

Speech given by Ana Aluisy at the Fall 2010 Commencement Ceremony – 12/11/2010

Queridos amigos, we are gathered here to today to celebrate the joyous culmination of a special time in our lives. A time of sleepless nights, cram sessions, stress over papers and exams, and of course our beloved friend caffeine. But more importantly, it has been a time of growth, learning and preparing ourselves for what it is to come in our futures.

Each graduate is going to receive a diploma today. Most of us will place it on a wall, in a desk, or simply refer to it on our resume. But it is not just a piece of paper or another achievement for our trophy stand. It is a call for action to make changes, big or small, in our families, in our communities, and even globally. I hope you will remember this each time you see it, because “las acciones hablan mas que las palabras” actions speak louder than words.

When I first came to this country 11 years ago from Ecuador, I thought that my future would be limited in this new country, and that my language was going to be barrier. I felt different. Today, I have realized that being different is not a block or limitation for anyone in this country. I learned that we can accomplish anything that we set our minds to; with hard work and perseverance we can make this a better world. Richard, my friend, classmate, and co-worker is a great example and an inspirations for me. He is a motivated, enthusiastic, and gifted individual, with a passion for helping others. He also has a great sense of humor. Richard has cerebral palsy, which makes certain tasks difficult for him, but what is most inspiring to me about Richard is his speech, which is also affected by cerebral palsy, but his passion and motivation are stronger than that. Meeting Richard has been an honor for me. Working with him reinforced my belief that the sky is the limit when you work hard and do not limit yourself by any impediment. As Richard stated “having a disability is not a limitation, it only makes life more interesting.” Let’s take his wise words and don’t let any limitations get in our way.

Over the last few years, we have been given the opportunity to receive an education by a university classified as a “Research University with Very High Research Activity” by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching,” one that is now ranked in the top 10 of the largest universities in the United States. Let’s take the memory of this opportunity to make a lasting difference and to create a new world for our children and their children. The responsibility is ours, if we wish to truly make it so.

Lastly, today is also a time for being thankful to all the people that made this day possible, to our parents, husbands and wives, children, and friends for being patient with us and understanding that we had to study when everyone else was having fun...that we were cranky because we stayed up late studying...and that we were stressed out...

And last but not least, today is a time for being thankful to our professors, who taught us, and guided us with their wisdom and experience, and who believed in us enough to know we would be sitting here today. Gracias por su ayuda. Thank you.