Search Cal Poly News

GO

California Polytechnic State University

"MY PART IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE"

presented

to the

Cal Poly's Sixty-eight Spring Commencement

CONVOCATION ADDRESS to the

CLASS OF 2009

California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, Carlifornia, U.S.A.

June 14, 2009

by

H.E. Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika

"MY PART IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE"

By

Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika

What a privilege and honour to be with you today. This brings back many precious memories of my own vestervear.

I came to the United States of America and to this Campus as a vibrant and hopeful teenager. American students and families welcome us warmly. We made friends, some of which continue to be.

Your country and your people invested in me. In turn and by God's grace, I have invested in many young and old, in different parts of Africa and other nations of the world.

Imagine, the seeds planted in me forty-five (45) years ago germinating all over our world.

President John F. Kennedy inspired us, young people then, to be one. To ask not what our countries and our world can do for us but offer ourselves and expertise. I have never look back. It has been an exciting journey.

What if I had not come here to College? What if no one had welcome me? What if I missed or ignored the inspiration offered by President Kennedy? Where would I be? What could I have contributed to my world and your world?

Allow me to relate today's convocation to Africa, my heart, my soul and being. Fortunately, Africa is in the global village and has been touched by other nations in many ways.

We hear of the Global village more in our contemporary times than in the past. For many years, relationship was not made between global; big wide world and the village; a small obscure little place that binds closely knit families and clans.

Associating the term 'village' to Africa needs it even more remote. The Africa of the past perceived as a dark and far away, unreachable place, except by people like Dr. David Livingstone, Dr. Albert Schwatzer and the like. These persons were seen as weird as the so called dark continent.

Many during this era had no idea how much Africa was in them, how much Africa sustained and improved their lives. They had no idea the effect they had on Africa and how Africa affected their lives. Had they known the role Africa will play in their future, they would have paid more attention to Africa, invested in it and her people for the good of their own children and children's children. they would have embraced the term and concept of village, learned from it for their own good and the good of humankind.

Today, the world has shrunk and whether we like it or not, we are thrust into this global village. Who will survive in this global village? Who has prepared for it?

We are born in the global village without being aware of it. Slowly, as we grow, some of us see, recognize, respond to, and invest in this global village.

The investment we make in this global village determines the bonus or harvest if you are like of what we reap from it. Those who sow abundantly in the global village reap abundantly from it. Thos who sow little, harvest accordingly.

Unfortunately, many, particularly in these great United States of America, grow and go through life and, even depart from this world, from this global village, without being aware of it. They are born into the riches and wealth of the global village but live their lives in poverty and depart this village as paupers.

To which category will you, class of 2009, chose to belong? Those who open their eyes, ear, and hearts to the global village, invest in it, reap from it and, leave the world a better place than they found it? Or those who grow, go through life with their eyes, ears and hearts closed to the world. They take what they can from the global village and depart from it poor, leaving the world more impoverished than they found it.

The recent Economic Meltdown, as some call it, has shocked the realities of the global village upon us. Whether we were ready or not, we woke up fully thrust into one global village. Many nations and people have been affected in one way or another by the Economic crisis of our times.

In several parts of Africa, Economies were booming in the recent decade. Finances were being well managed. Alas, this progress came to a sudden halt and we found ourselves in scotched by the melt down.

We can only hope that our minds and hearts are now more in tune with the whole world; different people and nations. Together, we have to get up, dust ourselves, and move together as related members of the same village. This time, hopefully, we will be aware of our dependence on each other and the benefits we derive from others.

People and nations of the world contribute to the global village. These contributions can be harvested for the good of humankind, individually and collectively.

Africa, as other countries, has made her contributions to our world, the global village. African has given human, material and financial resources to the world and, contributed significantly to the development and progress of many nations.

Africa has contributed to scientists and mathematicians, philosophies, architecture in past centuries.

This trend continues with Africa availing to the world her precious human and materials resources such as oil, 15% to the USA, Coltan, a rare, hard and dense metal that is used in cel-phones, MP3s, and in aircraft engines, (mined in the Democratic Republic of Congo), uranium, gold, diamond, silver, and many precious stones.

Africa is giving her tea, coffee, spices and foods to the contemporary hotels, industries, from take-away shops and homes.

Africa, perceived as poor, continues to make many rich and wealthy. Will the Class of 2009 reverse this trend into a win/win situation for all human kind?

A closer look at the flow of resources from Africa show some sad sights. Imagine, a woman working on a tea plantation in Kenya. She works all day long with a baby on her back. She has left toddlers and elder children unattended in some 'shack' she calls home. Her pay may be 20 cents a day. You and I sip a cup of tea or coffee in the comforts of our well carpeted chandlers and homes, or stop at some shop to enjoy a cup and friendship, and has no idea about the woman who toiled all day for 20 cents. What will happen to her children who have been left unattended? Many never go to school. What will their contribution to your world or mine be? Someone sells this tea for \$15.00 (fifteen dollars).

The same for the woman in Mozambique working on the Cashew nut plantations. These stories go on in different parts of the world. We look to the class of 2009 to redress these situations within their areas of expertise, talents and giftings.

Other nations also contribute to our daily lives. The shirt you have on may be from China, your shoes from Thailand, your silk from India, the copper wiring in your home from Zambia. So we go on sharing and exchanging, sometimes unaware.

International cuisine has revolutionalised our world as we dine and wine. We eat food from different countries daily. This is now part of us as the global village is within us as we internalised delicacies from around the world.

The challenge is to help this young generation be continuously aware that their lives depend on others as others depend on them. We are in the global village together for better or worse. The Class of 2009 will ensure it is for better and best.

Who will survive and flourish in the global village? It is she or her whose eyes, ears, and heart are open to others. Fortunately, the world today is at our door steps. Before we take the first flight from our homes or cities, the world is in our living rooms. The information technology generously supplies us with what is going on in every part of the world. We have enough information to act upon, to do good.

People from other nations are in our neighbourhoods, on our college and university campus, in our communities and at our place of work. This is a good place to begin to enjoy the global village.

Get to know someone from another country and culture right from your home, community, place of school or work, Learn another language. By the time you take the first flight to another country, you are well rehearsed to survive and flourish in the global village.

Join the family in this global village and take a child or two with you. An orphan, an abandoned child, or a marginalised person. Look out far and wide. There is still work to be done in and for the global village. There are children not in school or struggling to stay in school. For how much? Maybe \$20.00 a day. Can you help these in any way?

They are adolescents roaming in search of mentors. Will you be one? There are refugees suffering from ravages of war, conflict, famine, etc. Will you offer a helping hand, or a connection to get some help?

Class of 2009, open your eyes, ears and hearts. See! Go from here to add your lot to improve your global village. Start investing in your children's world. The ball is in your court.

Events • Cal Poly Magazine • Cal Poly Public Affairs Cal Poly Update E-newsletter • Alumni • California Polytechnic State University Giving • Athletics San Luis Obispo, CA 93407 805.756.1511 polynews@calpoly.edu