

**Remarks for the Senior Luncheon**  
**President Patricia McGuire**  
**May 15, 2009**

Senior luncheon is one of my favorite events of the year. We take this moment to pause to gaze upon you, our seniors-soon-to-be-alumnae in all of your glory. We realize how much you mean to us. We know that you are moving on to your new lives as Trinity graduates, and yet, we also know that we can and will keep you close as active alumnae and alumni.

We will remember the highlights of your student days.

- Tega taking your courageous STAND for Darfur
- Nicole leading the student body with great confidence
- Liz taking up the cause of justice for young people with disabilities
- Marie holding it together in the residence halls
- Jamie exercising your great professionalism at the Trinity Center
- Chantil organizing programs for the NAACP
- Brigid's many international adventures, now our Fulbright Scholar
- Kodilichi's inquiring mind
- Laura in the Chemistry labs...

You have been Trinity students during a time of massive economic and political change in the United States. During your student days, the plague of terrorism and its bitter consequences in a dubious war and the vengeance of torture dominated headlines and national policy. In your senior year, the election of Barack Obama as president of the United States was the defining political moment of recent history, and you witnessed his historic inauguration with millions of others standing shoulder-to-shoulder on the Mall. President Obama inherited an economic catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. No one could have foreseen, when you started your college careers four or five or six years ago, or longer, that the banking industry would collapse, that venerable investment houses would disappear, that the engines of Detroit's automakers that drove so much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century economy would sputter out.

You are taking your Trinity degrees into a world that is in grave crisis on so many fronts. You can't get out there fast enough. Armed with the power of your education here, you will contribute your best work to helping this nation find its way back to prosperity, justice, peace.

Let's take just a few more minutes to think about your lives from this day forward.

I recently saw a bumper sticker that read, "Some days, all I want to be is a missing person." We all have days like that. We crave the freedom of no schedules, no deadlines, no needy other people expecting so much of us. Even I like to escape to the solitude of the wilderness once in a while where only the osprey know where I am. Of course, thanks to the wonders and burdens of modern technology, even in the deep forest the little red light of my BlackBerry calls me back to my more responsible identity. As much as we may have days when we long for the carefree life of total anonymity, in fact, by accepting our Trinity degrees, we have accepted a different life

entirely. We all have the intellectual and spiritual Trinity GPS devices now embedded in our souls.

There are no missing persons among Trinity graduates. There's no invisible cloak to shield us from danger like Harry Potter. We have embraced the challenge of Plato's journey from the dark cave of ignorance into the blinding sunshine of knowledge; there's no going back. We are visible in the light; we are the light for others. We have obligations and expectations for our life's work. You may think that you're all done with Trinity's expectations for you. But, no. Trinity's expectations have only just begun! Having educated you as well as possible during your student days here, now Trinity expects you to put that education to the best possible use in the lives you will live beyond graduation day. You will do this in many fields of endeavor.

For those going into business: you are entering an uncharted landscape where banks are in ruins, CEOs are in hiding if not in jail, and capitalism is on the run. Market volatility is now a way of life, and the value of corporations is artificially boosted by government investments – a TARP by any other name is a cover against a storm. Trinity graduates in the past have risen to significant levels of responsibility in corporate life --- think of Cathie Black '66 who is president of Hearst Magazines; Stasia Kelly '71 who is general counsel of AIG; Joan Payden '53 who runs her own \$50 billion investment business Payden & Rygel. These and other corporate leaders now face amazing challenges --- Cathie is trying to figure out how to keep magazines alive in the online age; Stasia is responsible for the legal details of the world's largest and most troubled insurance company; Joan is navigating through the roiling waters of the investment markets. All once sat in this room, like you, eagerly awaiting graduation, looking forward to careers that were most likely very different from the reality they experience today. They are hugely successful women because they learned how to adapt, how to think and analyze when confronted with new problems, how to innovate and embrace change, how to stand firm on timeless ethical principles. They also learned how to manage colleagues effectively, how to get the best from co-workers, how to be good team leaders. They didn't take specific courses on these topics, instead, they drew upon the lessons of leadership inherent in a great liberal arts education infused with Trinity's values of intellectual excellence and rigorous integrity.

Some of you are Trinity's new force in Nursing and the health professions: you have chosen your life's work in one of the most important sectors of human endeavor. You are already invested in our great ongoing national search for rationality, fairness and justice in the delivery of health care to all those in need. You face ethical challenges of immense complexity; we pray that your Trinity education will keep you strong through the thickets of life's greatest questions.

Some of you will study law. I approve! Trinity lawyers down through the years have blazed trails of great achievement in the shaping of law and policy for this nation. You will follow in the footsteps of such accomplished alumnae as our Judges Rosemary Collyer '68 on the bench of the U.S. District Court here in D.C., and Superior Court Judges Pat Broderick '71 and Jeanette Clark '70. Like our alumna Tonya Esposito '96 you might join a law firm, or like Tonisha Gilliard '98 you might start your own practice. Perhaps you will become a public interest advocate, or staff to a Congressional Committee. Whatever your work, you will serve the cause of justice.

