today's planet are more sinister than Boko Haram—the violent extremists in Nigeria who have kidnapped and enslaved thousands of women and girls, and forced a child as young as seven to blow herself up in a crowded marketplace. In February 2014, Boko Haram raided the northern Nigerian village of Izghe, killing more than a hundred people and abducting scores more, including sixteen-year-old Binta Ibrahim and her sisters. They were taken to a neighboring village, where Binta recognized three child captives from her village: a two-year-old named Matthew, and two four-year-olds, Elija and Maryam. Separated from their parents, they had no one to look after them.

So Binta, who—mind you—was just 16, started to take care of them. One day, the village was hit by an air raid, and the Boko Haram fighters fled for cover. Binta's sisters decided to make a run for it, urging Binta to come with them. But, Binta said, "I had these three kids to care for and I couldn't abandon them." She stayed.

Not long after, Boko Haram forced the captives to march to a hideout in the forest. But the three kids were so malnourished that they couldn't walk. So Binta strapped Matthew and Elija to her back, and wrapped Maryam around her waist. And—carrying three children—she began to walk. She trekked for an entire day like that, and then a night; and then another day and another night. She said, "There was nothing to do but rest when I couldn't take another step, and then press ahead when I had recovered."

After two days, they finally arrived. She saved those kids' lives.

A few weeks ago, Binta, Matthew, Elija and Maryam were rescued, along with more than 700 other captives. When a journalist caught up with them in a refugee camp, where Binta continued to look after these kids, the reporter asked her why she risked her life for those three children. Binta responded, "I love them as if they are my own," pulling her fists into her chest for emphasis.

Binta is a Muslim. The three kids she saved are Christian. Tell me a more powerful rejection of Boko Haram's perversion of Islam than Binta's love for those kids.

And you can find the sources of light close to home, too. Around 15 years ago, professors from Penn's medical school noticed a growing number of Latin American immigrants showing up at the emergency room with chronic illnesses or ailments that could have been prevented. Most were undocumented, uninsured and unable to communicate in English. They feared seeking medical help could get them deported. So the Penn doctors decided to start a program to help this vulnerable community—not just treating the emergencies, but the root causes of their health issues. They called it *Puentes de Salud*, Bridges of Health, and they began holding walk-in clinics a few nights a week—sometimes in the back of a gas station or a church basement.

Puentes relied on a consistent stream of student volunteers from Penn, and community members who they trained as promotoras – or community nurses. As the undocumented population in South Philadelphia grew from around 6,000 people when the program started to some 30,000 people today—*Puentes* grew, too. Med students volunteered in the clinics. Students from the Graduate School of Education helped design curriculums. Wharton students gave financial literacy workshops. And students from other schools got involved, too.

One of them was Daphne Owen. In 2009, Daphne was helping pay her way through Bryn Mawr College by working at a local dive bar, where she made friends with a group of Mexican dishwashers. They told her about how their kids were falling behind in school because they struggled with English. So Daphne did some Googling and found her way to *Puentes*, where she eventually worked with staff to create an after-school program for the kids of Spanish-speaking immigrants. Today, that program is tutoring and mentoring hundreds of kids in South Philadelphia. And today, Doctor Daphne Owen is graduating from Penn's Perelman School of Medicine°.

Amidst all the darkness of the world, it can be easy to lose sight of all the bright spots. But look around you: they *are* all around you.

Consider this: from 1990 to 2010, the number of people living in extreme poverty in the world—people who live on less than a dollar a day—fell by 700 million people. At my last graduation—from law school, in 1999—the idea of an American state legalizing civil unions for LGBT persons wasn't even on the radar. Indeed, that year, 36 states had passed statutes or constitutional amendments banning marriage for same-sex couples. Today, the same number of states, 36—have legalized marriage for same-sex couples. And if there is justice, the Supreme Court will soon affirm marriage for same-sex couples as a constitutional right across this great land.

Class of 2015: You are going out into a world of profound challenges, it goes without saying. But the Binta Ibrahims and the *Puentes* of the world show us that—whether in Nigeria or in Philadelphia—the path to solving these big problems begins with small solutions. And it starts with individuals. Individuals like you.

You can see that in the teenager who straps three kids onto her back and her waist and walks for two days straight. You can see it in the doctors who notice new neighbors living in the shadows and extend a hand.

Penn grads, you have the inclination and the ability to change your communities, and to change your slice of the world. Act as if. Know something about something. Bring others along. And humanize your cause.

Franklin was right when he said the purpose of the education you have all just received is not to serve yourself—but to serve your community, your nation, your world. This has been Penn's mission from its conception. It must continue to be your mission from this day forth.

Best of luck, Class of 2015. Go at it!

PENN COMMENCEMENT 2015

During Penn's Commencement on Franklin Field *(far left)* Chaplain Charles (Chaz) Howard *(at left)* gave the invocation and dismissal; Swaroop Rao, C'15, *(above)* sang *The Star-Spangled Banner,* the National Anthem; President Amy Gutmann *(below)* presented the 25th and 50th reunion classes, conferred seven honorary degrees and thousands of degrees to Penn students; Provost Vincent Price *(below left)* announced academic honors and introduced the Commencement Speaker, Samantha Power.

Photographs by Marguerite F. Miller