

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | The College

## CLASS DAY 2017

JUNE 9

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The late, widely acclaimed recording artist Prince kicked off many of his concerts with the phrase: “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to get through this thing called life.”

Well, borrowing from the elusive pop icon, dearly beloved we are all gathered here today to celebrate getting through this thing called UChicago.

I could get into the late nights and early mornings at the Reg, brutal winter winds, and the ever-daunting course bidding system...but I won't. After all, we're here to celebrate!

And despite those challenging experiences, each of us has myriad reasons to be proud today—some widely shared with our classmates, and some particular to our own personal struggles.

During occasions such as this one, it is common for speakers to encourage the graduates and all who are here to support them to aim high, and never stop believing in themselves.

But I won't do that.

If you've made it this far, you know how to *carpe that diem*.

So I won't stand here today and tell you what to do, or how to do it, but rather remind you of who you should be doing this for.

As tempting as it may be to make these graduation festivities all about us, and the time, love, and dollars poured into getting us here today, our celebration is bigger than us—it's about all of the people who will never meet us, and yet be impacted by the things we do and say.

A degree from the University of Chicago will undoubtedly open many doors, but the real task is figuring out how we can use this degree to open doors for as many other people as possible.

I'll tell you a quick story about an experience that captures my time here so well: like many of you, I spent much of my fourth year working on my BA thesis. I truly believed that the work I was doing was revolutionary and trailblazing. That was, until, the week before it was due, I ran across an article in a law journal that was in essence my entire thesis.

In retrospect, I was naive to have assumed what I was doing had never been done before, after all, there is no such thing as “new knowledge.”

But it was then that a professor reminded me that the importance of doing this work wasn't simply for the sake of my own learning, but instead to amplify the voices of those who have been marginalized.

To whom much is given, like this all-consuming, taxing yet rewarding degree, much is required, and on this campus, in this city, in this country, in this world, there is serious work to be done.

And who better to do this work than a group of people who are committed to more than remaining on the surface, who understand that rigorous inquiry requires leaving no stone unturned and no worldview deconstructed?

Those of us here, were fortunate enough to get through this thing called UChicago, so let's get out there into the newsrooms, labs, boardrooms, classrooms and communities, and do what is necessary to help as many others as possible get through this thing called life.