

Penn President Amy Gutmann's Baccalaureate Remarks given in Irvine Auditorium on Sunday, May 15, 2016.

Baccalaureate Welcome



Photograph by Lisa Godfrey

Amy Gutmann

Parents and families, friends and colleagues, welcome to Penn's Baccalaureate Ceremony!

My warmest congratulations to the great Class of 2016. We gather to honor you here today. But we do so in a somewhat more thoughtful and reflective manner. If Commencement is a big bang of a celebration shared with the world, this afternoon's event, the Baccalaureate, is an opportunity to hear from a leading public intellectual—such as our honored speaker, David Brooks—shared only among ourselves, and with family. This is our time together, underscoring the value of the friendships we have formed, the importance of family and the sharing and caring Penn community that will continue

to be a cherished part of your lives for years to come.

The Baccalaureate is the perfect occasion to reflect on the power of mind and the value of clear thinking that is our common heritage as university graduates. It stems from the medieval ceremony—which is said to date back to 1432 at Oxford University—that served to demonstrate the intellectual prowess of the new graduates by giving each an opportunity to deliver a sermon...in Latin.

Fortunately for all of us non-Latin speakers, our traditions have evolved. We now no longer commit to the idea that suffering on the part of the audience refines the spirit. Instead, we believe that rigorous thinking and pellucid expression of those thoughts can indeed uplift the soul. We are very fortunate and grateful to have today a guest speaker known for the originality of his ideas and insights, who will provide excellent opportunity for a quieter and more intimate opportunity to reflect.

You—the remarkable Class of 2016—have learned and grown and

advanced in so many ways in the past four years. You are the class who saw Facebook go public, Uber become ubiquitous and who witnessed—for better or worse—the surge of the selfie stick.

Were we to turn those now-ubiquitous cameras on the moments I think define this senior class, here are some of the images most likely to be captured:

A picture of not one, but two Rhodes Scholars—Yours is the first Penn Senior Class in nearly a century to boast two in the same year.

A snapshot of Ivy League Champions—Your years here brought home more than a dozen championship titles, including historic victories in football and women's basketball.

Photos of three new winners of the President's Engagement Prizes, who over the next year will work to improve farming in India, expand the distribution of health information through public libraries and ease the transition into regular life for women released from incarceration.

Your class photos would also show two winning teams for the inaugural President's Innovation Prize: one team that will be creating new avenues of therapy for Parkinson's patients, and a second that has pioneered a new technology to remotely monitor individuals' core body temperatures over time.

And you can bet there'd be pictures of record-breaking hackathons, Penn Quakers engaging for good in our community and around the world, Spring Flings and Hey Day, that time Penn Masala was featured in *Pitch Perfect 2* and even a visit from the Pope.

You are a potent force for good that we are about to send into the world. This gathering is an opportunity to give thoughtful attention to all you are capable of achieving. It's also our opportunity to share our thanks for everything you mean to us.

Members of the Class of 2016: 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.

Congratulations and enjoy.

Baccalaureate Address given in Irvine Auditorium on Sunday, May 15, 2016 by David Brooks, author, political and cultural commentator and New York Times columnist.

Navigating Exciting Possibilities

Graduates of the Class of 2016: Tomorrow you will walk across that stage and receive your diplomas from the University of Pennsylvania. I am honored to be part of your pregame activities.

As you know I was asked to be your speaker today because I am the author and star of a hit Broadway musical, *Gutmann: The Hip-Hop Adventures of an Inspiring College Administrator*.

Many of you were moved by the songs from that musical: The one I did with Kanye and Jay-Z called "Provosts in Paris." My tribute to the Wharton School, "Mo Money, Mo Ego."

No, I'm just kidding. I'm not actually a hip-hop star, though my lifestyle was once the subject of a Snoop Dogg song called "Gin and Juice."

I'm actually here to help you prepare for the big event tomorrow. One of the things I always try to tell graduates is that when you get your diploma it's always nice to tip the college president 10 or 20 bucks just to show she did a good job.

It's also nice to slip the Baccalaureate speaker a few bills—maybe two or three thousand.

On these occasions I also always try to inspire students by telling them about the glittering possibilities in front of them.

Within just a few short years, many of you will be sleeping on your parents' couches while working for a semi-functional NGO. Others of you will have thrilling consultant careers, working on PowerPoint presentations past midnight at the Topeka Comfort Inn.

I'm here to help you navigate these exciting possibilities.

I'm here to help you take advantage of the skills you learned at Penn, like dominating classroom discussions after having done none of the reading.

I'm here to urge you to lives of public service, working on Capitol Hill while bringing the nation's top leaders coffee and sexual tension.

Mostly I'm here because Paul Krugman was busy this weekend.

So yes, I'm truly honored to be at the University of Pennsylvania.

And I'd like to talk to you about the big transition you will make tomorrow, from being promising to making promises. We live in a society that puts a lot of emphasis on freedom and personal choice. But the big thing I've learned recently is that if you spend your years keeping your options open you will lead an impotent, fragmented life.

