



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SPEECH BY DR. VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW,  
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
DURING THE 57th GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD  
ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2017 AT THE  
CHANCELLOR'S COURT AT 8.00 A.M.**

**Dr. Fred Matiang'i, Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Education,  
Science and Technology**

**Other Cabinet Secretaries present**

**Prof. Peter Mulwa Mbithi, Vice-Chancellor**

**Chancellors of sister universities**

**University Staff**

**Parents and guardians**

**Distinguished guests and most importantly, graduands,**

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**Good morning!**

**I want to make today's graduation speech short and  
painless so I hope to keep you awake just long enough  
not to fall asleep!**

**Let me begin my address today by borrowing the  
wisdom and eloquent expression of William Ernest  
Henley.**

**Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.**

**In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.**

**Under the bludgeonings of chance**

**My head is bloody, but unbowed.**

**Beyond this place of wrath and tears**

**Looms but the Horror of the shade,**

**And yet the menace of the years**

**Finds and shall find me unafraid.**

**It matters not how strait the gate,**

**How charged with punishments the scroll,**

**I am the master of my fate,**

**I am the captain of my soul.**

**I chose these words deliberately for one reason...that  
they are the embodiment of the struggle and triumph  
that we celebrate today.**

**When a child is born, it is born with a seed for both good and evil. As it grows, its parents and larger society water these seeds and the two continually struggle to outgrow each other. Yet, good and evil continue to coexist in this constant struggle to the end of a person's life. For these reason, one is always confounded with two options: to do that which is good and right or to succumb to the seduction of evil ways.**

**Today we live in a society where opportunities for evil abound. Many of us fall prey to envy, gluttony, greed, lust, pride, sloth and wrath because it is convenient to do so. We exploit and oppress those we should serve and praise those we should starve. The path of truth and honesty is becoming a decongested street for want of choice by many of us. The premium that was put paid to truth is slowly losing its currency. That is the society we live in!**

**Yet with all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, I chose to believe in a better world. I chose to believe that from this cohort of graduates can go out into the world strong in mind, body and character men and women who will remain faithful to the ideals of humanity. I chose to believe that, like Ernest Henley, in the clutch of circumstance and the bludgeoning of chance, you will neither wince nor cry aloud but will stand unbowed and unafraid in defense of right. When**

**you lose courage, when you feel like losing hope and giving up, when you feel like lying never to get up again, recite the words of the *Invictus* and you will be inspired enough to wake up and go on.**

**Graduates we send you into the world as our ambassadors. We, your forbearers may have fallen short of being the perfect role models. Be better than us. Heed the word of the scriptures that you may not**

**be corrupted or conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is good and acceptable and perfect. You will be faced with many odds including those hell bent on keeping you down, stifling your growth, stealing your thunder and extinguishing your candle that theirs may appear brighter. In light of all these, never lose hope, never despair and certainly light yourself another candle! Sometimes you will succeed**

**and sometimes you will fail. Always take from what Theodore Roosevelt once said about the man in the arena, that:**

**“credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does**

**actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly..."**

**Finally graduates, as you go into the world, go in peace. You have our blessings to be the best version of yourselves. May the best of life's tidings be in your stead. Be your brother's keeper. Whatsoever your duty in this world, do it as perfectly as you can. As the late Sr. William Geoffrey Griffin once said, this world is full of people who do their duty half-heartedly, grudgingly and poorly. The world is full of people who sacrifice their principles and sell their souls for money**

**and/or fame. Don't be like them. Stand for truth and  
you life will be happy and fruitful.**

**May God bless you all, may He bless the University of  
Nairobi and may He bless Kenya.**

**DR. (MRS) VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW,  
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**