

I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Ngunnawal people. I pay my respects to elders, past, present & future.

I also pay my respects to our esteemed Deputy Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Members of Council, Deans of Faculties, the exceptional staff, new graduates, families & friends.

It is my great honour to congratulate you on your achievements thus far. This is a day to be proud of, to celebrate with family and friends.

By now, most of you, if not all, will have listened to great speakers tell you to chase your goals, to be flexible but disciplined, focused and impassioned. Those innumerable speakers articulate those messages far better than I, so allow me to speak to you about remembering.

I knew from the earliest age, from my very first recollections, what I wanted to do with my life. I had the passion, the conviction, the grand idea. Standing all of 3 feet tall, short shorts, high socks and basketball booties on, I was convinced that I wanted to own a chocolate shop.

Because of course that's how you could always have free chocolate, right?

Fast forward a few years, and my convictions had changed, however I was no less passionate. Ok let's put away the baby nonsense, owning a chocolate shop is ridiculous... a ranch though, with horses and fences and long rides into the sunset, this, this is what I was put on this earth to do. Or I would be an astronaut, and fly to different planets and explore the stars, and travel to the ends of the galaxy. Either would be fine.

As I progressed through primary and then middle school, my paths and my passions changed as quickly as Canberra weather. I wanted to join the army, race cars, fly planes, beat Sampras to win Wimbledon, play in the NBA, drop a hit record and be crowned the best MC in history...

Clearly, my understanding of how to set realistic goals was shaped by Disney telling me I can do anything I set my mind to.

But life is not, unfortunately, a Disney movie all the time. My father passed away, and all I wanted to do was be alone.

My journey felt to be at a standstill, and all I could do was watch the dark clouds around me.

I made my way to high school in Canberra, and slowly, without even realising, my life's ship set sail again. The clouds had begun to part, as all clouds inevitably do.

As my foray into university got underway, my ambitions and interests had changed, but my enthusiasm and passion hadn't. I wanted to be a journalist, travelling the world and reporting on conflict and significant world events. I wanted to be a photographer, with my name in National Geographic and Time. I wanted to follow my parents' footsteps into the

United Nations, working on mankind's biggest problems, and I still wanted to be an NBA player. Old habits die hard.

From discovering the traditional O-Week hangover to serving on the Isaacs Law Society as President, from playing basketball for the University to playing catchup in classes I had missed because of some social event or another, my life at UC was a mix of sunshine and storms, smooth sailing and, at times, angry waves.

In other words, University life was preparing me for "real" life.

While at UC I was extraordinarily privileged to qualify for a scholarship to the University of Georgia, where I found both my intense passion for justice and my absolute certainty that the professional basketball dream was well and truly over.

I then talked my way into a summer program in Paris, at the Sorbonne University, to study comparative legal systems. As I landed in Paris, for the very first time in my life, I felt overwhelmed. After a semester at the University of Georgia, playing basketball and debating the law with some of the greatest legal thinkers in the world, I should have been overjoyed to finally be in my father's adopted home, the city I had studied and read about and loved for as far I could remember.

The excitement and joy of walking to the Sorbonne for the first day of class was clouded by the memories of my father.

That giant of a Viking had made me feel invincible; his dream had been to see me walk into the Sorbonne one day, and now, as I approached that famous entrance, all I could see around me was the storm of loss.

I was supposed to be standing here with both parents beside me, proud at how far I'd come.

Then, in what felt to be the darkest part of those thoughts, I remembered.

I remembered the voice of my mother, cursing the tie she was attempting to tie on me on my first day of a new school, not long after my father passed.

I remembered how she had encouraged me endlessly to pursue study abroad, how she had supported me financially and emotionally as I spent months in the states.

I remembered how proud she was when I told her I was accepted to the Sorbonne, how this little woman who nevertheless towered over my world spoke of the dream she had with my father to see me study at that university with no regrets, no sadness, no darkness.

As I stood there, in front of that enormous door, feeling the presence of centuries of scholars who had passed underneath those very same arches, the weight finally fell from my chest.

The storm I had thought would never leave, was no storm at all anymore.

