

Baccalaureate Address
John P. Howe III, M.D.

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We come together on a very special day in the life of Boston University, Marsh Chapel and the Class of 2019. For the University, it was just 150 years ago that the Governor of Massachusetts, William Claflin, signed the Act of 1869, which first chartered Boston University. For the Chapel, it's now 70 years since its groundbreaking in 1949. And, for the graduates, it is the 146th Commencement of the University. A very special day, indeed!

In preparing for this year's Baccalaureate Address, I reviewed the messages shared from this pulpit by my predecessors in each of the past ten years. Dr. Gloria White Hammond spoke of "stepping up with courage, stepping out on faith, stepping forward with determination." Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr: "Never succumb to the culture of 'no.'" Dr. Ahmed Zewail: "Hard work and compassion are required for a good life." Judge Sandra Lynch: "Use the tools of democracy (free speech and voting) to keep our country safe and flourishing." Bishop Peter Weaver: "Dream with your eyes open." Dr. Nancy Hopkins: "Complete the social revolution!" The Reverend Cornell Brooks: "The surest path to meritocracy is diversity." Dr. Carrie Hessler-Radelet: "Choose optimism, make relationships your priority and make service your mindset." Dr. Mario Molina: "Use the skill of 'how to learn,' which you gained at BU." And, lastly, Carmen Yulin Cruz Soto: "Change the world we live in; stand up, be fearless and be counted."

I then spent an afternoon with three leaders of the University's Senior Class, three outstanding young women majoring in Advertising, History and International Relations - and asked them for their observations with respect to life at the University and beyond. They told me how the University had changed their lives - and had prepared them for a global society, how they gained a greater sense of self and purpose, developed confidence and found their voice - and how, with time spent overseas, they had become, in their words, "citizens of the world." They were inspiring - in their wish to use skills and talents gained at the University, again in their words, to "make a

difference in the world."

With this in the way of background, I will now depart from the traditional themes of past Baccalaureate speakers (integrity, courage, independence and tolerance) to address a theme inspired by these three senior class leaders - and that is, the theme of "making a difference in the world." I will do so by sharing my experience of using a Boston University medical degree to "make a difference in the world" by engaging in what is known as "citizen diplomacy," diplomacy in which ordinary citizens play an important role - with examples from Indonesia, China, Iraq and, here in our own country, Mississippi.

The call came from Admiral Vern Clark, the Chief of U.S. Naval Operations, after the Indonesian tsunami. He said, "Doc, this is Vern Clark, the CNO. I have a novel idea. What isn't novel is to send the Navy hospital ship Mercy to Banda Aceh. What is novel is to have it staffed by you, not the Navy. This has never been done before." The 1000 bed hospital ship Mercy arrived in Banda Aceh with 220 Project HOPE volunteer physicians and nurses, two-thirds of them from Boston and the Massachusetts General Hospital, who then cared for 50,000 patients before returning home six weeks later. The impact of the volunteers can be described in human terms as well. One of the 50,000 patients was little Iqbal, an 11 year old boy who was fishing with his dad, when one of three 100 ft. tsunami waves threw their wooden boat against the shore, killing his dad. The boy suffered a cardiac arrest, was intubated by a volunteer physician and was flown to the hospital ship. Two weeks later, as Iqbal was leaving the ship, the Commanding Officer gave him a traditional Captain's Coin. A year later, when the hospital ship returned to Banda Aceh, little Iqbal ran out on the dock and showed his Coin to one of the volunteer nurses who had saved his life the year before. He told her, "Every morning, I rubbed it and rubbed it, hoping the ship could come back - and it did." Surveys conducted after these two visits of the hospital ship Mercy to Indonesia, a country with the world's largest Muslim population, showed dramatic improvements in attitudes toward the United States - a doubling of the percentage of positive feelings toward the U.S. compared to similar surveys done before the tsunami.