You will wander about in the indeterminacy of your own passing feelings

and your own changeable heart. Life will be a series of temporary moments, not an accumulating flow of accomplishment. You will never be all-in for anyone or any path, because your eyes will always be wandering to some other possibility. You will lay waste to your powers, scattering them in all directions.

To have a fulfilling life you have to make promises. You have to surrender some freedom of choice to taste a higher freedom, the freedom that comes after you've settled on a direction, chained yourself to a cause and enlarged your capacities.

It is precisely our restraints that liberate us for that higher freedom. You have to chain yourself to years of piano practice to have the freedom to really play.

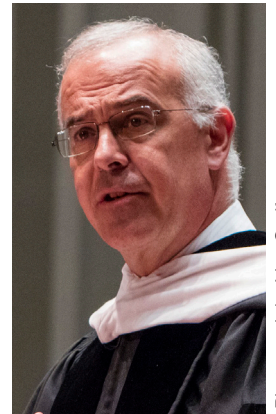
To lead a fulfilling life, most of us make four big commitments: to a spouse and family, to a vocation, to a faith or philosophy and to a community. The measure of our lives depends on how well we choose these four enduring commitments and how well we execute on our promises to them.

Of these four commitments, only the marriage decision involves an arranged ceremony at an altar, but all forms of commitment require a vow of dedication, an investment of time, an act of faith and a willingness to leap headlong down a ski run that is steeper and rockier than it appears.

Up until tomorrow, "promising" was an adjective used to describe you. When people called you "promising" they were judging you by their criteria. Starting tomorrow, "promising" becomes a verb. You will begin to make vows. Now it's your criteria that matters.

Many of you will be more boring at age 35 than you are right now. For those who are, it'll be because you mindlessly assented to the conventional criteria of success.

So how do you choose what to promise your life to? How do you choose
(continued on next page)



Photograph by Lisa Godfrey

David Brooks

PENN BACCALAUREATE 2016

Address by David Brooks (continued from previous page)

a career or vocation, whom to marry or what cause or community you should dedicate yourself to?

You can't analyze your way through these problems. You don't have enough data about who you will be in 20 years. You don't know how the experience of, say, becoming a parent or going to med school will turn you into a different person.

You can only make long commitments if you understand the permanent loves that are latent within your own heart. One thing you have to do is to try to figure out what you really desire, which is a surprisingly hard thing to know.

You can start by observing your own behavior: List the three or four things you have enjoyed doing most in life. Do they line up in a row or point in a single direction? Did they all involve the developing world or gathering people for conversation? If so, you probably should continue along one of those lines.

Another thing you can do is keep a journal. If you write only for yourself, then eventually honesty will come out and you become more articulate about your own latent desires.

Or you can ask yourself a set of sneaky questions designed to get glimpses at your hidden self.

For example, you can ask yourself: "What is the opposite of boring?" "What subject do I read about for fun and seems endlessly fascinating to me?"

A marriage is a 50-year conversation. "Have I met a person whom I can talk to for that length of time?"

Or you can ask, "What would I do if I weren't afraid?" Fear is a surprisingly good GPS system. It signals that you really want something, even if that something is on the other side of social disapproval.

Or you can ask, "What pains am I willing to tolerate?" If you're willing to tolerate the pains of boot camp, then you probably really want to be a soldier.

Alongside the phase of questioning and reflection there's the phase of experimentation—trying on different jobs or people or places to see which ones fit.

If you're going to commit to something for decades or for life it should have, as Martin Luther King once put it, three qualities. First, length. You should be able to flourish in it for a long time. Second, breadth. You should touch a lot of people. Third, height. It should pull your gaze upward and put you in contact with transcendent truth.

As my friend Fred Swaniker put it, the problem you dedicate your life to should be a big problem. You're Penn graduates. You are gifted enough to take on the world's biggest needs. It should be something your life history has made you uniquely qualified to address. You should care enough that you wake up in the middle of night worrying and obsessing about this thing.

Most of all, the things you commit yourself to should satisfy your yearning for righteousness. We all long for a lot of things. We like affirmation, status, maybe a little money, fun and sex. But though we don't talk about it as much, and don't even have a word for it, we are also all born with a spiritual hunger to lead a life of meaning. Religious or not, we all hunger for moral fullness, for purpose and inner joy. If we don't get it, we end up dry, unsatisfied, twisted and self-loathing.

It's like this: There is a part of each of our souls that is like a reclusive leopard. This is the part that doesn't care about money or status or Facebook or any of the everyday things. The leopard is the part of us that feeds off transcendence, that seeks an awareness of one's place in the cosmic order, a feeling of connection to unconditional love, truth, justice, beauty and home.

For long periods the leopard is up in the forest high in the mountains. You may forget about him for long stretches. But from time to time out of the corner of your eye, you glimpse the leopard, just off in the distance, trailing you through the tree trunks.

There are spare moments when you vaguely or even urgently feel his presence. This can happen agonizingly, in the middle of one of those sleepless nights, when your thoughts come, as Christian Wiman puts it, like a drawer full of knives.

