

COMMENCEMENT GREETINGS
June 21, 1939

Each graduating class, no matter the pessimism of its community or its elders, is optimistic for its own future. Each graduate desires a peaceful life in a fair and tolerant society. Even in the immediate matter of jobs, each one of you is confident that time will settle that difficult question.

And I think you should be optimistic. That is the right of youth. But let me say to you that you can't just be anything--you will have to do something. If you want the future which I think you want, you should go out and organize actively to keep this country out of war. Demagogy and propaganda are spreading the insidious dogma that a war will solve all your problems. You are going to give up your brothers and your future husbands and all that makes life happy in order to make the world safe for democracy. Well, I belonged to the former generation that tried to make the world safe for democracy. We fought the war and ended up not making anything safe for anybody. And for it, we were called the "lost generation."

War between modern nations must result in a stalemate. Don't let the clever word-mongers lead you astray. Be sure that they mean what they say--that they are not asking you to go to war for their own ulterior purposes. What I ask you to do is to go out and fight with every weapon we have given you in these four years of careful training. Go out and fight not a war, but against war, on the economic, social, and intellectual fronts. The only way we can really beat totalitarianism is not by arms but by force of public opinion. You will have to be active and coherent to do this for doubt is gnawing at our very vitals. Just "living your own life" will not be enough. You will have to use your vote to every advantage. Don't join the rabble in disorderly displays of force similar to the very thing you are fighting against. Try example; use words, written or spoken; organize groups.

First as to our economic situation: We are economically sounder than any country in the world but even our economy can be threatened by crackpot old age security formulas and who knows what next? You who are intelligent and educated must organize to fight the undermining of our national life. We must strengthen our economy and keep our self-respect before we can police the economy of our neighbors. We must immediately eradicate each canker sore to which they can point with scorn. Both labor and capital must also be shown that they should be reasonable and fair. Fascism claims that only force can do this. We must show the success of the democratic method.

You must fight to preserve our freedom of speech and religion. In particular, you must continue to uphold women's rights. You can prove by successful living that people are freer, happier and that they lead more spiritual and less material lives in a democracy than in an authoritarian state. Just "living" won't be enough; active citizenship and participation in sympathetic movements will be necessary.

We have equipped you for intellectual lives. Whether in or out of jobs, you can do creative research. You can aid your generation by artistic and scientific achievement and demonstrate that only in a democracy can we achieve the ultimate fulfillment of free minds.

And so I say to you, that the optimism of youth, the belief that what should be will be, is the greatest hope that the country has today. And I think you and your generation should turn that optimism to constructive use-- that you should fight to build a better, a more democratic America on the economic, social, and intellectual fronts. You should fight for intelligent peace, a more effective weapon against any possible enemy than any war that savage or decadent man, spurred on by his own ineptness, looking to arms rather than to spiritual force, can wage.

You should make that fight in the face of no matter how seemingly overwhelming odds. I am perfectly convinced that the people who count in life are the ones who have the courage of their convictions. Even a small struggle may have enormous results. Don't go to war, young graduates of 1939, but try that something else which your elders have failed to try.

MARION R. MACK.

THE DYNAMICS OF PERSONAL POWER

by

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Chairman, Board of Higher Education

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Two weeks ago at the World's Fair there was a function at which were selected a dozen women who had been outstanding in the last fifty years "because of their contribution to the welfare of the community." The names of most, if not all, of these would be recognized by you, had I the time to repeat them. And you would undoubtedly agree that these eminent women, ~~drawn from various fields of creative achievement,~~ were not only outstanding TTTT but were altogether admirable in the selflessness which led to such attainments as were acclaimed.

Wherein, I am prompted to ask, lies the secret of the power which leads to such accomplishment?

And I ask ^{this} ~~it~~ not merely because this is the kind of question to which Commencement talks are popularly supposed to be addressed, but for a reason that lies even closer home to you. It is a fact, which my own publishing experience has confirmed, that all America today seems bent on finding the secret of personal power. Recent books by the score have discussed ^e ~~this~~ topic from every angle. Some of them have been best sellers; all of them have had a good sale; and it is an axiom of the publishing world that you can't go wrong on what are called self-help books if they possess even a slight

intrinsic merit. How to Get On - with self, with friends, with customers, with family, in marriage, in business, in life - the titles which are variants of these ~~issues~~ ^{themes} are literally legion. And more volumes will be issued next season and next year - and the public is still not satisfied.

