

CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

*Commencement*



2015

SPEECH

*Ethan D. Estalilla*

FIRST AND FOREMOST CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE HAD MANY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACHIEVED MUCH TO BRING YOU TO THIS MONUMENTAL MOMENT IN YOUR LIFE JOURNEY. IT IS NO SMALL FEAT AND I AM FLATTERED AND HUMBLED TO GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU THIS MORNING. WHILE THE LAST FEW YEARS HAVE COME WITH EBBS AND FLOWS, CELEBRATION AND HEARTACHE I AM EXCITED TO TELL YOU THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING. WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?

THIS IS THE QUESTION POSED TO EACH OF US. HOW DO WE CHANGE OUR WORLD? THE ANSWER IS BOTH PROFOUNDLY SIMPLE AND IMPOSSIBLY DIFFICULT. IT ALL COMES DOWN TO ONE LITTLE WORD: CHOICE. THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES AND TRANSLATING INTO OUR ACADEMIC CAREERS WE HAVE ALL HAD TO MAKE CHOICES THAT ULTIMATELY HAVE LED US HERE AND SOME HAVE BEEN MORE DIFFICULT THAN OTHERS. I WAS ASKED TO SPEAK TO A GROUP OF FRESHMAN DURING THE FALL QUARTER THIS YEAR AS ONE OF THE FIRST SIX WEEK PROGRAM INITIATIVES. I GAVE THEM THE SAME ADVICE I GIVE YOU NOW. LIFE, AS IN COLLEGE, IS ALL ABOUT CHOICE. IF YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL, IF YOU HAVE A DREAM YOU THINK IMPOSSIBLE, YOU MUST ACTIVELY AND CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN. THERE IS NOTHING MORE STUBBORN THAN HUMAN WILL. IT CARVES THROUGH GRANITE, ERECTS THE MIGHTIEST OF MONUMENTS AND WOOS A CRYING NEWBORN TO SLUMBER. DR. KING CHOSE TO STAND AGAINST AN ADVERSE SYSTEM OF OPPRESSION. BILL GATES CHOSE TO SEE THE WORLD THROUGH A NEW LENS. THE SINGLE MOTHER WITH THREE KIDS AND A FULL TIME JOB CHOSE TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN COLLEGE BY MAKING SURE SHE HAD HER EYES SET ON THE GOAL. NOW I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, I'M NO DR. KING OR MR. GATES. BUT LET ME BE THE FIRST TO TELL YOU PLAINLY THAT YOU'RE WRONG. THESE INDIVIDUALS DIDN'T WAKE UP ONE DAY AND FALL INTO THE ROLES WE REMEMBER THEM FOR. THEY CHOSE. THAT'S IT. THEY CHOSE AND SO CAN YOU.

DON'T GIVE YOURSELF EXCUSES. MUHAMMAD ALI, ONE OF THE GREATEST ATHLETES OF OUR TIME PUT IT THIS WAY. "IMPOSSIBLE IS JUST A BIG WORD THROWN AROUND BY SMALL MEN WHO FIND IT EASIER TO LIVE IN THE WORLD THEY'VE BEEN GIVEN THAN TO EXPLORE THE POWER THEY HAVE TO CHANGE IT. IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT A FACT. IT'S AN OPINION. IMPOSSIBLE IS NOT A DECLARATION. IT'S A DARE. IMPOSSIBLE IS POTENTIAL. "IMPOSSIBLE IS TEMPORARY. IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING."

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AND SO I GIVE YOU THIS CHARGE. GO FORTH AND CHOOSE TO BE THE MAN OR WOMAN YOU WANT TO BE. CHOOSE TO BE THE HUSBAND OR FATHER, WIFE OR MOTHER THAT DESERVES TO BE ADMIRER. MY YOUTH PASTOR GROWING UP SPOKE OFTEN OF THIS SUBJECT. HE USED TO TELL US THAT AT THE END OF OUR LIVES ONE THING THAT WE CAN ALL AGREE ON IS THIS. OUR LIFE WILL COME DOWN TO THREE PARTS WRITTEN ACROSS OUR HEADSTONE. THERE WILL BE A BIRTH DATE, A DEATH DATE AND A TINY PIECE IN THE MIDDLE THAT EVERYONE ALWAYS MISSES. THIS IS YOUR DASH AND YOUR DASH IS YOUR LIFE. EVERY MEMORY THAT YOU WILL CREATE, EVERY FRIENDSHIP THAT YOU WILL FORGE THE LOVE YOU MAKE AND THE THINGS YOU DO WILL ALL BE SUMMED UP IN THIS INFINITELY PROFOUND CHARACTER. I CHALLENGE YOU TO GO FORTH FROM THIS PLACE AND LIVE A LIFE THAT IS WORTHY OF REMEMBRANCE. MAKE CHOICES THAT DESERVE RECOGNITION, HONOR, RESPECT AND GRATITUDE. WE DON'T GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE BACK THE DECISIONS WE MAKE. DON'T TELL ME YOU DON'T HAVE TIME, CHOOSE TO MAKE TIME. DON'T TELL ME IT'S TOO HARD, BE HARDER. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS CHOOSE. IT'S THAT SIMPLE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ATTENTION. GOD BLESS YOU IN YOUR ENDEAVOURS.

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