The leopard can visit during one of those fantastic moments with friends or family—when you look out at the laughing faces and you are overwhelmed by gratitude—when you feel called to be worthy of such undeserved happiness, joy and grace.

The leopard can come during moments of suffering, when you are forced to peer into the deepest cavities of your self and you want to know how you can connect this moment of suffering to a larger story of redemption.

And then there are moments, inevitable in every life, but maybe more toward middle or old age, when the leopard comes out of the hills and he just sits there in the middle of your door frame. He stares at you, inescapably, eye to eye and face to face, implacable and unmoving. He demands your justification. What is your purpose? What is your mission? For what did you come? There are no excuses at that moment. Everybody has to throw off the mask.

Some people have no answers and have given those questions no thought. They die knowing that, and maybe trying to suppress that awful knowledge.

But we all know people, on the other hand, who have led their lives through a moral lens, who can look at the leopard face-to-face, exposing their great loves and their great brokenness.

The people who look at life through a moral lens invert the normal logic of life. Normally when we're making the big decisions we try to follow a straightforward cost-benefit logic. Does this meet my needs? Does this work for me? Am I getting more out of this than I put in?

But people who adopt the moral lens are looking for ways to forget themselves, surrender themselves, to throw themselves into something without counting the cost. They understand, if only by instinct, that their true joy is found on the distant side of unselfishness, not on this side.

People who use the moral lens don't ask, "what do I want from life?" They ask: "What is life asking of me? What problems are out there in my specific circumstances that I am well positioned to address?"

People who see through a moral lens don't ask: "How big is my impact?" They ask, "can I do this work the way it should be done?" Dorothy Sayers once wrote that if you try to serve the community with your work you will end up distorting your work. You'll be angling for applause. You'll be thinking the world owes you something. But if you just try to serve the work—if you just do your specific craft the way it should be done—you'll end up serving the community even more.

People who see through a moral lens have a different view of marriage. They don't just ask, "Is this person right for me?" They ask, "Does this person bring out my loveliness and can I love her in a way that brings out her loveliness?" "Can we together take our private passion and direct it outward? Can our morning snuggles spread outward and include our children? Can our sideways glances warm a dinner party, a barbecue, a neighborhood and a home?"

People who see through a moral lens see their own self-centeredness as the main problem in any relationship. As Tim Keller puts it, we all have a tendency to regard the other person's self-centeredness as the problem in a relationship. But selfishness in you prompts selfishness in them and if a relationship is going to succeed, somebody has to break the pattern and make a sacrifice play.

We have all, as I said earlier, been raised in an individualistic culture. That culture subtly encourages us to bargain with life, to stand halfway out and protect our interests at all times. It encourages a subtle pattern of putting everything at arm's length, or of looking over somebody's shoulder to see if something better may be around.

This arm's length pattern leads to private loneliness and public fragmentation. One of the chief challenges of your generation is to heal the social isolation we see all around us, which leads to rising suicide rates, rising mental illness, greater inequality, falling social trust, strained family bonds and a loss of national cohesion.

We are not going back to the old collectivism and conformity of the 1950s. But we can't continue with the growing isolation and atomization that have marked the past 40 years. We have to find new ways of bonding with each other. We have to find new ways of being tight. We have to do it through personal promises and personal commitments.

In one of his poems, Wordsworth describes how a moment in time can tighten the bonds between a person and a vocation. He was out for a walk one glorious day and suddenly became aware that he was a poet. He kept that commitment all his life:

"My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walk'd
In blessedness, which even yet remains."

In the novel *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* Louis de Bernieres describes how love can tighten the bonds between two hearts. An older man is talking to his daughter, describing his marriage to his late wife:

"Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident. Your mother and I had it, we had roots that grew towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms had fallen from our branches we found that we were one tree and not two."

This is where promises end. When you make a promise and live out a promise year upon year through thick and thin, no more promising is required because you are one tree. You're one tree with your family. You're one tree with your vocation, one tree with your cause or community, one tree with your philosophy or faith. You have moved from freedom to sweet compulsion.

Penn Class of 2016, in the years ahead you have to teach us new ways of being tight. You have to teach us new ways for people of different classes and races to become close. You will have to practice the heroism of vulnerability and find new ways to build community and bonds.

It starts with promises. Choosing your commitments well, carrying them out courageously, living each day for the intimate moments it offers.

I should close by noting that people who are good at keeping promises are not living life as a chore or an ordeal. They're like: "I have the greatest job!" "I have the greatest kids!" or "I love this town!"

They're not anxious about their promises. They are living out their promises. They are making the school lunches. They're debating the research findings in a lab. They're crouching in a hut in Senegal, a child's fevered forehead cradled in their lap.

Life in such moments is lived eyeball to eyeball, hand to hand and heart to heart. People in such moments are not thinking about how hard it is to keep promises. They are not thinking about themselves at all. The guards are down, the arms are open, and a leopard lies content, full and peaceful by their side.

