



KEYNOTE SPEAKER DOROTHY BASSETT

PAST SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER DOROTHY BASSETT DELIVERED THE KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE CAPE COD FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION, HELD ON JUNE 13, 2017, AT THE DENNIS INN. FROM 2006-2009, THE CHATHAM NATIVE RECEIVED SCHOLARSHIPS FROM THE FOUNDATION TO EARN AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE FROM CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS IN BOSTON. TODAY, SHE IS THE DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR THE CHATHAM MARCONI MARITIME CENTER AND STEM EDUCATION SCHOOL.

Hello,

My name is Dorothy Bassett, and I feel so honored to be here. The scholarships I was awarded through The Cape Cod Foundation, and other local non-profits, have been truly life-changing, and words can't express how deeply I appreciate the opportunities I have been given.

I remember sitting where you are now, at this awards ceremony, and feeling a bit like I didn't belong, and like maybe I didn't deserve this great honor I was being given. I remember it vividly: I was late, having driven from my internship and second job in Woods Hole. In hurrying to leave, I had accidentally doused myself with bleach while working in the laboratory. I had to immediately run to the chemical cabinet, find the neutralizing chemical, mix the solution, and douse myself again in order to keep my award ceremony clothes from being destroyed. So, I was late to the ceremony, soaking wet, smelling like chemicals, in my best yet still inadequate clothes, and feeling a bit out of place, humbled to be among so many bright students, and like I didn't belong. I was intimidated by the huge amount of change and responsibility I was on the precipice of experiencing, eager to hear the advice and inspiration of the ceremony's speakers.

And so, standing before you now, I would like to talk to you about five things I wish I had been told way back then.

Number one: there is no "real world." The "real world" is a statement used by people who love you, because they are afraid for your wellbeing when you're no longer in their care, and they want to encourage you into caring about your safety too. But chances are, you've already been through hardship. Maybe you've seen abuse, or lost a friend or a family member. Maybe there's someone you wish could be here to see this moment. And you've moved forward, fought your way through, worked hard, and have earned your place in this room.

Number two: Of all the colleges I attended, from 4Cs, to Umass, to Harvard, the best teachers and educational opportunities were right here on the Cape. When I graduated, the main concern of the hiring professionals in the workforce was my GPA, not the school listed on my diploma. When I got my first job

out of college, I worked alongside Ivy League students, with my degrees from 4Cs and UMass Boston, both reputable public colleges.

Number three: sexism, ageism, and racism, are alive and well, and it's up to all of us to educate ourselves so that we can recognize and fight it when we see it. You will all see or personally experience some form of discrimination in school or in the workplace, and it's all of our jobs to fight it. So please remember to stand up to do the right thing, especially when it's hard.

Number four: To be asked at the age of 18, what you want to do for a life that could last 100 years, is ludicrous. Some people have a calling, and have always known that they want to be a teacher, a pilot, a politician. When I was a child, I wanted to grow up and be a monster truck driver. When I was in college I changed my major probably ten times, and it's ok, and good, for you to experiment too. You have so many potential paths in front of you, it's only human to want it all. But you will eventually have to focus, in order to specialize your skills. Focus then on the career that you are passionate about, not the commensurate paycheck, and you'll do just fine.

Number five. The concept of luck. Luck is when preparedness meets opportunity, and the world is brimming with opportunity. You just need to jump in, study hard, and be prepared for those chance encounters. The world is your oyster, your delicacy, to be consumed raw.

I stand before you now, and I feel like I've lived ten lifetimes since graduating from high school. I graduated college in the height of the recession, and the strain was heavy on myself and my peers. I had to work in a bar with a college degree. I brought home the sandwiches that were expiring that day to my roommates and the people in my building. Sometimes the bag was so heavy I had to stop for breaks. I worked for three years as a hazardous materials chemist in Boston, learned to weld, and moonlighted in robotics. I took a solo trip around the world, and visited places I'd always wanted to go. I explored the ruins of Angkor Wat, volunteered in Kenya, kayaked through the glow worm caves in New Zealand, met former headhunters in Borneo, and a few other misadventures. And while I was traveling, I missed home. And when I thought of home, I didn't think of Boston, where I'd been living for eight years. I thought of the Cape. When I finished my travels, I went home to Chatham, completely exhausted, penniless, deliciously fulfilled, and ready for the next adventure. And today I am the director of a non-profit called the Chatham Marconi Maritime Center and STEM education school. And I couldn't be happier, and I could never have predicted this path.

So, looking back on that day when I was in that plastic chair where you are now, and I was squirming in my wet clothes and feeling like I didn't belong, I now see exactly why I was there. I was there because I wanted to get an education so that I could make the Cape a better place. I was there because I studied diligently, held down a job, and worked hard at my internship. I was there because my parents were both sick, and their medical bills made saving for their kids' college tuitions an impossibility. I was there because I worked so, so hard to be there, and all of you have too. And you have been given a tremendous opportunity by The Cape Cod Foundation, and I hope you grab onto it with both hands and use this opportunity to better your life. You have earned your seat at this table, and sometime down the road, I want you to earn your place at this podium.