It occurs to me that perhaps this outpouring continues because these books do not give the right or satisfying answer! And readers, therefore, do not find what they hope to find.

Perhaps we have to probe deeper and ask: Where does power come from - whence does it derive? Are the attitudes, qualities, efforts, techniques of human relations and the rest, which are usually discussed in such works, possibly the outward evidences, the secondary manifestations, of a deeper influence which should be sought? The search for self-hood, for self-maximization; the effort to amount to something; the drive to develop personality - perhaps these familiar aims need reexamination. Indeed, I am suggesting that the primary question is: what is personal power, rather than how do I become personally powerful?

Is there, out of human experience, light to be thrown on this primary and universal inquiry?

I believe there is. I believe it is to be found in many idioms, in divers phrasings, in the insights, the revelations and the lives of the wise of humanity down through the ages. I pass by the interesting question as to why today we try to satisfy ourselves with merely the techniques of personal power; I have a notion that is a passing phase. Too long, we have asked for bread and the applied psychologists have given us a stone. Such a diet has proved to be inadequate fare. And we ask now not to be turned away hungry!

Prometheus, as a modern philosopher has said, was right.

"Men must take their fire from Olympus, where fire is, not from the reports of those who have traveled among the campfires of the gods."

Another eminent modern has said that we must seek "a conceived identification of one's interests with those of an unlimited community." (Peirce).

Still another urges upon us "acknowledgment of some end in whose pursuit all desires are fulfilled."

And another summons us to "activity pursued in behalf of an ideal end against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss, because of its general and enduring value." He urges "faith in and devotion to an ideal objective." (Dewey).

Josiah Royce, you will recall, summoned us to loyalty to what he called "the beloved community."

Augustine, one of the great saints ^{and mystics} of the Church, has said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in Thee."

~~Another later mystic of great repute was St. Anselm who said:~~

~~"Truly, I see it not, because it is too bright for me. And yet, whatsoever I see, I see through it, as the weak eye sees what it sees through the light of the sun, which in the sun itself it cannot look upon. My understanding cannot reach that light, for it shines too bright. It does not comprehend it, nor does the eye of my soul endure to gaze upon it long. It is dazzled by the brightness, it is overcome with the greatness, it is overwhelmed by the infinity, it is dazzled by the largeness, of the light.~~

~~"Oh, supreme and unapproachable light! Oh, whole and blessed truth, how far art thou from me, who am so near to thee. How far art thou from my vision, though I am so near to thine! Everywhere thou art wholly present, and I see the not. In thee I move, and in thee I have my being; and I cannot come to thee."~~

So one might go on with the efforts of so great a cloud of witnesses to put into feeble and groping words a sense of the Ineffable and Unutterable, which yet lies under and around and in and above us, working in some ~~wise~~, as we individually let it work, for ends we only dimly sense, but ends humanity has perennially been struggling to apprehend and to realize in the relations of man to man.

There has indeed been an "enduring quest" in which mankind has historically sensed in recurring moods of clarity of belief, that it was somehow embarked on a great adventure which had reference to some outcome beyond our ken, embarked on a voyage the destination of which was not of our deciding even though unmistakably we had a hand in helping the Captain on toward bringing the ship safely into port. Indeed, in this sublime journey on which we are "outward bound," the ship seems to a degree even to be sailing under sealed orders. So that the bravest and most trusting souls have, in the face of life's inscrutable tragedies, ^{said} with Job of old, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

Now, all this, you may be saying to yourself, sounds strangely incapable of proof, inconclusive, conjectural, - even otherworldly. But this belief that man and his immediate career are involved in and sharers in some larger destiny, has prompted many a bold human venture in which personal power of the very highest order has been manifest. It is true that in recent years we have seen valiant witnesses to an ethical idealism which ventured no further than to insist upon man's responsibility to man. It is true that ~~certain~~ exponents of certain brands of ^{what is} ~~something~~ called "humanism" have been content to conclude that "the music of the spheres is still and man is left alone with man."

