

Commencement Speech: Gordon Gekko to Harvard University Graduates

Thank you, President Faust. My thanks to Provost Garber, Board Chair Reeves, and the Executive Committee for having me. Rare is the chance to pierce minds as fresh and brilliant as these. And though I generally can't afford humility – simply because it costs too much on Wall Street – I find myself showered in it today. Humbly and sincerely, I thank you for inviting me to deliver this commencement address.

Crimson Class of 2024... Welcome. Welcome to the real world; it's a place where the common man seeks love and happiness like sheep do grass, ever convinced that greener pastures lie elsewhere. And congratulations on becoming shepherds, ready to lead them to nonexistent paradise. I am more humbled by you than I am by Presidents and Army Generals, who stand atop their respective mountains oblivious to the mountain-makers. This is not to say, of course, that no Harvard grad has ever measured his success in terms thrust upon him; merely that such a person was taught to know better.

You know, the word "commencement" derives from the Latin *cominitiare*, which means "to anoint, or initiate as priest." Consider this address, then, as similar anointment. Just as priests man the tollbooths between conventional wisdom and divine revelation, so will you between the world we see and the one we actually live in – what Harvard calls "Veritas" in its Latin motto. But rather than indulge in the abstract much longer, let me relay a personal story that will clarify what's in store for people like you.

I once owned one of the first companies to make latex rubber. During the heyday of swim caps and kitchen gloves, the stock skyrocketed like nothing I had ever seen before. But after whetting my appetite for record-breaking profits, the company began to financially plateau. And needless to say, I was still hungry.

Upon hearing that latex could be used to make contraceptives, I scheduled a meeting of company stockholders. With me were the product researchers, journalists and ad men on company payroll. Unbeknownst to everyone there, I and those employees stood on the foothills of history.

I pointed to the researchers and said, "These people will now make condoms. Using our miraculous product, they'll make durable, comfortable insurance policies for our children and our children's precluded children." I then pointed to the journalists and said, "These people will manufacture fear. Through their spin, global strife and domestic upheaval will herald a doomsday much too soon for modern child-bearing." And finally I pointed to the ad men, and said "These people will create love. And it will be incomprehensible bliss which only comes but once a lifetime, probably not in your dumb-as-dirt boyfriend with whom you'd rather not breed mistakes."

Graduates, that company earned me an additional \$40 million those next two years. You know why? Because I said it would. At that meeting, before those stockholders, I said it would.

I hereby anoint you as shepherds alongside me, the people to whom Presidents and Generals will refer when they say that they did something “because he/she said so.” The herd lives a daily life in which each sheep makes the same subconscious prayer: that they’re told what to do. My message to you today: Tell them.

Just remember that you haven’t been given this privilege because you’re especially intelligent. College diplomas are like opinions, and opinions are like... well, the point is, everybody’s got one. Yours just happens to be crimson.

You’ve been initiated, because not only do you possess the ability to shape social, economic and political realities, but you also have the guts to do so. Most people in your shoes would prove too cowardly to dictate the dreams we chase and the currents through which we chase them. They just want to ride the tides and call it an active pursuit of happiness. I can certainly understand, but cannot excuse. Because happiness, for a lack of a better word, is cheap.

Much more than happiness; much greater in trade value and more lustrous an ore, is power. Real power. And do you know what real power is? It’s making truth . It’s *Veritas*. It is, quite simply, telling the herd what to do.

I’m sure each of you has friends back home who joke about how you’ll graduate Harvard and then run the world. They want it so bad, they might as well be on their knees in prayer.

Lead on, fellow shepherds. Because I said so.