

Good Morning fellow graduates, families, special guests and PHILLIPS Staff. My name is J.D.

I am fortunate enough to stand up here today as the senior speaker for the Class of 2019.

Before I go any further, I just want to assure everyone that I will not be like a preacher, I promise to make this short and sweet.

An author by the name of Zig Ziglar came up with a principle called the ‘3 C’s of Life’: Choices, Chances, Changes. Mr Ziglar said, and I quote, “You must make a choice to take a chance or your life will never change. The greatest and most persistent blockages to your progress in life usually comes from a single source ----- yourself.”

My time here at PHILLIPS can be described as metamorphic. As metamorphic as a caterpillar that then becomes a butterfly—I have gone through many changes and I can say with certainty that It was here with love and the support of staff members and certain students, that I learned self-acceptance, patience and compassion.

When I first came to this school, I was a bit shy. Eventually I warmed up to the environment as well as the staff and students. Based upon common interests such as food, travel, music and pop culture, I became more engaged. I soon realized that PHILLIPS staff and my peers were going to be the family who helped me when it came to getting a job, dealing with a tragedy, and whenever I needed to talk—staff would listen without interruption or judgement. I really feel as though throughout this journey, I got a chance at redemption and for that, I am forever grateful.

Before I conclude my speech, I would like to read a prose that I have written and would like to dedicate to my fellow graduates. It is called Endurance Road.

We're at the end
The end of the road
End of a journey
Which will lead to beautiful new beginnings
This path we walked on was to
Prepare us for life
Prepare us for the future
We've gone through
Trials
And tribulations
So let's bask in the triumph
Let us not forget those who helped us
Supported us
Pushed us to extreme limits
For without them we would be lost
As we move forward into our future
Never Forget your up rise
Never let yourself fall hard
And never let yourself be controlled under anyone's influence
We decide where our lives will advance
So be strong
Be independent
And excel in your future
Congratulations, Class of 2019! We made it!