But the affirmation for which I seek consideration, as

one of the uncontestable facts of history, is that persons have been powerful in the measure that a great cause wholly beyond their little circumscribed and petty selves has won their loyalty and devotion. Say it in whatever words you will, these humans have had real power who have deemed themselves sharers in a process quite beyond the personal, co-workers in a process of the world's becoming, of total creativity, members of that community unlimited in time and space whose builder and maker is other than man, servants of the One through the contributions of the many.

Power of the person has never been something poured in from without, nor applied like a poultice, nor derived from a hypnotic body of beguiling personal tricks. Power is a manifestation of selflessness, not in the sense of absence of the self's conviction or action, but in the sense of the self's allegiance to something so much other than self in scope and stature that the power spoke clearly through the person. Power comes through trust that one works not alone. Power comes from confidence in the meaning of the human enterprise. Power derives from faith that man can, if he will, work with and for aims that have the most profound significance for human welfare. Power is the result of living on the assumption that struggle for the best - for the good, the true and the beautiful - counts, is all that counts, in human effort.

This, I repeat, is not my idea. This is the record of personal power down through the years. The larger the loyalty, the bigger the access of power, the greater the impress upon affairs. The wider the sweep of one's concern and awareness, the deeper the feeling of power to be and to do, which goes out from one. We have power not by virtue of

something done. We do something - we win friends and influence people - by virtue of the power that is in us. All the particularities, all the methods of human accomplishment - vital as they are - are the secondary facts. They are the channels outward of the power within - the outward signs of an invisible faith. The most profound summary of this truth is still the great paradox of power and of its dynamic: He who would save his life, let him lose it. He who would have power, let him give forth power. And having turned our eyes away from self, the project of living and of achieving takes on a dimension and a potency never otherwise known or experienced. The frame of reference, as the scientists would say, is extended so that the person sees himself in the perspective of more eternal realities.

One word more to emphasize that this anchoring of conduct in a deeper area than the harbors of today's activities, is not a turning of one's back upon one's fellows. Some of you may be saying that efforts to see humankind under the aspect of eternity have historically given rise to bigotries, intolerances, divisions among men, heresy-hunting. You may be saying that religious wars have always been those most passionately fought, and most disruptive of the sense of man's brotherhood. This is true. But we must realize that the evolutionary fact of little religions, limited, exclusive and dogmatic, has also witnessed the fact of a progressive purification and universalizing of man's belief. And the fact that people have had inadequate religions is no reason why we, standing on their shoulders, should commit ourselves to no belief and to no effort to relate ourselves to that power and that purpose in which we live and move and have our being.

My own reading of human experience is clear that where ~~is~~ *social effort*

is not grounded in some reference to and validation by acknowledgment of a reality more than human, it quickly becomes less than human in its quality. It loses its sense of the crucial importance of each person; it dilutes its passion to realize human brotherhood down to some restricted interest in some limited ideal like the State or the Nation. Agencies of human association, necessary as they are, tend - as we see today, both at home and abroad - to become ends in themselves unless there is clear insight that they are means to larger ends. And it is surely not without significance that in the nations of the world where a limited ideal is now being glorified, the one continuing, sacrificial and powerful voice of protest has come from the loyal adherents of that belief in the unlimited and beloved community which I am here urging as the deeper, truer source of power.

No! Men do not - and historically have not - risen to their own noblest in loyalty and creative relation to their own fellows unless there has also been a positive conviction that man's adventure transcended his own momentary desire. In that conviction is the power and the glory. In that faith comes the perspective and the persistence to fight against all the odds of ignorance, inertia, wilful denial, cynicism and abject pessimism with its resultant admission of futility, inaction and resignation.

There is a long historic argument that has relation to this whole theme of the dynamics of personal power. It has to do with the relation of faith to works - and with their relative values. Do not understand me to be saying that works, that effort and struggle, are unimportant. That is the exact opposite of my thesis. But the self-help idea, the emphasis

upon the whole "onward and upward," success story, Horatio Alger formula, - this is shallow and trivial. ~~Indeed it has brought us to our present pass of confusion between ends and means.~~

I have not time to expand upon this interesting question of the detailed means by which the astute person gives daily expression to fundamental ends - to the ^{el}power manifestations I am suggesting that we strive for. But I would offer a word about two such channels of expression. And I pick out from many these two because they can flow so fruitfully over and through so much of our day-to-day conduct. I would suggest that in affection and in creativity each individual finds outlets for personal power - and they are outlets which confirm, enrich and renew that power which we have.

