

Revised Speech for Alumni Reunion Luncheon (Includes Mickey Ross Memorial)
May 31, 2009, New York Hilton

Thank you for that kind introduction, Jane.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to be with you today to not only update you on what's happening at The College of New York, but also to celebrate:

- The 25th reunion of The City College of New York Class of 1984;
- The 40th reunion of The City College Class of 1969;
- The 50th reunion of The City College Class of 1959;
- The 60th reunion of The City College Class of 1949,
- And the 70th reunion of The City College Class of 1939.

It is truly wonderful to have so many of you here who have chosen to come home to Alma Mater at this time to celebrate the anniversaries of your graduations. And, I am especially thrilled that we have two tables filled with members of the Class of '39.

I want to acknowledge the presence among that group of one of the most courageous journalists of the 20th Century, Daniel Schorr, as well as another great journalist here today, Dan's colleague at CBS, Marvin Kalb.

Before I continue, though, I need to share a bit of sad news. We learned last week of the passing of a member of the Class of '69, a true son of City College, Michael Mickey Ross.

Mickey and another member of the Class of '69, Bernard West, formed a creative partnership that spanned several decades. Together, they helped produce and create some of the most famous programs in television history, including *All in the Family*, for which they earned Emmy Awards in 1973. Mickey later worked on *The Jeffersons* and *Three's Company*.

Last year, he gave back to his alma mater in a major way, endowing the Michael and Irene Ross Program in Jewish Studies and the Michael and Irene Ross chair in Hebrew and Yiddish. His legacy will live on at City College, ensuring that future generations of CCNY students will have the opportunity to study and benefit from his generosity and to honor his name.

Dan Schorr, Bernard Kalb and Jane Tillman Irving are part of the great legacy of City College alumni who used their journalism education here as springboards to launch their careers. Not only were highly successful journalists, but their reporting did so much to enlighten the dialogue on important issues.

As you know, City College alumni have distinguished themselves in virtually every field: the arts, medicine, law, engineering, architecture, business, public service and education, to mention a few. You, your classmates and the students who preceded and followed you have set proud examples for today graduates to live up to.

In a few moments, you will hear from a member of City College's Class of 2009; someone whom I have complete confidence will make his mark upon the world, as well. I am referring to City College's newest Rhodes Scholar, David Bauer. Jane will tell you more about David shortly.

The City College Class of 2009 has nearly 2,800 members. It's one of our largest graduating classes in a long time.

Unfortunately, it is graduating in the midst of one of the most severe recessions to hit the economy in a long time. A few weeks ago, another CBS News correspondent, Kelly Wallace, was on campus to report on a public sector career fair we held for our students. In her report, she mentioned that nationwide less than 20 percent of college graduates had lined up jobs, compared with over 50 percent a year ago.

I wish more members of the Class of 2009 could meet their brethren from the Class of 1939 because your stories would, no doubt, inspire them. You graduated at a time when not only was the world still coping with the Great Depression, but it was also on the eve of the greatest conflagration it has ever known . and, hopefully, ever will know.

Yet, after that terrible war ended, America entered into one of the longest periods of prosperity and growth it has ever known. And, thanks, in part, to your City College educations, you were able to benefit from that growth.

I am confident the members of the Class of 2009 will find their way, just as all of you have. I base my confidence on what we have seen from them so far . what they have accomplished at City College and what they have had to cope with to get here and stay here.

Our Office of Communications and Marketing just created a web site to celebrate some of the Great Grads in the Class of 2009. It contains profiles of 12 of our students . David among them . who not only reflect the diversity of City College but represent every school and division of the College.

Their academic achievements and stories inspire us to do what we do at City College: Help promising men and women from modest and diverse backgrounds go on to virtually limitless possibilities. Let me tell you about three of them.

Marcus Childs Moore was a young violinist from Alabama who moved to Harlem and came to City College to become a jazz musician. Not only did he become an accomplished performer has toured with the Harlem Symphony Orchestra and Winton Marsalis, but the stories, dreams and struggles of his student peers helped to redefine and bolster his social conscience. As a result, he decided to go to law school and he now is narrowing down offers of admission from 12 institutions.

Cynthia Carr-Johnson is a 49 year-old career civil servant from Far Rockaway who didn't have a chance to go to college right out of high school. She became a part-time student in the Division of Worker Education, our program in Lower Manhattan for adult students. There she rediscovered her love of literature and excelled academically: she graduates with a 3.9 G.P.A. Next fall, she will enter the evening division at The Julliard School, and she hopes to work toward a Ph.D. in her approaching retirement.

Ayelet Haran's journey took her from Israel to San Francisco, back to Israel and, finally, to City College. Here, she developed an interest in political science. She paired that interest with knowledge of the wine industry that she gained in California to conduct independent research in France on that country's wine industry and its national identity. She has been accepted into Columbia University's M.P.A. program and hopes to do public interest work related to fair trade after she completes her masters.

The accomplishments of David, Marcus, Cynthia and Ayelet epitomize what has been an extraordinary year at City College. In addition to David becoming a Rhodes Scholar, our second in four years, City College students have won this past year:

- A Truman Scholarship, our third in four years;
- A Javits Fellowship, our second in four years;
- A Hays-Brandeis Fellowship, and
- Two Fulbright Teaching Assistantships.

We also have a 2008 graduate of our M.F.A. program in Media Arts Production, Jeremy Joffe, who will soon find out whether his thesis film, "The Bronx Ballet", has won the gold, silver or bronze prize in the 36th Annual Student Oscars.

These achievements reflect not only on the students who are excelling but also on the members of our world-class faculty, who serve as mentors and role models. As Ayelet Haran said about our faculty, "they are willing to give you their all if you are willing to put in the work."

And they are accomplished in their own right. Over the past year we have seen, for example:

- Michael Sorkin, Distinguished Professor of Architecture, elected to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences.
- Michio Kaku, Henry Semat Professor of Theoretical Physics, chosen to host a 10-week television series based on his best-selling book "Physics of the Impossible."
- Myrah Brown Green, Distinguished Lecturer of Art, have one of her quilts selected for a special exhibit in Washington to honor the inauguration of President Obama.

Not only that, but we added to our faculty throughout my eight years as President, including strategic hires in each of the six departments that make up The Grove School of Engineering over the past two years. Some of these senior-level professors are world leaders in areas such as renewable energy and hydrology.

They put City College in a position to compete for research funding at a much higher level than before. In addition, their presence offers our students opportunities to participate in cutting-edge research that will give them an advantage when they go out into an increasingly competitive job market.

As I mentioned before, the City College Class of 2009 faces a challenging environment as it embarks beyond our campus. But, I am confident that it goes forth prepared to confront the challenges in its path.

Our students have tested their mettle in our classrooms and growing up in the neighborhoods of New York. They have been fortunate to be supported by a nurturing and committed world-class faculty as well as so many alumni, like yourselves, who identify with them and are willing to extend a hand in support.

So, on their behalf, I thank you for your love of and support for Alma Mater and the examples you have set for our graduates to aspire to.

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