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**Topic:** Miscellaneous items  
**Date/Time:** 5/22/2006 3:02:54 PM  
**Title:** Sulzberger's commencement address  
**Posted By:** Jim Romenesko

*New York Times publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr.'s graduation address at SUNY New Paltz*

Sunday, May 21st 2006

Good morning and my most heartfelt congratulations.

As the father of two relatively recent college graduates, I know how important this moment is to all of you. Whether mother or father, you are now breathing a huge sigh of relief. Your child has the possibility of a future and, while the bills remain to be paid, at least they've stopped growing.

But as much as I'd like today to be about us parents, I know it's not. It's about the rest of you our children and our future. So, to all of you well done.

This is my first ever commencement speech and, depending on your reviews, maybe my last.

Worse, the truth is I even skipped my own graduation. It was a glorious day. My cousin and fellow graduate and I heard the road calling. Motorcycles; speeches no brainer. Thank goodness it's gray and overcast today, so most of you are here.

Given my lack of commencement experience I prepared for today the way good journalists are supposed to -- I reported out the story. I read what generations of other commencement speakers had said and what themes they hit.

Ninety five percent of them come down to this: "Today you enter the real world. Follow your heart. Find what you love and do it."

Who can argue with such wisdom? It's sort of a motherhood and apple pie statement. It sounds so easy.

So let's all tip our hat to the honesty of our favorite non-newscaster, Jon Stewart of the Daily Show. Two years ago he told a graduating class at William and Mary:

"So how do you know what is the right path to choose to get the results you desire? The honest answer is this. You don't. And accepting that greatly eases the anxiety of your life experience."

As a journalist; as a media executive; as a human being -- I come to you fully aware of the need we all have to heed Mr. Stewart's words and ease our anxieties. The vagaries of life are enormous, and it is those very vagaries about which I want to talk with you.

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By Vanessa Gezari

I'll start with an apology.

When I graduated from college in 1974, my fellow students and I had just ended the war in Vietnam and ousted President Nixon. Okay, that's not quite true. Yes, the war did end and yes, Nixon did resign in disgrace but maybe there were larger forces at play.

Either way, we entered the real world committed to making it a better, safer, cleaner, more equal place. We were determined not to repeat the mistakes of our predecessors. We had seen the horrors and futility of war and smelled the stench of corruption in government.

Our children, we vowed, would never know that.

So, well, sorry. It wasn't supposed to be this way.

You weren't supposed to be graduating into an America fighting a misbegotten war in a foreign land.

You weren't supposed to be graduating into a world where we are still fighting for fundamental human rights, be it the rights of immigrants to start a new life; the rights of gays to marry; or the rights of women to choose. /CONTINUED BELOW

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**Date/Time:** 5/22/2006 2:59:24 PM  
**Title:** Sulzberger's commencement address  
**Posted By:** Jim Romenesko

You weren't supposed to be graduating into a world where oil still drives policy and environmentalists have to relentlessly fight for every gain.

You weren't. But you are. And for that I'm sorry.

Starting today, it will be more and more up to you to decide what world you will bequeath to your children (yes, most of you will be having children it just goes with the territory).

As you continue to make the

choices that define your life and by the way, attending and graduating from college was a critical one you also will be defining the world you live in. Think of it as your personal version of what in the scientific world (or perhaps the science fiction world) is known as the butterfly effect. The butterfly effect holds that the smallest of actions -- say, the flapping of the wings of a butterfly in the mountains of Bolivia -- can lead over time to enormous consequences -- say, a hurricane in Africa.

Each of you will face many crossroads, some of them seemingly small and inconsequential. You will choose at each point whether to be bold or hesitant; inclusive or elitist; generous or stingy. And each one of your choices will result not only in how people define you. Each one will help shape the world you make for the rest of us.

So I have a plea and I have a piece of advice. The advice is to focus on the small decisions, because they add up very quickly. And I don't mean what job you take or what town you live in. Those will change as you change. I mean decisions like whether to pick up that overturned trash can or whether to stop for that stranded motorist. Those are the decisions that can change our world just as surely as a butterfly can create a hurricane.

Yes, it's important that those of us at The New York Times have the courage of our own convictions and defend the rights of our journalists to protect their sources or, after much debate and discussion, publish the news that our government is bypassing it's own legal systems to tap into phone calls made to and from the United States.

But those big decisions rest on a stable foundation which has been built by thousands of small decisions from the way we protect our reporters and photographers in war-torn areas such as Iraq (and even then lose too many) to how we've shattered the glass ceiling that for too long stopped women from moving into the highest levels of leadership.

And my plea is: engage. Our world needs you. It needs your energy and your caring; it needs your commitment and your values. If we don't get them our

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society all of us will continue to aimlessly drift, failailing to make our country and our world a place that makes us proud.

By Vanessa Gezari

Engage. Help make decisions.

Vote. Read a newspaper (what, you thought the publisher of The New York Times wouldn't get there?) Knowing what's happening in your world, your country, your neighborhood is the critical precursor to being a citizen of a democracy. Each one of you who forsakes your role in keeping our democracy alive by either inaction or, perhaps worse, by action based on ignorance, threatens all the rest of us. So, read a newspaper and build a community.

As you already heard, I'm here in large part because I'm a rock climber. I work in New York City but I come to New Paltz to clear my head and batter my body against those beautiful cliffs up there. And this ties in to another bit of reporting I did in preparation for today. I found what may well be one of the shortest commencement speeches every given.

It was 1941. Following what was no doubt an excessive introduction, - sort of like mine - our speaker walked to the lectern, glared out at the assembled multitude and in his trademark bark intoned: "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never -- in nothing, great or small, large or petty -- never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense."

And then Winston Churchill sat down.

With a philosophy like that, Sir Winston would have made one hell of a rock climber. Life is relentless. When you think you've made the crucial move -- what in climbing parlance is called The Crux -- it always throws you another one. And another. And another.

These are the vagaries of which I spoke earlier in these remarks. In my experience, the only way to prepare for them is inside each of you. It is not about the job you have or the money you make. It is about commitment and courage; it's about caring and fortitude. It's about supporting those around you and, just as importantly, it's about letting them support you. In the parlance of the climber, trust that you're [indecipherable].

Engage; get the small decisions right; never give in and please -- please build us a world of which we can be proud. Go make a damn difference.

None of you wants to be standing where I am 30 years from now apologizing to the next generation of bright and shiny college graduates.

Thank you.

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