There may well be nothing new to be said about the invaluable role of affection in human affairs. But in the sense that affection is the deliberate going out of the person to meet friend or lover or parent or children or neighbors on ~~the~~ ^{their} ground to the advantage and enhancement of both persons, - in that sense the conduct of the affectionate side of our life supplies a pattern of human attitudes which has in some wise to be extended out and out so that the tender concern and solicitude we feel for those near us is capable of being aroused toward those fellow-beings who are not so near us. All the wise men whose essays on friendship you and I have read, stress the same truth that in this relation we strive to rise to give of our best. Our true friends supply a higher standard for us. As Thoreau says in his famous essay, friendship "is not an idle sympathy and mutual consolation merely, but a heroic sympathy of aspiration and endeavor." The relation of affection between two people becomes in fact the fruitfully influencing relation. We ask ourselves, "What would

he or she like me to be and to do?" And in that effort to realize another's expectations, one finds oneself met halfway by the effort of the other to meet our expectations.

Dr. Josephine Baker, from our own city, who, by the way, was one of the twelve women mentioned at the outset of my talk, tells in her recent autobiography, "Fighting for Life," about the problem she faced in one of New York's foundling hospitals. Among the premature, moribund, and unwanted babies there was a hundred percent death rate despite all the expert, hygienic practices of the hospital. She checked carefully on every phase of the purely medical procedures. She then decided to try farming these babies out to selected families on the East side. The death rate was cut in half in one year. In her own words, "That was why I became and still am a firm believer in mothering for babies."

And what affection does for babies, it has done also for adolescent boys in reformatories. I remember a young man, employed as a custodian, who asked to have assigned to him the most incorrigible boys in his institution. He lived continuously with these dozen boys. He lavished his entire thought and care upon them. He trusted them; he gave them responsibilities; he built up their confidence in themselves. And every one of them went out from that personal relation to a place of usefulness and decency in the community.

These simple instances of the power of affection may be an old story to you. But they do remind us that our influence with people can start wherever we are, tomorrow morning, if instead of being stingy with our regard we become lavish with it, lavish in the solicitude we will expend on those who may especially profit by our devotion to them.

There is a saying in the Bible, "How can you love God whom ye have not seen, unless you love men whom you have seen?" And this truth

that in the practice of affection we are enabled to widen our imaginative concern for people beyond our immediate circle, suggests a basic way of attack upon larger problems. Whether it is child labor, unemployment, old age, relations with foreign peoples, or with minority groups at home, we go about removing handicaps, hardships and hatreds not by some grandiloquent formulas but by the practice of a warmer, closer feeling of human affection and fraternal regard. Until this is built up there is no basic motive for these large improvements. And one of the tasks of education, I remind you in passing, is to enable all of us to widen the sweep of our affectionate concern by imaginative understanding so that the welfare not merely of our immediate friends but of the wider community interests us, ^{and} moves us, ~~and~~ ~~breaks down barriers between people which are so largely verbal.~~

Affection is something to strive to extend, in short, because it is the total attitude which prompts us to touch other people in an elevated way and with loving care for their well-being. To be stingy in one's affection becomes one of the ways to be locked out of effectiveness in human dealings.

A second channel of power expression springs from determination to be uniquely, distinctively creative in one's own right. No one can tell you just how or where to make your creative contribution. For some of you, a marked bent has already shown itself and you are fortunate in having some career which you are confident is yours. For others the channel for your attainment is no doubt still obscure. I, for one, am not blind to your difficulty, especially at a time when profitable and interesting jobs are exceedingly hard to find. Nor would I offer any Pollyanna advice under the circumstances. But I would say in soberest truth that a creative foothold can be found. Decide on some area to be effective in. Equip yourself

The decision is more important than the area.

continuously to do some one thing well. Mark out a place to lavish affection, to create better human relations, to ally yourself into a community effort of some kind. You may not get paid at once; but you can get to work at once.

