

**Cathleen P. Black,  
President, Hearst Magazines**

**Hamilton College Commencement**

**10:30 a.m.**

**Sunday, May 24, 2009**

**Clinton, New York**

President Stewart, members of the Board of Trustees, distinguished faculty, parents, families, friends... and graduates of the Class of 2009:

Thank you for the honor of speaking to you on this important day. The first thing I want to say to you graduates is... Congratulations!

I am pleased and very proud to receive this honorary degree. Congratulations also to my three fellow honorees, John Adams... Stuart Scott... and President Rebecca Chopp.

My goal today is to applaud you and... to share some thoughts on your journey ahead.

But first... who am I and how do I happen to be your commencement speaker?

Perhaps you're thinking... why not Michelle Obama? Or Hillary Clinton? Or Paul Lieberstein – Toby on TV's *The Office*... who I *now* know is a Hamilton graduate.

I bring this up because when I gave a commencement address last year, one student blogger opined before the big day that she'd never heard of me.

"Cathie Black, who is *she*?" she wrote. Actually, she posed the question a little more forcefully than that... you can use your imagination.

Another blogger, defending the choice of yours truly, posted that I'd written a bestselling book, *BASIC BLACK: The Essential Guide to Getting Ahead at Work and in Life*.

Another chimed in that I had a pretty cool job, president of the large magazine company that publishes *Cosmopolitan*, *Esquire*, and *Oprah* magazine, among others.

But not before blogger Number One surmised that maybe her parents should bring her Gameboy to Commencement to offset her boredom.

There are two things to know about me, upfront:

First: I speak from the heart of a business executive who *has* a heart. I do have a cool job... but I also have a husband and family I dearly love, friends I cherish, and causes I passionately believe in.

Second: my business... media... reflects a sea change that is under way in our country and our culture.

That is...

... while print and broadcast once largely delivered mass information in *public* service... technology has now put it equally at our *personal* service.

Past generations marveled that they could travel by land... sea... and air. *Your* world connects by Facebook... Twitter... text... and video.

I am waiting for *TIME* magazine to name as its next “Person of the Year”... the thumb.

You have a whole new vocabulary and some old words have whole new meanings.

If something went viral when I was young, I stayed home from school.

YouTube has changed all that.

Two words: Susan Boyle.

A few weeks ago, this unknown Scottish woman captivated the world with a song on a TV show called, “Britain’s Got Talent.” In just nine days, her performance was downloaded more than 100 million times on You Tube. That’s 81.5 million *more* views than President Obama’s Inaugural speech.

Technology has transfigured how we communicate.

... and because of that... there has never been a more critical time... to do so with *clarity, creativity, and care*.

You are very lucky that this college puts the highest value on communication.

We need your written and verbal fluency... and the intellect that informs it... in business and medicine... to bridge cultures... and find cures.

We need those same skills in teaching and the arts... to inspire students ... and touch souls.

We need those skills to re-imagine cars... and then build them.

There is no job in the world today – or role to be played – that does *not* demand first-rate communications skills.

That is a truth that cuts across *all* media... .. print... broadcast... digital... every possible way we connect to and with each other.

From hieroglyphics to Hulu, people have *always* wanted to know about their world.

**It gives them a sense of control in their lives.**

**It grounds them to their time in history.**

**It roots them in communities.**

**As all humans have, since time began, we feel compelled to share what we know and seek out what we don't.**

**Besides your communications skills... you are lucky in another way:**

**A liberal arts education prepares you to take life on.**

**This is not because there has never been a greater need for philosophy majors.**

**It is because on a liberal arts campus, inquiry is fearless.**

**You'll find that it takes intellectual courage to change the world... or change your mind.**

**Speaking of what's on your minds, I have to assume that getting a job is right up there on your playlist. (Guess what, your parents are thinking the same thing!)**

**So, are there any jobs out there?**

**YES.**

**An abundance?**

**No.**

**But please remember that there are many paths you can travel.**

**Maybe yours is not a job right away.**

**Maybe it's grad school.**

**Maybe it's the Peace Corps.**

**Maybe it's community service.**

**Or the military.**

**Or... be an entrepreneur and start your own business.**

**If it is a job... do not expect to find the Sorcerer's Stone on the first try.**

**Any job is an experience that will help you more clearly define what you really like doing.**

**There's a phrase: "Follow your bliss."**

**The truth is that you can't locate your bliss first on Google Earth and then map its shortest route.**

**I prefer something a little less lofty. Such as: follow your passions. Your interests. There are things you genuinely *enjoy* doing. Pursue them.**

**Like Harry Potter, let your intuition amaze you sometimes. The fruits of that may surprise... or dismay... your parents and friends. So what?**

**Confound expectations!**

**And how thoughtful of the global economy to maximize your opportunities to do just that!**

**A recent *New York Times* story told about Wharton business school graduates trying to enter the field of finance at its all-time low.**

**The high-paying jobs they expected are just not there. At least not now.**

**Who planned on banking... tanking?**

**These new grads found themselves thinking about other careers for the first time in their lives.**

**One took the Foreign Service exam.**

**Another considered rabbinical school.**

**Other paths suddenly appeared: working in Dubai... importing wine... Teach for America.**

**Confound your *own* expectations!**

**I urge you today to think not so much about doing the expected... and to think instead about being agents of change.**

**Agents of change are innovators... initiators... and, yes... instigators.**

**It takes a willingness to evolve.**

I could not, for instance, 10 years ago... envision the day when I'd spend 30 percent or more of my time as a publishing executive on digital media.

