

Huntington High School's 151st Commencement

Valedictorian Juliana Coraor's Address

I asked Kaja to introduce me because I wanted you all to see the person who is responsible for who I am today. Besides cooking for me and giving me rides, she has been my best friend since the moment we were born. Although we bicker and squabble at times, I know she will always be there for me even when we part ways in the fall. I love you, baby sister, and don't ever forget that.

It took me forever to write this speech, not because I had nothing to say but because I had too much to say. Should I talk about our experiences in high school, our transformation over the years, or some of the numerous successes we have had at this school? Who should I thank for helping us get this far: our parents, our teachers, or our friends? (Probably all of them.) What lesson should I ultimately say we all learned from high school: how to pass math or how to properly ask someone to the prom? Finally, I realized that all of these questions were leading me away from what graduation was truly about. It isn't about what we have done or have learned in the past, it is about what we will do and will learn in the future.

Graduation is not a time to lament leaving all of our friends behind; it is a chance to wonder about what new ones we will make in college, in 20 years from now, or even in 50 years from now. It is a time to question what life changing experiences we will have, and whether they will be for better or for worse. What will we discover in the future? What will we inspire? And ultimately, where will we end up?

However, as exciting as the future may seem at first glance, understandably it also gives us all cause for apprehension. Up until now we have proclaimed our independence and self-reliance, but for all of our statements, we still were minors and went home every night to our parents. After high school, though, we will no longer be able to rely upon our parents or other adults to the same extent that we did earlier. We will be on our own in a way we have never been before and frankly that's pretty scary.

This means that it is more imperative than ever that we understand who we are and accept that each of us is fundamentally different from the rest of the people in this world. We are each unique and incredibly gifted human beings, all with special talents that will help us to succeed in life. It is up to us to recognize and use those talents in the best way possible.

So ultimately, I ask you to picture in your mind what you will become: a doctor, a fashion designer, a businessman. Remember that dream you have always had, whether it is to be rich, get married, or simply just to be happy. Finally, keep those thoughts in mind as you venture forth from here into the world. Be yourself. Be different, and have confidence that you will get to wherever you are meant to be in life. If you do all of that, there is no need for me to wish you good luck.