

I am humbled and honored to be able to welcome you to this event on behalf of our community. Malcolm X said “Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today” We are proving, by being here, that we are preparing. But, who are we? We are parents, we are immigrants, we come from different socio-economic backgrounds, we speak different languages, and we have all walked different paths.

I am inspired by all of you.

I am inspired by those of us that due to documentation, our government has deemed un-worthy of a subsidized education, however, you work, pay the full tuition, and still maintain the grade point average needed to qualify to be here.

I am inspired by those of us who are parents, trying to navigate going to school, working, and raising a child or children, juggling three very different, but very important roles and trying not sacrificing any of them.

I am inspired by our support systems. The Hostos Faculty, as well as, our families and friends that support us because we cannot do everything. We need them to help facilitate our academic achievement.

Finally, I am inspired by where we are going. This is the beginning! We have accomplished so much to get here, and we are continuing to accomplish great things by being here, but now, we need to focus on what we are going to accomplish in the future.

We are academic leaders within Hostos Community College, but with leadership comes responsibility. We need to constantly look for solutions.

Not only do we need point out what is wrong, but we also need to actively work on making things right. We need to listen to what others have to say, even when they speak in the most quiet of voices. For that reason, we must address the issue of people who have not been given the opportunity to speak or who do not feel as if they are being heard. We need to help people whose support systems have failed, and help them as they try to navigate a difficult and sometimes cruel world. And it is a sad truth that some of our leaders, for all their propaganda and promises, have made no real changes and many youth have been left disenfranchised.

It seems that every week this term we heard about atleast one Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered student who has been betrayed by an uncaring and callous society. Every week, the news media introduced us to a different young person who believed that their only escape was to take their own life. Please take this moment now to reflect on those who were denied the ability to excel.

I am aware there will always be obstacles to success, and that is why I am also proud of our triumphs and successes. We have found a way to succeed despite not having the “proper documentation”. We have succeeded despite being parents. We are here despite the lack of support systems to help us.

In continuing forward we must not forget the people who have not made it, and the reasons why they are no longer with us. We must use that knowledge as fuel to keep our fires going. No one is going to give us anything or make it easy, so we need to go back to our individual communities and show them that just because things are they way they are, does not mean that is the way they have to be. That is the power that achieving academic excellence provides. That is the power that we have. And we are here to celebrate that! Congratulations!