Or... that in my 12 combined years at *USA Today* and then as the head of the Newspaper Association of America... that newspapers would face such a challenged future.

Or... that the world would be so globally integrated that some 30% of our magazine company's profits would come from 200 international editions in 55 languages in 100 countries.

The top seller worldwide is *Cosmopolitan*! Today, there are *Cosmo* editions and *Cosmo Girls* in 59 countries and countless cities from Moscow to Beijing and Jakarta.

You know the world is changing when the most popular American magazine for young women is also #1 in countries that, for decades, didn't exactly welcome us with open arms.

Every generation has the chance to be agents of change. Yours has more than a *chance* to effect change... yours has a *mandate*.

To help you prepare for it, I'm going to share what's worked for the most successful and accomplished and... this is important: *caring* people that I know.

People who do well *and* do good.

They start with ambition... and also heart.

They strive for balance in their lives by filling them with work, yes... but also family... friends... faith... causes and commitments.

They use both their passion and their resources to have an impact on the lives of others.

A few famous names come to mind... Bono.

Bill and Melinda Gates.

Warren Buffett.

Oprah Winfrey.

Paul Newman.

But most of this nation's real contributors are not famous.

What they are is... generous. With their hearts... with their help... with their love... with their spirits.

Many of them surround you today.

I'm no Dumbledore in the enlightenment department... but I was lucky enough to have generous people set amazing examples for me.

They include my parents and siblings and kids... mentors and colleagues. CEOs and charity volunteers. And... the love of my life, my husband of 27 years, Tom.

May you all be so lucky in finding a partner to share in your success... and, yes, even just the ups and downs of your daily life.

From all of these people I've learned:

Emulate those you esteem. Say no to the world's cynics and haters. Work for people, companies, and causes you admire.

Admiration is great. Respect beats it hands down. Success is ephemeral. Think about who you want to be, as a person most of all. It's not *what* you are... but *who* you are... that counts.

Reach for a full circle of life – what I call the 360-degree life. Contentment needs both gratitude and enthusiasm. Don't wait to give back... give first. Be pro-active in your work... your community... and your relationships.

Know that, ultimately, the real reward of both work and love... is paying them forward.

Be hopeful. Be appreciative. Say thank you more often than please. Especially to your parents who have gotten you this far, often with sacrifice.

Move forward with optimism. It is attractive, affordable and good for your health.

Be good to the planet.

I'm impressed that being "green" here at Hamilton is important. Carry it with you.

Companies are turning green, too.

The Hearst Tower was the first gold, LEED-certified building in New York City. We built it for maximum efficiency with recycled materials and wood from protected forests. We collect rainwater on the roof.

The planet needs both your green mindset and your green commitment. Please. We are counting on you!

And please...

Stand up for diversity.

This country had a defining moment last year. You will always remember that America elected its first African-American President in your senior year at Hamilton.

Diversity was nationalized in your time.

It has never been more critical to embrace differences in the pursuit of common goals.

As a woman in the generation that first broke the gender barriers, I've spent my career promoting diversity in the workplace in its broadest definition.

It's about results, success, and achievement... not where you come from or what you look like.

Also, you can only hope to understand the world's complexity by staying informed.

So, get the day's news... every day.

You probably will not start *your* day, as I love to do, reading two or three newspapers in print format.

You'll get your news when you want it... how you want it... and where you want it.

However you get it...

... Please support the First Amendment. Recognize its critical importance to citizenship. Every time you connect with the larger world through a free press... you engage in a conscious act of democracy.

One more thing: take risks.

I mean calculated, well-reasoned ones.

Nothing astonishing happens by playing it safe.

Earlier this decade, the Dow was at historical 10-year lows. Apple Computer could have cut costs... people... and products.

Steve Jobs had a better plan. He thought: *Innovate. Introduce great new products.* Color! Ear buds! iTunes!

Laugh *a lot*.

Don't ask why, you'll find out along the way. Just do it.

Lastly, treasure these last four years. They have made you who you are.

**The friends you made... the risks you took... your teams... your clubs... your classmates... your roommates.**

**... Your hard work and long hours and Senior Thesis. Your professors who are now friends. Even the first daffodils after a long, cold winter.**

**... Cherish all of it.**

**You have much to be proud of!**

**This is the perfect day for hope and optimism.**

**As agents of change, you can't help but surprise *us*!**

**Dare to be great.**

**Dare to tread your own path.**

**Dare to dream.**

**Dare to care.**

**I wish you all the best of luck.**

**Thank you... and... Congratulations to the Hamilton College Class of 2009!**