

Good morning and welcome. Board of Directors, faculty members, parents, distinguished guests, and most importantly: GRADUATING CLASS OF 2017!

It is an honor to be here today, and to be able to give this speech, which, I hope, will inspire and motivate you.

As ancient Chinese philosopher and writer Lao Tzu once said; “New beginnings are often disguised as painful endings.” A phrase I cannot find more appropriate for our graduation day. We have approached this day with both eagerness and nostalgia, as it marks the end of one of the most memorable chapters in our lives.

The nostalgia we feel is provoked by our human nature, a fear of the unknown and conflict towards change. Instead of following our default nature, I believe we should accept change in ourselves and around us.

I do not want you to see this as the complete closure of a chapter or the finalization of it, but rather as a moment you should take in, in order to better appreciate what you have obtained from the past 18 years of your life. I have obtained from this school not only the information we are supposed to study and learn academically but gained knowledge from crossing paths with most of the people sitting in this room today.

Coexisting for this seemingly short period of time with all of you has taught me the value of friendship, responsibility, perseverance, loyalty, the importance of standing out and embracing who you are and where you come from, and it has also taught me that you can learn from everyone and that any person can teach you something.

This is what I want to expand on: the way we learn, our education.

Besides the somewhat obvious reason that we are graduating today because we “learned”, the reason I was drawn to choose education as a theme is that learning comes in all shapes and sizes.

I want to take this moment to thank all of our parents, who accompanied us in our journey, you were our first teachers in life.

We entered this school as children, and our time here has changed us, it has made us evolve into unique individuals. Change was very good, and it was caused by all the experiences we lived together, with our teachers, directors, peers and all others that make up the school. They have all made us who we are today, by setting an example, or simply by letting us get to know them.

Needless to say, we don't only learn from people, we also learn from situations; the environment you live in shapes you and there is no way around it. You can only control the way it changes you, and it depends on your ability to learn something from it all. Venezuela's current situation offers a lot to learn.

I hope that from the scarcity and poverty you learn to be generous; that corruption teaches you to be honest; that from death, you learn to value other's lives and your own; that crimes remind you of the importance of justice; that in the face of hate, you appreciate love, given and taken; that from witnessing a country at its worst, you find motivation to build it up from the ground, as it is our generations responsibility; most importantly, I hope that oppression never let's you forget to treasure and defend liberty, and stand up for what you believe in, in the same way many have done here in the past months. And may your roots be forever tied to this benevolent soil, from which we sprouted and to whom we owe our growth and formation.

With this in mind, CLASS OF 2017, you have one job left: you must set out to find your purpose in this world. Once you do, cherish what you already know, keep on learning and always be the best person you can be.