

Good afternoon everyone ; thank- you for the honor of allowing me to speak today.

As you may know, Oprah spoke at Harvard on Thursday ... They gave her a plane, a hotel, and a limo. What do I get? .... validated parking!

Quincy College did a nationwide search for a speaker and they came up empty-handed. ....so here I am.

I've lived in Quincy for 20 years. The home of two presidents and the greatest place on earth.... for an emergency pedicure, manicure, and massage..... Ok, that's the end of the jokes.

This really is an honor, and as I prepared my speech, I asked some students what they wanted to hear. They said they wanted to know if they could make a difference in their lives. As I thought about that question, I thought of the people who I've known and who have inspired me in my life; and have made a tremendous difference!

I grew up during the Vietnam era. When the vets came home, there were many of them living on the street. What happened? A few guys from South Boston, Chelsea, and other parts of the city decided to start the New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans – which soon became a model for the rest of the country.

Will McDonough, the legendary sports writer, saw a need in his hometown for better sports facilities. What did he do? He formed the Hingham Sports Partnership... and we are now in our 18<sup>th</sup> year.

Five years ago in my hometown of Charlestown, I saw a girl I went to high school with pushing a baby carriage. I asked who it was; and she said it was her granddaughter. Her daughter couldn't take care of her because she had succumbed to the epidemic of oxycontin in our cities. What did we do? We started a program, where young people tell their stories to other young people about their battle with addiction. We are now in our fifth year and we've spoken to thousands of kids.

In each case, someone saw a need and asked, what can I do? Then the answer came. It all began with an idea and then others got involved. These are just a few examples.

Thursday night, I had the incredible honor of working with the greatest musicians in the world at the Boston One Fund at the Boston Garden. This was a case of each person taking his talent and using it to give back to our city. There I was the youngest of five of a longshoreman, who literally broke his back for his family. My father spent one full year in the hospital with a broken back. There wasn't one night when he came home from work that he wasn't in pain. He raised his family and fought in World War II and lived through the Great Depression. Talk about guts!

As someone once said, we are not human doings; we are human beings. Every horrific event we've gone through, I ask myself what am I bringing to the table? If the question is important, the answer will come. We all have something we can give to each other. Sometimes the greatest gift we can give to others is our attention, to be fully present. There is an elder who needs a good listener. There is an animal that needs to be adopted, or a tree that needs to be planted.

We are passing this beautiful, pristine planet on to you and it needs you to save it. Literally, my generation has failed. We need you to do better than us.

Congratulations on your graduation! If you ask the right questions, and give back with everything you have, you'll have a meaningful, fun life ... And when you are asked to give a commencement address, you'll look back on your life and say, wow, I didn't blow it.

Thank- you....enjoy your day.