

**THE BOARD OF REGENTS  
THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

Judith Johnson  
Regent

Regents Office  
89 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12234  
(518) 474-5889

May 18,2017

On behalf of the New York State Board of Regents It is an honor to offer you our congratulations on your graduation.

No matter what adventures illustrate your personal story – this is your day in the history of your life. Your life's journey to this point has probably been marked by years of hard work, perseverance and determination. Your accomplishments, celebrated today, symbolize one of the many transitions you will make in life, and one of many accomplishments you will achieve in your life. And as they unfold, each transition will likely offer new challenges and new opportunities to celebrate success.

I understand that more than 2000 students are graduating from Westchester Community College this spring. That number represents an amazing example of perseverance and accomplishment. And the fact that you represent many cultures, many ethnicities and many world languages, is both daunting and inspiring. You represent America's greatest promise and you possess the potential to make great contributions to our democracy.

I did ask myself what I would most want you to remember about my brief comments. I know firsthand that you are going to enter a competitive workforce and it is your hope that your newly developed skills will make you a valuable asset to our economy and to your families.

I want to assure you that reaching this point in your life represents an undeniable fact; your quest for meaningful educational opportunities that expand your life opportunities is proof that your goals are only limited by your own actions.

But this is what I hope you will take away as a challenge. I hope you will be molded by a sense of moral purpose. It is a phrase used by President Kennedy in his book "*Profiles In Courage*." I hope you will focus on life goals that benefit more than yourself. You, in fact We, are the heirs of an imperfect but grand experiment, a way of life characterized as a democracy. If left untended, it could slip away from us. What happens to our nation depends totally on the contributions of our citizens.

Our strength as a nation is derived from each one of us. The goal of education (and now I quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.), is more than making a living, even though that is essential. Education can provide us with the tools needed to make the world a safer, more just place, by using our acquired knowledge for the public good.

Working together, we can make this one nation, with liberty and justice for all. And that mission — our march toward a fairer, more just, more progressive place, our march to keep the promise of our democracy alive for the next generation has a new start each and every day.

What happens to our nation in the next decade depends on what you do with what you have inherited. Find a way, big or small, to make the world safe for human diversity. You are poised to take on the work of making our planet a better place for us all.

Find your own trails. Throw your whole self into the journey. Don't let disappointments disrupt your goals. Most importantly, live a spectacular life. Congratulations and Good Luck to all of you.