Janae Williams

Doctor Rodriguez, Teachers, Faculty members, family, friends and fellow graduates, today is a day of joyous celebration.

When I was told that I had been selected as the Valedictorian of the class of 2009 I was absolutely thrilled. Until I realized that I had to stand up and make an inspiring speech. That's when I became nervous. So, like always when I have a huge assignment and I get nervous, Google becomes my best friend. Unfortunately, Google had failed me. Most information required you to pay a modest fee of \$34.95. Being a teenager, I am flat broke. And I tried to imagine the conversation I would have to have with my parents to get the money. "Mom, Dad? Can I have \$34.95 to buy a pre-made valedictorian speech online?" I would ask. And because they have those crazy things called morals and values, they would probably say no.

So I was forced to go to my next source of advice, my friends. I received many different responses. Some said "make me cry" others said "make me laugh". I got "do funny hand gestures", "misquote things on purpose", "make it inspirational", "no clichés", "make it your own", and my favorite "keep it short". All request/advice ended with "if you don't, I'll boo you off the stage". No pressure guys.

After all this helpful advice, could you believe that I was still left with a blank page on Microsoft Word?

Later when I sat down at actually thought about it, I realized that all of that advice was really good. So be proud class of 2009, all of your input combined together, has helped me with my message to you. Today, I would like to talk to you guys about perspective and what perspective has to do with your future.

When I say the word future, some of you in the audience started day dreaming about what it will be like. Others were trembling in their caps and gowns, fearing what the future holds. If you're excited for the future, you might be surprised that your best friend is shaking in their shoes. That doesn't stop you from being friends does it? You respect each other's differences and continue on loving each other for who they are.

This is where perspective comes in. When you move onto that new destination, people are going to have different perspectives and completely different opinions. I want to remind you graduating class of 2009, don't just shut these people out because they're different or because you have other friends. Embrace every person you meet. Because you never know, their perspective can change yours or even make your views stronger.

When we leave these halls and the comfort of our friends, it seems that everything is going to change. I'm not going to lie to you guys; things are changing, big time. We won't have the security of coming into Daley's class and knowing that along with finishing our lesson, we could have an in depth discussion about Batman. We won't be positive that we're going to want to get to the cafeteria early because it's Taco Thursday.

But what we will have is each other. My mother said to me that we don't know how lucky we have it. She lost contact with most of her friends because all they had was a telephone. We have AIM, Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, texting, and cell phones. We have more ways to stay in contact than ever before. So along with meeting new people and embracing differences, don't forget each other. The memories, the laughs, and the tears we've shared. We've been through a lot. The good thing about having such a small class is that we know each other a lot better than bigger high schools. I can probably name one memory that I have with each one of you.

I would like to end these few words of encouragement with the chorus of a song that I recently fell in love with. The song is My Wish by Rascal Flatts and the chorus goes:

My wish, for you, is that this life becomes all that you want it to.

Your dreams stay big, and your worries stay small.

You never need to carry more than you can hold.

And while you're out there getting where you're getting to.

I hope you know somebody loves you, and wants the same things too.

Yeah, this, is my wish.

Class of 2009, it's time to celebrate. We did it. It was hard but we survived four years of high school and are ready to go out into the world and change it. And while you're doing that, I hope you all remember the friends that you've had here and never forget the friends that you've made. Thank You.