Penn Commencement Address given on Monday, May 16, 2016 by Penn President Amy Gutmann at Franklin Field.

Friendships Across Great Divides

Welcome to the 260th Commencement of the University of Pennsylvania! Chairman Cohen, Trustees, honored guests: I give you the great Class of 2016!

Graduates, during your time at Penn, you have learned so much and grown so much.

Not only that: you have been able to capture it all on Instagram to share with your friends. What an education that has been!

Just think of what you've gained.

You have friends who barely eat a bite of food without taking a picture and sending it to you for approval.

Plus you have friends who believe the greatest single invention in the history of humanity is the hashtag.

These virtual friendships are new and wondrous. But they still do not replace the friendships you make in person, with an open mind and open heart.

Many years ago, at the height of the Vietnam War, I became acquainted with a fellow graduate student who seemed profoundly different from me. He had trained to be an Air Force fighter pilot. I had demonstrated peacefully against the war in Vietnam. He was Catholic; I am Jewish. His father was a lawyer and his family was solidly middle class. My mother and I lived on social security survivors' benefits and her secretary's income, and I was the first generation in my family to graduate college. To many at that time, these differences seemed impossible to bridge. Yet, despite these differences, we soon were friends.

Today, all these years later, no achievement, and no pleasure in my life rivals that unlikely, yet lifelong friendship with my husband, Michael Doyle.

I am a political scientist and philosopher by training. We are in the midst of a national election so vicious that it's been described as the *Game of Thrones*. But, folks, this is real, and thank goodness, it's without swords.

Why talk about friendship at a time like this?

Because in times of stress and conflict, the gifts of friendship matter most of all—in our own lives, and in the life of our society. Friendships are unique in human relations. They come into being without formal structures or explicit rules. Family, marriage, work relations—these are defined by legal rights and obligations.

But friendships are unbounded. They have no restrictions, no formal qualifications, no limits. They can spring up in the most unlooked-for places and cross the most unlikely boundaries. When they do, they lead in surprising directions and achieve unlooked-for results.

When movie star Marilyn Monroe was studying voice, her singing coach advised her to buy a recording of a little-known jazz vocalist and listen to the album a hundred times. She did, and she gained a profound appreciation for the singer's artistry. Monroe later had the opportunity to befriend the singer, who traveled the country singing in small jazz clubs. Her name was Ella Fitzgerald.

At the time, the most important nightclub in Hollywood was called the Mocambo, on Sunset Strip. Its audience was sprinkled with movie stars and its entertainment featured all the great singers of the day.

But it refused to feature Ella Fitzgerald because she was not well known, but more to the point, because she was African American. So Marilyn Monroe, then one of the most sought-after stars in show business, called up the club's owner and made an offer: if he would book Ella, she would reserve a front-row table every night of Ella's performance. The owner agreed and years later Ella would recall, "Marilyn was there, front table, every night. The press went overboard. After that, I never had to play a small jazz club again."

Friendships open hearts and friendships change minds: not only for each other, but for us all. Like Ella and Marilyn, friends who cross divides advance the wellbeing of our society. We are at our best when we embrace those special friendships that cross religions, races and all kinds of identities and ideologies.

As it so happens, these are the very kinds of friendships you have been able to forge in your years at Penn. They surround you right now. To appreciate how truly important they are and to really savor this moment, we are now going to take a quick selfie break!

This is for real. Graduates: grab your phone and grab a friend, pull them in, and capture this moment of friendship forever.

Terrific—some day you'll thank me for that!

The friendships we cherish across divides are at the heart of the Penn ethos. From your countless student clubs, your community outreach, your studies abroad, and from the world that coursed with you every day down Locust Walk, you have generated passionate intercultural connections and friendships. That is the meaning of the image you just snapped. It will become, in the years ahead, more important than ever—not just for you, but for all of us—all of society.

Never in your lifetimes have the walls that threaten to divide us seemed higher.

Mutual respect across divides has become scarce; understanding, rare; personal viciousness, rife.

Those who think differently aren't treated merely as adversaries; they are treated as enemies. But as you know so well from your experience here, it need not and should not be that way.

Shortly after Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia died this year, an image appeared in the news. It was a photograph of Justice Scalia, riding atop an elephant in India, smiling and waving. Behind him on the elephant was Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, also smiling and waving. But how could this be?

Everyone knew the two were adversaries on the Court, about as ideologically far apart as two justices could possibly be.

In fact though, the two shared a friendship, along with trust and respect, across a great political divide. They shared holiday gatherings with their families and friends. When it was announced from the Bench that Justice Ginsburg lost her husband, Justice Scalia could be seen brushing away tears.

That's what friends do. We share laughs. We share tears. And from time to time, in the jungles of life, we share the odd elephant ride. This is why, in the midst of a bare-knuckled election season, saturated with personal viciousness, I am extolling the enduring value of special friendships. Friends who don't think and look just like us not only enliven our daily lives; they also enrich our society and the entire world. They enable us to govern inclusively, to make sound policy, to build communities and societies worth living in.

