

Hector Vega's 2006 Commencement Valedictory Speech

Once upon a time there was a little boy whose fantasies were unreachable dreams that were meant to stay in his infant mind. That boy slowly matured facing barriers, one after another, non stopping struggles were in his way, but with the help of his classmates, his now friends, and his teachers, he gained strength and overcame it all. This is the story of life, not only my story, but the story of many of us.

I have done many things in high school, but all that is not important unless it means to someone else. It's worthless to care for others, it's worthless to achieve a goal, it is worthless to win the battle against life's obstacles, it's worthless to drink the **plump juice** of glory if you are the only one drinking it, it's all worthless until that action impacts another person, and that person feels inspired and realizes he too is capable to break the stereotypes and free himself from the closed box in which people put him in. My accomplishments finally are important; because I know at least they moved and touched the soul of one of you. That is truly what makes it all worth it.

People think that Hector Vega holds the secret of success, that it is impossible to achieve so much in so little time. Well, today I will reveal the secret of success, and no, I'm not trying to sell you anything. Truth is that

we all know how we can be successful, but we need others to remind us of it. The key to success is to dream of something that you know will make your life complete and to work intensely to make it true. After today, we will all take our own path; we will make our own choices on what we want to do in future years, but remember to always keep an eye in what you really want, hold on very tight to your goals, and don't ever let anyone take your dreams away from you.

We need to be strong and have the will to work hard. The battle is tiring but very rewarding. A beautiful person once told me that it does not matter how long it takes us to be successful in life, it does not matter if we fall behind to others, what matters is to get there, feeling proud for ourselves, knowing we deserve every second of joy we get from all the effort we spent in it. That is personal satisfaction, that's growth. That is what we should pass on to others; the fact that we will find happiness after accomplishing something that we wished so deeply and worked so much for.

At many stages of my life I asked myself who I was. I have been the innocent, I have been the defeated, I have been the weak; I've been the one that simply can't go on no more. But life is not about feeling sorry for ourselves; life is about entering a quest towards fulfillment. I come from a misrepresented society; I speak here on behalf of many that come here in the

quest for a better life. I am, like many others out there who never give up their hopes, an immigrant. This is one of the reasons I worked so hard for, to prove to the world who I am, better yet, who we are. We are more than the workers who stand in the sun asking for work. We are more than the restless farm workers that collect vegetables in the fields. We are more than desperate mothers and fathers who cross the border seeking the opportunity that will give their sons and daughters a shelter every winter. We are more than that. We are intelligent individuals capable of extraordinary success in any professional field. Because we are equal, I am no better and not worse than anyone in this world. Because we are equal, we deserve the same opportunities as anyone. Because we are equal, some day, that mother and that father will go to work with no fear that that day might be their last in this country.

Yo hablo por mi gente. Yo hablo por todos aquellos que tienen un sueNo, el sueNo de triunfar y de convertirse en una persona realizada. Quisera que todo aquel quien no ha perdido la capacidad de ilusionar con un major maNana me escuchara. Usen mi historia como una fuente de inspiracion. Usenme para darles fuerzas. Miren donde estoy gracias a mi esfuerzo y mi arduo trabajo. Me gustaria que todos sintieran la satisfaccion que yo siento al conciderarme ya, a mi edad, una persona realizada. Mi

gente debe apuntar su flecha al cielo. Mi gente debe sentirse inspirada a cosas mucho mas grandes que nunca habian imaginado. Tenemos esa posibilidad, tenemos esa capacidad, lo unico que nos falta es poner empeño y no dejarse vencer. No hay que ser conformistas, no hay que dejar que nuestra integridad sea destruida. Luchen, luchen con todas sus fuerzas por realizar el sueño de su vida. Siempre hay que tratar de llegar a la luna, porque aun si no llegamos, estaremos entre las estrellas. Mirenme y dense fuerzas, levanten la cabeza, levanten el corazon y sigan adelante.

My friends, I want to give my last words. Whatever it is that you want to do in the future, do it with all your heart, be passionate about your life. Every one of us has a dream, feed that dream with works and hopes, and my friends, follow your heart and when you reach that dream, embrace it, enjoy it, feel it with all your senses, it's yours and no one can take it away. May all your dreams come true my friends, and when they do, pass on your legacy, and always keep the luminous flame of your heart alive, eternally.

Thank you very much James Lick High School.