

Thank you very much Dr Karen Lazenby. Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It is such an honor and a privilege to be invited as a guest speaker at the first graduation ceremony of the Higher Certificates in the University Access Programme. Ladies and gentlemen we are here to celebrate. We are here to celebrate success, determination, hard work and achievement that it is indeed possible. We are here to celebrate the achievement of each and every one of you graduating today. I say to you well done. Well done because some if not many of you were told that you don't qualify to gain access at the UFS or any other university for that matter.

Please allow me to share my own journey. I am going to share with you some of the most valuable lessons I learned over the years which has contributed to my success as a young leader. When I was in standard 5 my science teacher said to me in front of the whole class that I was stupid and dumb. That crashed me into a million little pieces and I was shattered. All I wanted was to disappear and from that day onwards I struggled to believe in myself and have confidence in my capabilities.

Please don't feel sorry for me because my story ends well. I did all I could to work hard and make sure that I pass. The incredible support of my amazing mother helped me to overcome some of the negative things spoken over me and I focused my mind of what I can do instead of what is it that I cannot do. I remember the one time when life was tough and I wanted to give up my mother would say to me "Ngwanake o tshepe Modimo ka dinako tsotlhe , o bereke ka thata. O se ke wa reetsa batho ha ba bua dilo tse di maswe translated My child trust God at all time and work hard. Don't listen to people talk negative things over you" and that is exactly what I did.

I didn't pass my matric very well with what was previously called matric exemption. But all I knew was I wanted to go to university because I would be the first granddaughter to go to university. Yes, I wanted to be a history maker. Initially I wanted to be a psychiatrist but I later on realized that it is not for me. Because of my poor matric results, I had to find something that would help me give birth to my dream of going to university and heard about the CPP and applied. I worked hard and later on graduated in 2008 as you've heard in Dr. Karen's introduction. I realized that if I want to succeed in everything that I do and become a history maker that I know God wants me to be I had to find people who are smarter than I am and who would push me my limits. Ladies and gentlemen I am blessed to have those people and I call "MY POINTS OF LIGHT". They encouraged me to work hard and believe in myself and in all that I do and that is a lesson that I continue to use to this day. I encourage you to find people like that and surround yourself with selfless, humble, kind hearted hard workers. Trust me You'll go a long way.

There will be times when you are told you are not smart enough, you are not beautiful or that you are too poor. Let those words go in one ear and out the other. Remember that you are a master of your own destiny. Look around you. Today we celebrate the "Impossible you, the sorry you don't meet the university requirements you". You have made it and well done on this achievement. Remember the huge responsibility you have now to finish your studies and contribute to the amazing country and continent of ours. If you fail to give everything you do your all remember you are not only disappointing yourself, but you are disappointing your parents, your community, the people who believe in you and who look up to you but above everyone else you are disappointing the God who created you with a specific purpose.

I really believe we all have a purpose to fulfill on earth and I want to encourage you to find that which makes your heart pump at a thousand kilometers per second that which makes your brain hurt from thinking about solutions to that problem and be a history maker in your own field. Do not only come to university to obtain a degree but ask God to use you until He uses you up and be a change agent. Find solutions to problems. I know I am. With my PhD I am looking at assets students from disadvantaged backgrounds bring with them into university and I trust that my findings will make a contribution to policies at institutional, national and international level. I am thinking big because I am a history maker!

I advise you to be the best version of yourself. Use your talents to find solutions to problems we face in the country and the continent. In Mahatma Gandhi's words "Be the change you want to see in the world". The question I want to ask you is "Is your qualification all about money or to use your talents and skills and contribute to solving some of the challenges we face in our continent"? I decided to take the road less travelled and with hard work and determination I am encouraging you to find your purpose and never ever give up.

I want to also encourage you to value your parents, guardians and everyone who sacrificed so much for you to come to university. Those people who helped you get to where you are now I call them "points of light" because they sacrifice so much to see you succeed. You are their hope. Most people say the sky is the limit but I don't believe in that because there are footprints on the moon. I encourage you to serve with your talents. My passion to serve has afforded me opportunities to become a young leader in my profession. When I attended a leadership conference last year Billy Hybels asked a fundamental question "who comes to mind where you think of leadership"?

I had to reflect a lot about that and I discovered that leadership is about servanthood and I choose every day to be a servant. I decided that I want to plant leadership seeds in the lives of young people and invest my time in believing in them. Hence I do what I do now. I often speak to young people and tell them about my own journey. Can you imagine an African girl doing a master's degree in Poland? Poland of all places. I chose Poland because I wanted to see my own strength and ability and besides getting the qualification I had amazing experiences that will I will live to remember for the rest of my life.

I have chosen to do uncomfortable things and I constantly think and reflect about why I do what I do. I believe that you can become a champion as long as you set high standards for yourself and remember to reinvent yourself over and over. Find that which you love and excel in it. Enjoy the journey, eat right, work out and be the best version of yourself.

I hope to see you in three or four years' time graduating with another qualification and using your talents in the process. Remember the sky is no limit, you can go beyond! Once more congratulations and well done!

Thank you.