Creatively

You may disagree with the ideas and aims of those you find yourself working with. That, too, is part of the creative effort. Some of you may be in protest against the "system" and want to see drastic changes in social and economic organization take place. ~~Personally~~, I respect such feelings of protest. But protest in and of itself is not, for any but a few martyrs in any age, the pathway to personal creativity. All protest sooner or later comes down to this: where and how can my protest gear in on the conduct of the world tomorrow morning? Does my dissent from current ills run in parallel lines to those ills, or do I try at my point of leverage - in my job, my home, my local ward committee, my social club - to discover what I should do next to give my protest some specific and practical effect?

It is at the point of the next thing to be done that creativity emerges, if it is to emerge at all. We all have to realize that the rightness of our stand has to be kept in relation to the tactics of getting enough others to agree about our rightness, so that it becomes right and wise for them, too, so that they, too, will help to action.

The glory of youthful dissent and of eagerness to build a better world lies in the fact that under intelligent direction it can prompt a new generation to some of its finest occasions for creativity. The limitations upon this opportunity will probably not be found in your vision but in your strategy and in your sense of the tempo of transition.

Finally, to you, as women, may I offer a more personal word? Certain areas of ~~struggle~~ ^{creativity} are found in practice to be touched with special concern for women as women. Not the least among these is the home itself, -

its creation and its ministrations. I believe most of you will find that the closer your creativity can focus on those vital areas in living that women are functionally interested in, the more fruitful and happy will be your achievement. You recall G. K. Chesterton's quip at the time of the English suffrage campaign. He said, "Four million women rose up and said we will not be dictated to; and then they all went out and became secretaries." By indirection he was suggesting that dictation and creativity are not necessarily the same thing - although I have known plenty of secretaries who made of their task a creative project.

My other word has to do with the kind of demands you may at some future time make upon your husbands. Part of a married woman's creativity, I am confident, lies in her eager willingness to let her husband realize himself without the handicap of distracting and belittling demands of hers. This a subtle but perennial problem. Jealousy of a man's career can take devastating forms; and the surest protection against this temptation is to know in your own heart that you have marked out a creative pathway for yourself in whatever one or more fields you feel summoned to. Marriage does not ask of you that you get your creativity vicariously through pride in what your husband does. Even to admit to yourself that you might let this be true would be a great betrayal of you. Your affection in marriage does not imply self-effacement. It implies a mutual and reciprocal effort of each to draw out the creative best in the other. This and this only is what wise affection is, ~~as we have already seen~~. Marriage rather asks of you that you be a wise enough woman to find within, ^{and} through ~~and around~~ the married relation, some genuine unfolding of your own unique expression. Also in all fairness to women, be it ~~added with emphasis~~ ^{said}, don't let a husband's claims to your attention or your adulation of him distract you from what you know to

be your rightful and total self-expression ~~in the world.~~

~~In summary,~~ I have been suggesting that most current efforts at self-help and self-development are concerned too much with the detailed means and not enough with the underlying and embracing end. The search for personal power is basically a search for belief in the reality of the human job of loyalty to and effort on behalf of that unlimited and beloved community of man in nature embarked on a great adventure, the total meaning of which we may not know but dimly sense. Yet that meaning surely has to do with the working out of a genuine, ~~operating~~ fraternity among men here on earth. Under the aegis of that belief, man works with fuller courage. His affection becomes a way of touching others powerfully. His creativity becomes a way of contributing uniquely to community benefit. There is not only room for every person's creative urge, but every person's creativity may add something otherwise lost, to the total foundations of a universal Kingdom.

Do you want personal power? Do you want to add a cubit to your stature?

I believe the answer is clear. I believe it is an answer to which the deepest feelings and wisest thoughts of humanity respond - as deep calleth unto deep. Have faith in the reality of the universal community which is in process of eternal becoming under a law of love and under the creative contributions of every precious son of man.

Members of the Class of June, 1939, I wish this kind of power, this kind of faith for you. Armed with this, you have resources that will enable you to do great things. More power to you!