



High School Graduation

June 7, 2009

Speech by Noah Robbins, Class of 2009

Before I begin, I'd like us all to take a moment to acknowledge something very beautiful that is here with us today. I'm talking about my Popsicle tie, which I've worn for every special occasion since sixth grade. With that said, I'd like to dive into my speech.

So I've been trying to figure out why you guys chose me to make this speech. There were several ways I could've gone about finding out. I suppose I could've gone up to each of you and asked why you wanted me to speak, but I was afraid I might learn that some of my close friends voted for one of the other candidates. So I decided to simply imagine why I'm here, and what people wanted me to talk about.

My best guess is that you thought I could give you a little piece of wisdom, something I've come to know about the world we're about to enter. Let's see how much I actually know about that subject. Here are two quick stories that, I think, only two people in this room know.

The first one goes like this: I once walked into a Burger King, went to the counter at the front, asked for a cheeseburger and small strawberry shake, and then immediately sat down at one of the tables, because I expected them to bring my meal to me. That's story number one.

The second and even more embarrassing story is this: I once got lost walking from the Tenleytown Metro stop to Georgetown Day School. Now for those of you who don't know where the Tenleytown Metro stop is in relation to GDS, let me just say that it is almost impossible to get lost walking between these two places. In fact, you can pretty much see one from the other. Anyway, I'm fairly certain it was one of the first times I had taken the Metro to this particular location by myself. To this day, I don't know how I got it wrong, but I do know that I ended up asking a mailman for directions to school, and I had made so many wrong turns by that point that he didn't know where it was. Either that, or it was his first day on the job. In either case, after wandering around for a while and beginning to panic, I ran into a fellow student who kindly walked with me the rest of the way, pointing out my tremendous stupidity as he did so in true

GDS fashion. That's story number two.

Now, you might be asking yourself why I decided to tell these stories, since they don't seem to be relevant to graduation in any way, shape, or form. The reason is that I want all of you to know, right off the bat, that I know absolutely nothing about living in the real world. And this is somewhat problematic, seeing as how it's the job of a graduation speaker to talk about how high school has prepared us to go out into the real world with confidence and, more importantly, competence. How am I supposed to talk about this momentous event, when the only knowledge about the real world that I have at my disposal is 400 episodes worth of MTV's *The Real World*, a show that, I'm told, is a better depiction of college life than the real world?

Now as I understand it, there are a few differences between GDS and the world out there. One, in the real world, there are more than just three or four, open, non-closeted Republicans. Two, in the real world, if someone is offended by a show like, say, *The Producers*, they simply don't see it. Three, unfortunately, the next time we royally fail a written exam, we won't feel compelled to stick it on a wall and flaunt it proudly. And last, and I know this because my father is a lawyer, the only time you will ever have to do involuntary community service in the real world is if you get convicted of a felony or misdemeanor.

But, in all seriousness, we would be kidding ourselves if we were to say that we have any idea what we're getting ourselves into. We've all been raised on reality television, and sure, shows like *Flavor of Love* will indeed come in handy when we find ourselves inevitably chasing after a former rapper's heart (it clearly came in handy for one GDS alum), but the truth is, we don't really know what reality is. And so we're left with one question. Has high school truly prepared us for what's out there? The answer is definitely, no, absolutely not. But that's okay. Precisely because we have hardly any direct experience with the real world, we can change it.

For instance, when I had no idea how to get to GDS from the Metro, I kept thinking, "If only these street signs weren't so confusing. How can it be a river and a road?" When I made the mistake of waiting for the Burger King staff to serve me my meal, I thought, "Well, they should've made the process a bit clearer. Perhaps some instructions on meal-ordering etiquette taped to the wall would've done the trick." I wanted to change the real world, because I had no idea what was going on. And for us, though I'm sure none of you would make the same mistakes as me, we'll all want to change the world as it is, because we will be so confused. As we've seen in this

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last Presidential election, it only takes eight years of nonsense and confusion to motivate people to change things for the better, and putting aside for a moment the fact that the Obama girls ended up going to Sidwell, things have changed for the better.

So the next time someone says they're prepared for the real world, laugh at them, sneer at them, and if there's time, punch them in the face. If they try to put today's celebration into concrete terms and quote Bob Dylan with "How does it feel to be on your own?" retort with one of his incomprehensible lyrics, like "The sun's not yellow, it's chicken." If they quote the Beatles and say "All you need is love," shout back "I am the eggman, I am the eggman, I am the walrus. Coo-coo-ca-choo."

In short, the only modest wisdom I can offer is this: the best way to prepare for the real world is to be completely unprepared, to accept that it, much like these lyrics, will be difficult to figure out. For if enough of us are baffled, lost, and waiting for our cheeseburgers and small strawberry shakes, then eventually, we'll be able to change the real world into what we want it to be, but I could be wrong. After all, those stories about me are true. Thank you so much.