

Siena College
Commencement Speech
May 21, 2005

It is indeed an honor to stand here among such respectable colleagues all of whom are practicing scholars and creative educators.

Scholarship and education are two pillars of the bridge that connects us, the teachers, to you, our students.

A bridge that connects our world, built upon what was, to yours, as prospects of what will be.

A bridge that will extend as you transform the knowledge you gained in your years as students to the gifts you will present to our universal society as its citizens.

Standing here before you, the Class of 2005, I am reminded that as we begin the new millennium, our greatest challenge as intellectual human beings is to maintain our individual beliefs while understanding a world of multi-nationalism, multi-culturalism, multi-ethnic and multi-religious practices.

I am reminded that the global village knows no borders and as the residents of this village—which through the double-edged sword of technology has expanded to include the whole world—we are no longer limited to the geographic, philosophical or religious boundaries of our predecessors.

I am reminded that education can no longer be limited to the mere transference of knowledge; rather it must include the whole person-body, mind and spirit.

I am reminded that we, as the educated, must stretch beyond our own boundaries and find new definitions and new vocabularies to re-ignite the creative fire that the philosophers, mystics and shamans from every culture and tradition have shown to exist in each of us.

Standing here before you, I am reminded of the time, some quarter of a century ago, when I stood where you are now, listening to the words of my teachers, who, for one last time, tried to guide me toward creating a life of my own choosing.

I chose to live in theatre, because theatre serves as a means of self-exploration.

I have come to appreciate my art, as a way of viewing life in microcosm and understand that the emotions in *Antigone* or *King Lear* or *The Cherry Orchard* or *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, though separated by centuries from each other and from us, are really one and the same.

That love, hate, jealousy, passion, envy, revenge, loyalty, betrayal are as much a part of living now as then.

I chose to live in theatre because, as an artist, a scholar and an educator, I could strive to connect what has concerned mankind throughout history to the daily experiences of my audience, my readers and my students.

I chose to live in theatre because theatre is the medium that allows for all these messages to come through.

A medium that allows us to bridge the past to the present.

A medium that allows us to contemporize the wisdom of those before us.

And **that** is what has informed my scholarship for the past twenty-five years.

I have also learned that education is what is left inside you when you have forgotten all that you learned.

When the tools that were given to you are no longer effective.

When the *how to* of the books you have read no longer applies.

It is then that you will embrace the tradition you have become acquainted with.

The tradition that has survived the test of time.

The tradition that attracted you to this specific college in the first place.

A tradition of Tolerance, Acceptance and Love.

It is this tradition that will connect you, the sheltered individual, to the global society within which you are a citizen.

A citizen who has a vision for the future of an institution while acknowledging its past.

A citizen who understands the passions of youth while realizing the values of the old.

In short, a citizen who, to paraphrase Harold Clurman, will “be an organizer, a teacher, a politician, a psychic detective, a lay analyst, a technician.”

A creative individual who understands people and inspires confidence.

A citizen who, in Rumi’s words, is “a great lover.”

Siena has made you great lovers of scholarship and creativity.

Now it is your turn to take this love and share it with your world.

Thank you.