

**2018 BG MEXICO RETREAT
FRIDAY NIGHT OPENING SPEECH- FINAL Edition**

FRIDAY, WELCOME TO CANCUN!

Built up from a sand bar 50 years ago to become Mexico's number 1 travel destination, Cancun inspires images of spring break debauchery. But further south, here in Mayakoba's gated community, there are also spectacular sunsets, but not as many tourists, as well as beautiful sand, sun, tequila, and fantastic Mexican food. As you bike, boat, golf-cart, or walk around this ecologically-diverse paradise, you'll be able to enjoy not only stimulating Grove panels but also conversations and connections with new and old friends while participating in numerous fun activities.

For 2018, Pantone has chosen purple-ish ultra violet as the color of the year because it communicates originality, ingenuity, and visionary thinking. It is found in the cosmos; the wellness movement; and was a favorite color of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright, who wore a purple cape when he was trying to be creative.

(IT'S ALSO THE MOST COMPLEX...)

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It's also the most complex of all colors because it takes two shades that are seemingly diametrically opposed- *blue and red*- and brings them together to create something new. It's truly a reflection of what's needed in our world today. Not, what's going on in our world today. Which is an interesting distinction. It suggests that Pantone is not just observing and predicting, it's going proactive.

Pantone states "We wanted to pick something that brings hope and an uplifting message." This is the color-psychology equivalent of the theory that you feel happier when you make yourself smile. Or the "Field of Dreams" mantra: "*If you build it, he will come.*" In the Pantone version, if you wear it/drink it/drive it, solutions may appear. That's a pretty ambitious belief. Will people buy it? Well, at this stage, a lot of us may try anything. Gird yourself. We may be in for a new kind of purple reign.

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Hopefully, many of you will be winning and wearing purple ribbons very quickly. Every Grover is a leader in their communities! Leadership brings with it responsibility, and responsibility, in times of serious adversity, brings emotional turmoil and strain. There are times when even the best leaders lose their emotional balance. When the adversity is threatening enough or comes without warning, it can unbalance the leader at a single stroke. As Grover's know, courageous leadership is a result of individual people committing to work from their stronger selves, discovering a mighty purpose, and motivating others to join their cause. In the process, leaders and the people they inspire are made more resilient, and a bit bolder. That is why our sisters in the Grove can be so important to us.

And that is also why the Grove is a politics free zone. Politics is not why we gather. Many members have been invited to join the Belizean Grove because they are or will be national or international leaders but our getaways and meetings must

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remain a politics free zone. Our purpose is frank, open and spirited discussion of issues not dividing debates.

Close friendships can survive these times of intense political change. If anyone is going to become a model for putting friendship first and finding common ground, it is us. We have always vowed to leave politics at the door when we get together, and so far, we've always managed to put our sisterhood first. Some of the women we most respect have views that directly oppose ours and we welcome that as a way of giving us insight into perspectives we may not fully understand. Our Grove sisters are remarkable women and loyal friends... and hope that we will all remember to put those friendships ahead of our political passions. Difference is part of our strength... and the ability to laugh and dance together, even more so. Right now, we all need a little Grove in our lives...if only to help remind us what we have in common rather than where we all differ.

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Let's value our time together especially as we lost another Grover last year. Cathleen Asch knew how to have fun. Her insights, enthusiasm, curiosity and creative cocktails will be missed. Cathleen left an awesome legacy.

As Nora Ephron counseled, *Be the Heroine of Your Life, Not the Victim*. Harvard Business School professor, Nancy Koehn, has written a great new book- ***Forged In Crisis***, which demonstrates the powerful influence of courageous leadership in turbulent times.

When these leaders were in the middle of calamity, they recognized that they couldn't falter and then fail to recover; they couldn't give up! Rather, each resolutely navigated through the storm and was transformed in the process. They worked from the inside out- *from within themselves*- making a commitment to a bigger purpose, summoning the courage to adhere to this purpose in the face of huge setbacks, and harnessing the emotional awareness to navigate the turbulence around them.

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One of the most important threads connecting their stories is that all of these leaders were *made*. Relatively early in their lives, each came to see his or her setbacks as classrooms in which they could sharpen their skills, improve their emotional strengths, and minimize weaknesses. With experience, they learned to detach themselves from the immediacy of circumstances and take action within themselves in relation to external goals. And as all five individuals came to realize, the harder they worked on themselves, the more effective they became as leaders.

All of these leaders enjoyed large reserves of physical energy. The drive to make their respective marks was important in shaping them and took them some of the way. But then, interestingly, ambition ceased to motivate and influence them as it once had as they discovered a larger purpose and embraced it just as so many Grover's have.

They committed to cultivating emotional awareness. Before the term *emotional intelligence* was coined, Ernest Shackleton, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Dietrich

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Bonhoeffer, and one woman, Rachel Carson realized that their greatest source of power came from within. Some insights, such as the importance of solitude and reflection, were understood from an early age. Other lessons were absorbed by experience, such as the ability to focus on one overarching issue and not be distracted by smaller concerns.

Their encounters with failure, doubt, and despair were even more significant, particularly when the problems confronted reached crisis proportions. More than once, these leaders found themselves in calamity. They understood they had to navigate through the moment to endure and like everyone in the midst of a personal crisis, when they were most vulnerable. Somehow, they realized that the emotional penetrability that caused them so much suffering was also insight about themselves and new ways of being in the world. Each decided to use the subtle but powerful opportunity for personal growth contained in every crisis.

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Compassion, the attention these leaders paid to small details, and the humility that came with having endured and learned from crisis were important to the influence. Their separate endeavors weren't neat or clean. Long stretches were two steps forward and one back but they didn't give up. They tried to walk with thoughtfulness and a sense of purpose.

The ability to see the big picture and envision the potential impact is another thread weaving together these five individuals. Like everyone, they were overwhelmed at times; they struggled and drew vital support. These leaders also used small props, behaviors, and tactics to keep on keeping on. For example, when Lincoln couldn't sleep, he sang raunchy songs or told dirty jokes.

We live in an era where trust has gone from local to institutional- to now the third form distributed- which means technology has become important. We need a quick pause before we actually click, swipe, share, and comment. We need to put people first in ways that are transparent, inclusive, and accountable.

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As we've seen from the Grove, without trust, and without understanding of how its built, managed, lost and repaired - a trusted community can't survive and it certainly can't thrive. Trust is fundamental to almost every action, reaction, and transaction.

So many Grovers are pioneers; but, although pioneers may be picturesque figures, they are often rather lonely ones. We are constantly attempting the impossible to improve our work. As Ayn Rand advised, "The question isn't who's going to let me; it's who's going to stop me?"

But, we've also learned that although girls compete with each other, women empower one another. People inspire you or they drain you- so we've learned to pick them wisely.

We're going to have a fun long weekend or as Julia Child advised, "EVERYTHING IN MODERATION, INCLUDING MODERATION."

Theo Schwabacher (Grover) and Gia Colosi (Tara) are co-chairs of the Sunday night party. Perhaps that theme should be "*lead me not into temptation.....*"

Oh, who am I kidding???

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Follow me, I know a shortcut! Or as Lucille Ball commented, “I’d rather regret the things I’ve done than regret the things I haven’t done.”

So, in closing- may friendships, like wine, improve as time goes by!