And so we celebrate really good news today. You and your generation of graduates are uniquely well equipped to resist political and social polarization. Studies show that your higher education and your social networking savvy correlate strongly with more robust and diverse networks of friendship.

You understand that the key to achieving great things lies in bridging great divides.

Today is the day the Penn community of family, friends and colleagues collectively come together to celebrate your great educational accomplishments. Let us today also celebrate those deep lessons in friendship you have learned and offer to all of us. Making friends across divides and despite differences is not just a skill; it is a true virtue that will stand you in great stead for all your years to come. We couldn't be more proud.

So I ask everyone here to stand—family and friends, faculty and colleagues, Trustees and honorees. Stand with me now and show the great Class of 2016 just how proud we are!



Amy Gutmann

Photograph by Scott Spitzer

Remarks by Laura W. Perna, James S. Riepe Professor; executive director, Alliance for Higher Education; Incoming Chair of the Faculty Senate.

Apply What You Have Learned to Make the World a Better Place

President Gutmann, Provost Price, the Board of Trustees, faculty colleagues, families, friends, and most importantly, graduates:

As the Chair of the Faculty Senate of the University of Pennsylvania, it is my great honor to address you today. On behalf of the 4,400 Penn faculty—congratulations, Class of 2016!

Commencement is a time of conflicting emotions.

I hope that you are feeling pride in your academic accomplishments. Your diploma certifies that you have successfully met the faculty's high expectations.

You may also be feeling nostalgic. Commencement marks the end of a distinctive and special period. Hopefully your time at Penn has been filled with many satisfying experiences, in which you have pursued your intellectual curiosities, engaged deeply with scholarly ideas both inside and outside the classroom and developed lifelong friendships.

You may also be feeling a mixture of excitement and uncertainty about your future.

I understand this mix of emotions. Twenty-eight years ago, I was also sitting here, in Franklin Field, a member of the undergraduate Class of 1988. I had little idea what the future would hold for me—or for the world. I am thrilled to be standing before you today—but in 1988, I certainly was not imagining a path that would lead me back to this outstanding institution as a faculty member.

Regardless of your level of certainty, feel confident that you are ready for whatever the future brings. You are prepared to be the leaders that our world needs. As Benjamin Franklin is believed to have said, “You have on hand those things that you need if you have but the wit and wisdom to use them.”

As Penn alumni, we are the fortunate “haves.” We are a privileged group. Only two percent of undergraduates nationwide attend the nation’s “most competitive” colleges and universities.

With your Penn degree, you will have countless opportunities and options. With these opportunities also come responsibilities. As you make your choices, I urge you to consider how you are applying your knowledge and privilege—as well as your wit and wisdom—to make the world a better place.

Our world faces many challenges that require thoughtful and deliberate attention and leadership. As a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, you are ideally situated to provide the leadership that our world needs. There are many ways to be a leader. We lead by example. We lead by refusing to back down in the face of bullies, stinging criticism and other obstacles. And we lead by tackling the hard problems and doing what is right and just.

On behalf of the faculty, I thank you for the opportunity to be part of your educational journey. It has been a privilege to teach, mentor and work with you.

Very best wishes as you continue forward.



Photograph by Scott Spitzer

Laura W. Perna



Photograph by Scott Spitzer

During Penn's 260th Commencement at Franklin Field on May 16, 2016, Chaplain Charles (Chaz) Howard (at right) gave the invocation and dismissal; Lilly Claar, C'16 (above), sang *The Star-Spangled Banner*, the American National Anthem. Penn President Amy Gutmann presented the 25th and 50th reunion classes and conferred eight honorary degrees and thousands of degrees to graduating Penn students; Provost Vincent Price announced academic honors and introduced the Commencement Speaker, Lin-Manuel Miranda.



Making Ideas Truly Come Alive

Photograph by Scott Spitzer



Vincent Price

An immigrant's son, whose father had come from Puerto Rico to the Big Apple. He came north to grapple; to seek a better life for himself, and for his people; advising Mayor Koch on making things equal. Mr. Miranda knows the founding fathers, but he never bothered with Benjamin Franklin. You see, Quakers, he didn't go to Penn. His alma mater? That great school, Wesleyan.

As Provost, I have the honor of introducing our speaker. Now, unlike him, I don't rhyme a lot. But distinguished guests, like it or not, now's the time for me to take my shot—to show these graduates what I've got and to explain, Mr. Miranda, why you're about to take my spot. He grew up in the Bronx neighborhood of Inwood.

When he got there, he picked up a pen, and out of nowhere the show tunes came to him. He founded a group—a comedy troupe: the Freestyle Love Supreme. He wrote and directed, unaffected by rejection, and after four years elected to follow his dream.

That dream was to write and create stories to demonstrate both love and hate: People who tried to advocate for those society dominates, and how our fate can fluctuate, forcing us to recalibrate the people who make this country great.

Now, our honored guest knows that Broadway shows can open then close if the critics oppose. The audience slows. You see empty rows, and soon the petal falls off that particular rose.