Like every storm before it, it had passed, and the memory of it, though still strong, was just that, a memory, and not something which could hold me back any longer.

My plans may have changed through those years, my course may have been diverted from what I had so meticulously planned and longingly hoped for, but my destination was still the same. I was still passing the ports I had wanted to pass all along, I was still heading towards my goal.

I remembered, that day, all of the storms I had encountered, all of the barriers, all of the restrictions, all of the seemingly impossible days, and yet, there I stood.

I have had many such moments in my life, where the storms ahead seemed too great.

Battered, bruised, humbled by the experiences, I remind myself daily that I have weathered every storm. Every experience, every test, every challenge, has led me here, and I remember that every day I am at the helm of my ship is another day, another opportunity to sail towards my goals.

I remember the Sun will always shine again, and that the great moments in life, the successes, the triumphs, the happiness, is never lost simply by the presence of storms.

And so for you, this is a day to remember.

To remember those late night cram sessions before exams.

To remember the panic before handing in an assignment.

To remember missed deadlines, frustrations at your grades, the feeling of having to decide whether to go out for a drink or 6, or stay in and study.

To remember the times you chose to party, and to remember the times you chose to study.

To remember the times when your classes and your assignments meant nothing compared to daily life; when financial, emotional or relationship concerns seemed a far greater priority than the 1200 pages you had to read by next week.

This is a time to remember every single experience you have had to this point, good and bad, and most of all, to remember that through every one of those experiences, you are here today.

Whether your name has been called out today because everything went according to plan, or, like myself, your name was called out in spite of all of the times it seemed you would not be here, your name was nevertheless called out.

Henley so wisely spoke to us about being the Masters of our Fate, the Captains of our Soul.

This is a day to remember that even when there were storms between you and your goals, you Captained your ship so you could be here today.

This is a day to remember how some storms made the journey difficult; perhaps the cold rain of struggling with concepts and classes made a portion of your journey feel hard and almost unbearable.

And yet, here you are.

This is a day to remember how some storms made you feel as though you could not progress; perhaps the pressures of family life or the economics of the daily grind made it seem as though your ship was standing still.

And yet, here you are.

This is a day to remember how some storms seemed to cover the entire sky, kidnapping the sun and making you lose your bearings, wondering why your ship was here, and not knowing where to go next; we've all lost loved ones, faced challenges we felt would break us, struggled to deal with the magnitude of the world on days when we've felt so insignificant, so small, so helpless next to tragedy and heartbreak and loss, where the idea of classes and assignments paled to the events of the world around us.

And yet, here you are.

No one's journey here has been the same, and no one's journey has been without storms, but, my UC family, every storm breaks.

No storm lasts forever.

Every challenge you have faced thus far, you have overcome to reach this goal.

Every moment of self-doubt, of pain, of loss of footing, you have overcome to reach this goal.

No storm lasts forever, and no example of that is greater than the tragedy our fellow humans have faced in Christchurch this week.

Through the darkness of ferocious hatred, the pelting agony of senseless violence and death, through the waves of anger and frustration and loss, see the rays of sun that are humbly, stoically shining through.

See the outpouring of love and resilience so many have shown, watch the way each storm cloud dissipates with every yell of the Haka across the world.

The world has been here before. We have seen these storms.

Like all storms, this will break, and we are better prepared for further storms ahead.

You have been here before. You have seen these storms.

Like all storms, this will break, and you are better prepared for further storms ahead.

Remember today, and remind yourself every day from here on out, that you have weathered storms before.

Remember you always have the helm of your ship, and that no storm can stop you from ultimately reaching your goal.

Remember, today's achievement is not that you passed a few exams. Today's achievement is not that you memorised some concepts or expressed a thought in a way someone else liked.

Today's achievement is that you have reached a goal no matter what life has thrown at you, a goal that has taken perseverance, and strength, and the support of many around you, some of whom may be sitting here today.

Today's achievement is that no matter the storm, you are living testament to how bright the sun shines compared to any of those storms you have faced.

It is my absolute honour and privilege to be here with you today, and I am filled with pride to watch you set sail towards your goals.

Congratulations, class of 2019. The world is better for you in it.

Thank you.