The call came from the Office of the President of China. President Jiang Zemin asked me to meet with him in Beijing. He said, "You are probably wondering why I asked you to be here. I want to express my appreciation, and the appreciation of the people of China, for the work of the foundation

volunteers in the creation of the Shanghai Children's Medical Center. In addition, I want to thank you for responding to my request to train more than 200,000 health care workers in diabetes prevention." Again, in human terms, two year-old He Jing Cheng, arrived in Shanghai with his mother after a two hour plane ride from Wenzou, a city of nine million in Zhejiang Province. He was diagnosed with a potentially life-threatening form of congenital heart disease - and received corrective heart surgery the very next morning. This was only possible because Dr. Richard Jonas, an internationally-known pediatric heart surgeon, formerly at the Boston Children's Hospital and now at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, came to Shanghai as a foundation volunteer, one month a year for ten years, to train pediatric surgeons in Shanghai to become congenital heart surgeons. Last year, the surgeons that Dr. Jonas trained performed over 3700 open heart surgeries on infants and children at the Shanghai Children's Medical Center - two thirds of them under three months of age.

The call came from the Office of the First Lady, Laura Bush, a few weeks after the Iraq invasion. She and the National Security Advisor, Condelezza Rice, asked me to go to Baghdad and Basrah with two members of their senior staff and report back on the health of children in Iraq. The last twenty minutes of our flight into Baghdad had a corkscrew approach - to avoid being hit by a missile. The road from the airport to the city was called Suicide Alley. We found the prevalence of childhood leukemia in Basrah to be ten times what it was ten years before. No new hospital had been built in Iraq in twenty-nine years, and all the country's nursing schools had been closed. We were then asked by Mrs. Bush and Dr. Rice to build a state-of-the-art children's cancer hospital in Basrah. The Basrah Children's Cancer Hospital was completed and opened six years later. Its first patient, a tiny Iraqi boy named Amir, came from Baghdad. A CAT scan and biopsy confirmed a high-risk cancer: neuroblastoma. Following chemotherapy, the Hospital's surgeons, trained by foundation volunteers, were able to remove the entire tumor. After additional chemotherapy, little Amir returned home to Baghdad. A year later, he was reported to be completely well. And, two years after that, the Governor of Basrah sent the granddaughter of the Ayatollah of Basrah to share a message a message of thanks with the news that he had just approved a doubling of the size of the Hospital..

The call came from Mississippi Senator Trent Lott. Hurricane Katrina, the deadliest U.S. hurricane since 1928, had devastated the Mississippi coast -

and its three coastal counties (Jackson, Harrison and Hancock). Ninety percent of the structures within a half mile of the coastline were completely destroyed. The Navy hospital ship Comfort arrived with 75 foundation volunteers, who identified hundreds of patients, whose lives had been threatened by the destruction of their clinics, physician offices and pharmacies, and brought them to the ship, where their symptoms and signs of uncontrolled diabetes, hypertension and cancer were stabilized - and their treatments were restarted. Governor Haley Barbour drove from Jackson, the capital of Mississippi, to thank the volunteers, upon the reopening of a primary care clinic in Jackson County.

These are but a few examples of citizen diplomacy at work (again, diplomacy in which ordinary citizens play an important role), made possible in part, by medical education, my medical education, at Boston University. What began with training at the School of Medicine led to roles and responsibilities in academic medicine, as a professor of medicine, the academic dean of a medical school and the president of a major academic medical center - followed by the presidency of a global health foundation with people and programs in 35 countries. All were made possible with the encouragement of mentors: Aram Chobanian and Louis Sullivan at the Boston University School of Medicine, Jim Dalen at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, Roger Hickler at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Roger Bulger at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, Charlie Sanders at Glaxo and Shirin Tahir-Kheli at the White House.

It was Robert Goheen, the 16th President of Princeton who, in one of his last Baccalaureate Addresses, spoke of the “importance of conjoining the life of the mind with moral concern.” This “conjoining of the life of the mind with moral concern” is what lies at the heart of “citizen diplomacy,” so sorely needed in today’s world. It lies at the very heart of the three senior class leaders' description of how they will leave Boston University today, as “citizens of the world.” Just as Isaac Rich, founder of Boston University, sailed away from Boston at age 14 on a three masted schooner - later to achieve prominence in his chosen field of business, I have every confidence that the outstanding young women with whom I met (Cleopatra Dessalegn, Adia Turner and Carolyn Hoffman) and their fellow 2019 classmates will “sail away” from Boston University later today to make a great difference in the world - with the best of mentors and the best of networks. So, with respect and

admiration, I close by saying to them, "Bon Voyage" and, in this hallowed space, "Godspeed."