But he took flight with *In the Heights*. The ticket lines snaked out of sight. And by all rights those Broadway lights burned so bright each and every night.

Then, Mr. Miranda got a call from a Ms. Tony saying something about some big ceremony. Ms. Tony said you should make room on a shelf. Four gold trophies: three for your show, and one for yourself.

A rapid ascent: this was not his intent. But why lament? It paid the rent. Yet, Mr. Miranda was still not content.

A quick look at a book and then he was hooked. An incredible life that had been overlooked. It was Ron Chernow's story of guts and glory: a man with a quill, whose grill is still on the ten dollar bill!

This was a fatherless man from the lowest station who went from poverty to help found a nation. An immigrant and striver, a man with drive. A founder's tale that had to be told in a way that spoke to both young and old.

This was a hero of the American sort: a Caribbean import, a life that was cut short; a man who wrote, and spoke, and dueling by the gun. A man who went by Hamilton.

Well, that show is still on the rise, let me emphasize; and allow me to publicize: Hello Mr. Pulitzer Prize!

You know the rest, and you know our guest. He is truly blessed with what educators try to do best: They open our eyes; they catalyze; they help us realize; make ideas truly come alive.

Graduates and guests, that's enough propaganda. Put your hands together for Lin-Manuel Miranda.

(Lin-Manuel Miranda's Commencement Speech begins on next page)



Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

Photograph by Scott Spitzer

A Penn Tradition: Penn President Amy Gutmann sat with Ben on the Bench before the 2016 Commencement as this year's Honorary Degree recipients gathered around. Standing (from left to right) Asma Jahangir, Elizabeth Bailey, Eric Kandel, David Brooks, Commencement Speaker Lin-Manuel Miranda, Penn Trustees Chair David Cohen, Sylvester James Gates, Jr., Hawa Abdi's daughter, Deqo Mohamed (who accepted the honorary degree on her mother's behalf since she could not leave Somalia) and Renée Fleming.

Penn Commencement Address given on Monday, May 16, 2016 at Franklin Field by Lin-Manuel Miranda, composer, writer and performing artist; Pulitzer, Grammy, Tony and MacArthur award recipient.

The Stories We Tell

Thank you President Gutmann, MC Provost, Board of Trustees, Faculty, Family, Mister Vice President, Undergrads of the four Penn Schools of Hufflepuff, Slytherin, Ravenclaw and Gryffindor, and dear exhausted, exhilarated, terrified graduates of the Class of 2016.

I begin with an apology.

I am the writer of *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Every word in the show—and there are over 22,000 words in the show—were chosen and put in a really specific order by me. So I am painfully aware that neither Philly nor the great state of Pennsylvania is mentioned in *Hamilton*, with the exception of *one* couplet in the song “Hurricane,” where Hamilton sings:

“I wrote my way out of Hell

I wrote my way to Revolution,

I was louder than the crack in The Bell.”

That’s it! One blink and you miss it, the Liberty Bell reference!

I am also painfully aware that this Commencement address is being livestreamed and disseminated all over the world instantly. In fact, “painfully aware” is pretty much my default state. “Oh yeah, that’s Lin, he’s... painfully aware.”

So, with the eyes of the world and history on us all, I’d like to correct the record and point out that a few parts in *Hamilton: An American Musical* actually took place in Pennsylvania.

The Battle of Monmouth, wherein General Charles Lee, in our show, “S’ed the Bed” and retreated against Washington’s orders. According to Lafayette, this was the only time he ever heard George Washington curse out loud. That’s right, the father of our country dropped his choicest profanity and F-bombs in Pennsylvania.

The Constitutional Convention, wherein Alexander Hamilton spoke extemporaneously for six hours in what is surely the most un-Tweet-able freestyle of all time, happened right here in Philly.

In fact, Alexander Hamilton lived at 79 South 3rd Street when he began his extramarital affair with Maria Reynolds, creating the time-honored precedent of political sex scandals and *mea culpa*. You guys, *The Good Wife* wouldn’t even exist if Hamilton hadn’t gotten the ball rolling on this dubious American tradition, right on South 3rd street, right near the Cosi.

Finally, I need to apologize on behalf of the historical Alexander Hamilton, because if he hadn’t sat down to dinner with James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, desperate for support for his financial plan, Philadelphia might well still be the US Capitol.

Hamilton traded Philly away in the most significant backroom deal in American history. As the guy who plays Hamilton every night, let me get into character for a moment and say, “My bad, Philadelphia.” Thank you.

But take the long view, Motown Philly. Who really won that deal in the end? Look at DC: it’s synonymous with institutional dysfunction, partisan infighting and political gridlock. You are known as the birthplace of Louisa May Alcott, Rocky Balboa, Boyz II Men, Betsy Ross, Will Smith, Isaac Asimov, Tina Fey, cheesesteaks, and you can have *scrapple*, *soft pretzels* and *Wawa hoagies whenever you want*.

You win, Philly. You win every time. Water ice.

