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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS BY MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
GEORGETOWN VISITATION PREPARATORY SCHOOL
WASHINGTON, D.C. - JUNE 3, 1964

Your Excellency, Sister Roberta, students and parents:

It is a great pleasure for me to be here at this historical and lovely school which was founded in 1799 -- one year before the City of Washington. This is a most important day in your lives.

For me this ceremony has an added dimension -- a sentimental one. The President and I have shared the joys and strengths of long time friendship with the proud parents of Beth Jenkins. Today is, therefore, a very special and proud day for us too.

And to you parents who have given so much in devotion and sacrifice to send your girls here, may I say I know today you feel amply rewarded as you look at your alert and attractive young daughters.

This is a time when you will be leaving these familiar surroundings to begin your lives as educated women. Much will be asked and expected of you. We live in a world in which change and challenge have become household words. You must be courageous enough to understand these challenges and wise enough to meet them with a steady and a helping hand.

Many years ago, Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter, who attended this school wrote a study of Georgetown Visitation Convent which she called "A Story of Courage".

Winston Churchill has said that "Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all others." It is the quality which is essential if one is to be guaranteed a life in which there is independence of mind and spirit.

Education brings learning, but it is useless unless it also brings a courageous attitude toward life.

This is what I think commencement is all about. We begin to think out our role in society; we begin to think out the applications of learning and skills we have developed. This takes courage.

As graduates of Georgetown Visitation, you have the best of two worlds. In your years here you have learned to appreciate the values of tradition. You have been given an unbreakable link with other generations because you have shared with them a common experience. For some of you this link has been as personal as having mothers, grandmothers, even great-grandmothers, attending Visitation before you.

To their delight and yours, your alma mater is timeless. You have all, each in her time, enjoyed the sense of security that comes

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with changeless values. By fostering self-discipline and cultivating gentleness, as well as by providing a fine education, Visitation is providing you with qualities greatly needed in today's world.

We Americans tend to think of ourselves as a very young, very new nation. It is sometimes difficult for us to realize that among the nations of the world we have the oldest democratic constitution in existence.

Surely the experiences of your years here at school have brought you very close to our origins as a nation. Having been a student here, you have gained a perspective against which to view the problems of our times. It is important that we look at our world against the perspective of history.

But I do not wish to look backward and think only of the glories of our tradition-rich past. The inspiration to be taken from our founding fathers -- and from the courageous founders of this school -- is that they had a forward looking view. They could never have overcome the problems they faced if they had not kept their eyes on the future.

Jefferson said, "Cherish the spirit of our people". He was concerned with the growth of democracy. The journey of your life is still the unfinished story of America's growth, of the quest for the fulfillment of the American dream.

The words on your diplomas are the sign posts on your road to the future. Words are wonderful, magical messengers. The words of the wise, of the great, of the prophet, the poet, and the philosopher have become yours. You have inherited them by means of a fortunate legacy, the legacy of an education.

What you are going to do with them? How can you use them to defend freedom? How can you use them to bring an end to poverty and prejudice? How can you use them to extend understanding between nations?

I am certain each one of you will have a different and positive answer to these questions. It is never too early to start being a part of your community. This summer beckons you. Many of you have -- like my daughter, Luci -- gotten part-time jobs. That is an important part of learning. But don't let the next three months just waste away. You can do all kinds of things. You can, for instance, go down to the Urban Service Corps where Mrs. Annette Read will be glad to sign you up as a reading aid for children or as a library helper. You will have done a great deal if you help only one child learn how to use the library for, do you realize -- in the District of Columbia -- most public elementary schools are without libraries? That means that many youngsters enter Junior High School needing to use libraries for their schoolwork, but they never had any experience. This is a simple thing, but it is an important thing -- and it would be easy for you to do. Some of you may perhaps lend hand and heart to the Notre Dame Summer Peace Corps.

The challenge of democracy is one of learning about, growth toward, and realization of those goals that can fulfill the American dream.

I believe that the educated woman today has a role to play -- of courage and conviction -- unparalleled since frontier times. Then, she served as wife, teacher, physician, and often community

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leader in her settlement town. Today, she may be required to play much the same role in one of the far off battalions of the Peace Corps. Or, she may be called on to show equal courage in tackling a wide range of tasks here at home. I recently came to know at close hand two such women and their work -- Marie Turner, Superintendent of Schools for Breathitt County in the Cumberlands, and Kate Tuchman, principal of P.S. 184 in Harlem. These are two areas where teaching can make all the difference in the caliber of the young Americans who grow up there. I would strongly recommend for your own consideration the frontiers these dedicated women have chosen to conquer.

Woman can no longer afford to concern herself only with the hearth -- any more than man can afford to concern himself only with his job.

Too often success is treated as the single most important goal, the ultimate objective of the American dream. And this success is constantly measured by promotions, rewards, affluence.

Certainly these are the symbols and the trappings of success. But are these necessarily enduring attributes? Are these the lasting satisfactions that make life worthwhile? What happens when the ceremony is over, the pageants past, and the triumph a memory?

Have we not sometimes substituted the props of material success for the realities of timeless values?

Success has many faces; it need not be circumscribed by a title, a job, a cause. Success is not always "getting". It is more often "giving". It does not consist of what we do, but rather in what we are. Success is not always an accomplishment. It can be a state of mind. The quiet dignity of a home, the relationship of the individuals in that home. The continuing expression of an inquiring mind can mean more in terms of success than all the surface symbols of status.

This world beyond Georgetown Visitation, the one you are entering, is a wonderful world. Never before have young women found it so full of opportunity to achieve, so full of challenge to be creative. In every community there is a need for women leaders, women with a gift of understanding, women with vision, women with confidence in themselves, women with a questing mind and a quiet heart.

Less than fifty years ago, a conscientious graduate of Visitation could hope to do little more than treat the symptoms of world ills. You, with your expanded horizons and your wider sense of participation, can strike at the root causes. Today a woman with the strength to take on problems that do not lend themselves to quick and easy solutions, can build the success that comes of fulfillment, of a cause won, and a world the better for it.

You are no longer limited to giving succor, to stamping out suffering. You may not be expected to fill Christmas baskets for the needy, but to serve on committees to create new job opportunities. You will not only be asked to open your home to these committees, but to invite the visitor from Chile or the student from Kenya to share your hearth in the hope of extending international understanding.

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In planning your further course of study, I hope each of you will not only prepare for a satisfying personal life, but for a useful public life as well. Just as our country can no longer turn inward and concern itself with its own affairs, no individual can turn inward and concern herself only with her own and her family's lives. The world has become so small that the problems of Viet Nam and Zanzibar come to our breakfast tables. The standard of living in remote parts of the world can vitally affect our own prosperity. Just so, our progress and our cultural enrichment must be shared with others at the farthest end of the globe.

I would like to add one thing more.

All people have dreams; dreams and images of the person they would like to be and the world they would like to live in. High school graduates like yourselves usually believe their dreams can become realities, college seniors usually label the same dreams as daydreams too far fetched to be realized.

But, in an age when so much is possible, I hope you will hold on to your dreams -- examine them in the light of reality -- and work to make them come true. Many of them will.

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