

Salutatorian Speech, by Heoi Jin Kim

Many of us mark our journey through life counting our successes. For example, take tonight's graduation from high school. All of us here have succeeded in mastering a challenging course of study, and we are now prepared to enter the adult world as full-fledged members. Others will mark their journey through life by highlighting their failures, recalling that wonderful college they did not get into, or that special friend they lost. I am not sure who is right, the counter of successes or the recorder of failures. However, what I do firmly believe is that we need to share it with someone—along with our laughter and our tears.

My life in America began with a series of rapid transitions, many of these changes were quite bumpy, and often I felt hurt inside. Upon leaving Korea in 4th grade, I started 5th grade at P.S 150 in Sunnyside Queens, not knowing a word of English. Just as I was getting familiar with one school I had to switch to another. This time it was Intermediate School 73, and my world turned upside down once again. Very often, I felt terribly lost trying to master a new language, socially awkward trying to make new friends from so many diverse cultures, and emotionally exhausted trying to make sense of so many confusing experiences.

Then after the chaos of middle school, my bumpy ride through life continued. Like you, I entered the far more demanding world of high school. If I had complained the difficulties of middle school, those problems were nothing compared with the academic challenges of high school. How many of us had to make similar adjustments or even faces more traumatic transitions?

However, what made all of my days endurable, were my family and friends. I want now thank my parents, Regina and Samuel, who despite coming home very late every night would take time to listen to my problems and soothe my anxiety. Next, I want to thank my awesome friends: Robert, Jenny, Stacy, Kaina, Jennifer, especially, my wonderful mentors in the college office wise woman, and spider woman, as well as so many of you who accepted me for who I was and what I could contribute, not judging me from where I came from. Life always seemed more tolerable when you were there to sympathetically listen to my complaints, to gently advise me when I was about to make a huge mistakes and to patiently allow me celebrate a

moment of triumph. So to all of you, I give my heartfelt thanks. You are the inspiration behind our school's motto: Unity in Diversity.

Now, before I leave you, I would like to recite a verse from a favorite poem my mom gently sang to me when she tucked me into bed:

I was called to the end of a cliff
I was pushed and fell headlong down
I continued to fall to earth
Until I realized, I could fly to the sky

Class of 2008! It is now your turn to soar to the stars!