The simple truth is this: Every story you choose to tell, by necessity, omits others from the larger narrative. One could write five totally different musicals from Hamilton’s eventful, singular American life, without ever overlapping incidents. For every detail I chose to dramatize, there are ten I left out. I include King George at the expense of Ben Franklin. I dramatize Angelica Schuyler’s intelligence and heart at the expense of Benedict Arnold’s betrayal. James Madison and Hamilton were friends and political allies, but their personal and political fallout occurs right on our act break, during intermission. My goal is to give you as much as an evening of musical entertainment can provide, and have you on your way home slightly before *Les Mis* lets out next door.

This act of choosing—the stories we tell versus the stories we leave out—will reverberate across the rest of your life. Don’t believe me? Think about how you celebrated this Senior Week, and contrast that with the version you shared with the parents and grandparents sitting behind you.

Penn, don’t front. You’re a *Playboy* magazine ranked Party School—you know you did things this week that you’re never mentioning again. I know what you did this summer!

I’m going to tell you a story from my twenties today—a story I’ve never

told in public before. I’ll tell you two stories actually. It’s my hope that it’ll be of use to you as you stare down the quarter life marker.

I am 20 years old, finishing my sophomore year at Wesleyan, and my girlfriend of four and a half years is home from her semester abroad. I cannot wait to see her again—she is my first love. I dread seeing her again—I’ve grown into my life without her. In her absence, with time and angst to spare, I have developed the first draft of my first full-length musical, an 80-minute one-act called *In the Heights*. I have also developed a blinding pain in my right shoulder, which I can’t seem to stop cracking. My girlfriend comes home. I am so happy to see her, even as my shoulder worsens. My mother takes me to a back specialist, ranked in *New York* magazine, so you know he’s good.

He examines me, looks me dead in the eyes, and says, “There’s nothing wrong with your back. There will be if you keep cracking it, but what you have is a nervous tic. Is there anything in your life that is causing you stress?” I burst into tears, in his office. He looks at me for a long time, as I’m crying, and get this—you’ll appreciate this, Renée—he tells me the story of Giuseppe Verdi. A 19th century Italian composer of some note, who, in the space of a few short years, lost his wife and two young children to disease. He tells me that Verdi’s greatest works—*Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*—came not before, but after this season of Job, the darkest moments of his life. He looks me in the eyes and tells me, “You’re trying to avoid going through pain, or causing pain. I’m here to tell you that you’ll have to survive it if you want to be any kind of artist.”

I break up with my girlfriend that night.

I spend the summer in therapy. I tell a lot of stories I’ve never told before.

My father asks my mother, “What the hell kind of back doctor... Verdi? Really?”

I stop cracking my shoulder.

The story I had been telling myself—happy guy in a long-distance relationship with his high school sweetheart—was being physically rejected by my body via my shoulder. I’d never broken up with anyone before—in my head, I was a “good guy,” and “good guys” don’t break up with their significant others when one of them goes off to study abroad. I was trying to fit my life into a romantic narrative that was increasingly at odds with how I really felt. In retrospect, we both were.

What about her story? Well, it’s not mine to tell, but I can share this much: she began dating one of her good friends the following year of college. Fast-forward to present day: She is happily married to that same good friend, with two beautiful kids. In her story, I am not the angsty, shoulder-cracking tortured artist. I’m the obstacle in the way of the real love story. For you *Office* fans: They’re Jim and Pam, and I’m Roy.

Story #2: I am out of college. I am 23 years old, and Tommy Kail and I are meeting with a veteran theater producer. To pay rent I am a professional substitute teacher: at my old high school. Tommy is Audra McDonald’s assistant. Tommy is directing *In the Heights*, and with his genius brain in my corner, my 80-minute one-act is now two acts. This big deal theater producer has seen a reading we put on in the basement of The Drama Book Shop in mid-Manhattan, and he is giving us his thoughts. We hang on his every word, this is a big deal theater producer, and we are kids, desperate to get our show on. We are discussing the character of Nina Rosario, home from her first year at Stanford, the first in her family to go to college.

The big deal theater producer says:

“Now I know in your version Nina’s coming home with a secret from her parents: she’s lost her scholarship. The song is great, the actress is great. What I’m bumping up against, fellas, is that this doesn’t feel high

(continued on next page)



Lin-Manuel Miranda

Photograph by Scott Spitzer

Commencement Address (continued from previous page)

stakes enough. Scholarship? Big deal. What if she's pregnant? What if her boyfriend at school hit her? What if she got caught with drugs? It doesn't have to be any of those things, you're the writer—but do you see what I'm getting at guys, a way to ramp up the stakes of your story?"

I resist the urge to crack my shoulder.

We get through the meeting and Tommy and I, again alone, look at each other. He knows what I'm going to say before I say it.

"Pregnant—"

"I know."

"Nina on drugs—"

"I was there."

"But he wants to put our show up."

Tommy looks at me.

"That's not the story you want to tell and that's not the show I want to direct. There are ways to raise the stakes that are not *that*. We'll just keep working."