Some of you are moving onto study and careers in the intelligence community. In the last decade, we have come to know the great value and great dangers of the work of this vast governmental enterprise. Trinity graduates have responded to this call in previous generations when the nation was at risk; many Trinity Women entered the CIA and other agencies after the Second World War when the need for morally grounded and highly intelligent agents and analysts was urgent. Today, like never before, we need the power of Trinity minds and the ethics of your spirits to illuminate and shape the delicate and dangerous work of the intelligence community.

A good number of you will choose careers in teaching. May your commitment to educating children remain as vibrant in the days to come as it is on graduation day. Be a courageous example for your colleagues; do not become part of “the system” in which some burnt out senior teachers impose limitations on enthusiastic new teachers. The appalling state of urban education today is widely viewed as one of the great civil rights issues of our time. You, our Trinity teachers, you can be activists and advocates for the children who are the victims of the educational catastrophes in our local schools. Give them your best day every day.

Fortunately, some members of the Class of 2009 will make their lifetime contributions in the sciences. Too few American students persist in the sciences, and this nation lags the global community considerably when it comes to production of scientists and mathematicians. Trinity scientists have made great contributions over the years in our government labs in particular --- here today is Sue Numrich, Class of 1967, a physicist whose contributions to the Naval Research Labs are legendary. Our new generation of Trinity scientists will take up this long tradition in research and scientific inventions to advance our society.

Some of you will be journalists; perhaps a few will actually get paid for blogging. You will work in news media whose output will emerge in totally different ways from the past. Whether your investigations and reports appear in newsprint or cyberspace, you must insist on the free and independent voice of the news media to keep our society balanced, honest, free. You will be following pathways blazed by other Trinity journalists such as Pulitzer-Prize winning Washington Post reporter Caryle Murphy '68.

Many of you will work as executives and administrators in the region's nonprofit and advocacy organizations. You will join forces with our vast Trinity network to refresh the vitality of the nonprofit community, provide new thinking in urban policy circles, raise new voices of advocacy and activism for the citizens of the District of Columbia and other communities.

At some point, if you are like most Trinity graduates, you will run headlong into the cause that will fire your passion in ways you cannot even imagine today. Or, you will have a stunning opportunity to take a public leadership position that will also test your courage and conviction in ways you cannot imagine right now. When she sat in this very dining hall 47 years ago, I'm quite sure that Nancy D'Alesandro didn't imagine that she'd be Speaker Pelosi, one of the most important political figures at this moment in our national history. When she sat here 39 years ago, I'm sure that Kathleen Gilligan never imagined that one day she'd be called Secretary Sebelius at Health and Human Services. What motivated each of these Trinity leaders was a passion to make a difference in the public square. I'm sure that each, on a daily basis, has had to

deal with issues they never learned about here at Trinity --- reform of the health care system, the need to bailout the banks, the challenge of restarting the economy, the perilous condition of social security, the use of torture as a covert national policy, the future of the Supreme Court, the acute and sustained pressures from both right and left to develop law and policy over the central issues of the beginning and ending of life itself.

How do Nancy and Kathleen and our other graduates know how to work through these hugely complicated issues? The whole point of a Trinity education is NOT that you leave here on graduation day with all of the answers. Of course not. The whole purpose of this great educational enterprise is that you will know how to analyze the questions, recognize the questions that you must ask without apology; that you will know how to distinguish the truth from mere puffery or outright deceit; that you will have the courage to be the voice that shouts out when all others are silent. You will not always be right; you will make mistakes. But mistakes are the risk of a life of action; you are called to the life of action, of advocacy, of assertive leadership on behalf of your families, communities and nation.

There are *no* missing persons among Trinity graduates.

You are not leaving Trinity this weekend, you are simply taking Trinity with you to new places. Trinity will be with you in even the remotest of places. Earlier this week, I received an email from a graduate of the Class of 1996; I had not heard from her in years. She wrote to tell me of a great tragedy that has come upon another classmate whose home burned to the ground in wildfires in Santa Barbara last week. Just days before that calamity, Shannon lost her unborn child, even while she was enduring a divorce. Shannon was devastated. But her Trinity sisters rose immediately to the occasion. She writes of a Trinity friend who came to help Shannon and her grandmother pick their belongings out of the ashes. Her message goes on, "It's no surprise that it was someone from the Trinity family who helped my family escape the fire with a couple family treasures and photos from my Grandparents past! I have had many friends in my life, but none like the ones from Trinity. ... the family of our Trinity sisters and alumnae will do and give more from their heart and hands than most."

Out of such a tragedy, a great Trinity story. You are sisters and brothers to each other and to all others in our vast Trinity family. May your days from this one forward be filled with the joy of achievement, the comfort of your great Trinity friendships, the recognition of the fulfillment of your hard work in your college days in the professional and personal success of your lives. And on those days that are not so joyful, may you find in your Trinity roots the strength, faith, grace and hope to persist through the challenges, to live up to Trinity's expectations. May you go forth with the power, the wisdom and the love of the Trinity as your constant companions, the light for your path, the strength for your work all the days of your lives.

Congratulations, Class of 2009!