If I could get in a time machine and watch any point in my life, it would be this moment. The moment where Tommy Kail looked at uncertain, frazzled me, desperate for a production and a life in this business, tempted, and said no for us. I keep subbing, he continues working for Audra, we keep working on *In the Heights* for five years until we find the right producers in Jill Furman and Kevin McCollum and Jeffrey Seller. Until Philly native Quiara Hudes becomes my co-writer and reframes our show around a community instead of a love triangle. Until Alex Lacamoire and Bill Sherman take my songs and made them come to life through their orchestrations. It will be another five years before *Heights* reaches Broadway, exactly as we intended it.

And then the good part: Nina's story that we fought to tell, keeps coming back around in my life. It comes around in letters, or in the countless young men and women who find me on the subway or on college campuses and take my hand and say, "You don't understand. I was the first in my family to go to college, when I felt out of place like I was drowning I listened to 'Breathe,' Nina's song, and it got me through." And I think to myself as these strangers tell me their Nina stories, "I do understand. And that sounds pretty high stakes to me."

I know that many of you made miracles happen to get to this day. I know that parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and family behind you made miracles happen to be here. I know because my family made miracles happen for me to be standing here talking to you, telling stories.

Your stories are essential. Don't believe me?

In a year when politicians traffic in anti-immigrant rhetoric, there is also a Broadway musical reminding us that a broke, orphan immigrant from the West Indies built our financial system. A story that reminds us that since the beginning of the great unfinished symphony that is our American experiment, time and time again, immigrants get the job done.

My dear, terrified graduates—you are about to enter the most uncertain and thrilling period of your lives.

The stories you are about to live are the ones you will be telling your children and grandchildren and therapists.

They are the temp gigs and internships before you find your passion.

They are the cities you live in before the opportunity of a lifetime pops up halfway across the world.

They are the relationships in which you hang on for dear life even as your shoulder cracks in protest.

They are the times you say no to the good opportunities so you can say yes to the best opportunities.

They are what Verdi survived to bring us *La Traviata*.

They are the stories in which you figure out who you are.

There will be moments you remember and whole years you forget.

There will be times when you are Roy and times when you are Jim and Pam.

There will be blind alleys and one-night wonders and soul-crushing jobs and wake-up calls and crises of confidence and moments of transcendence when you are walking down the street and someone will thank you for telling your story because it resonated with their own.

I feel so honored to be a detail, a minor character in the story of your graduation day.

I feel so honored to bear witness to the beginning of your next chapter.

I'm painfully aware of what's at stake.

I can't wait to see how it turns out.

Thank you and congratulations to the Class of 2016.

Penn Commencement Speakers: 2000-Present

2000: *Seamus Heaney*: Poet, critic and translator; 1995 Nobel Laureate in Literature

2001: *John McCain*: United States senator, Arizona

2002: *Jim Lehrer*: Executive editor and anchor, *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*

2003: *Archbishop Desmond Tutu*: Chancellor, University of the Western Cape; 1984 Nobel Peace Prize Recipient

2004: *Bono*: Co-founder, DATA (Debt AIDS Trade Africa); lead singer, U2

2005: *Kofi Annan*: Secretary-General, United Nations; recipient of the 2001 Nobel Peace Prize with the United Nations

2006: *Jodie Foster*: Academy Award winning (1989 & 1992) actress, director and producer

2007: *James A. Baker, III*: 61st United States Secretary of State

2008: *Michael R. Bloomberg*: Mayor, City of New York

2009: *Eric E. Schmidt*: Chairman of the Board & CEO, Google, Inc.

2010: *Jon Huntsman*: (C'87) United States Ambassador to China

2011: *Denzel Washington*: Academy Award winning (1989 & 2001) & Tony Award (2010) winning actor; director

2012: *Geoffrey Canada*: President & CEO, educational innovator & advocate

2013: *Joseph R. Biden, Jr.*: 47th Vice President of the United States

2014: *John Legend*: (C'99) Grammy-award winning (2006, 2007, 2009 & 2011) songwriter and musician

2015: *Samantha Power*: United States permanent representative to the United Nations; Pulitzer Prize-winning author

2016: *Lin-Manuel Miranda*: composer, writer and performing artist; Grammy (2009 & 2016), Tony (2008), MacArthur award (2015) and Pulitzer Prize (2016) recipient

To read their Penn Commencement speeches, visit *Almanac's* website.

For a full list of Penn commencement speakers dating back to 1938 visit: <https://secure.www.upenn.edu/secretary/speakers38.html>



Penn Police Officer Julie Wesley chats with Vice President for Public Safety Maureen Rush prior to Commencement, as her canine partner, Socks, is occupied by sniffing the area outside Franklin Field.

Photograph by Marguerite F. Miller

PENN COMMENCEMENT 2016

The University of Pennsylvania's 260th Commencement on May 16, 2016 was held at Franklin Field, where more than 6,000 Penn students received bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the University's 12 schools. Eight honorary degrees were awarded in various fields.



Photographs by Marguerite F. Miller