

>> Good afternoon I am Cathryn Potter, the Dean of the social work school at Rutgers. Graduates if you didn't make a grand trance, do so now to waive to your friends and family and fans let get in the spirit and have fun and post on social media today. This is not the ceremony we wanted. That doesn't lessen our excitement about your accomplishments. It doesn't lessen the value of the accomplishments and it certainly doesn't lessen the impact we know you will have on the world. You are the class of 2020. Your reach will be long and your leadership will be legendary. Before the celebration however take a moment of silence to honor those effect by the pandemic and the social work colleagues on the front lines.

>> We are going to do most of the things we do at Convocation today starting here. Graduates stand and applaud your family and friends. We would not be here without them.

>> You come from all over the state region and country and studied in your signature program so do the shout outs in your homes for the doctor graduates and PHD -- those from the online programs or blended programs. Those that studied on all campuses. Students that completed the violence against women and children certificate the addictions certificate the health and aging and promoting health in child and aging certificate. All graduates and those earning their first social work degree joining of

profession. Welcome all y we have a great program and as bonus we expect it to be shorter than usual. We have great speakers and musical heads. So, stay the entire hour or you will miss memorable experiences.

Now, on with the celebration.

>> Each year, we recognize faculty and staff for their greatness. These awards are significant because they are selected by you our students.

The receiver of the first award goes to a faculty member who's teaching philosophy is consistent with social work ethics who uses teaching methods to teach. This year it goes to Marla Blunt Carter.

The most supportive professor award you serves as a mentor role model and resource to students open to suggestions and feedback. This goes to Mark Lamar.

The innovative and creative teaching award goes to a member challenging a student to learn beyond the classroom stimulating their ability to think critically and solve problems.

>> We have many part time lecturers in all programs -- leaders in practice fields and a great asset to our students. Some day you will join them as faculty members. this goes to Emily Boswell.

>> We also recognize the teaching of an instructor who was also a student in one of our doctor programs. I am

pleased to present the outstanding doctor student instruction award to James Hart. We honor our staff whom without we could not operate.

The most supportive staff award.

>> Congratulations to all of the faculty and staff award members.

>> We don't always have a student speaker but this year it was important for the class of 2020. Quaniya Jenkins is the Convocation student speaker. Quaniya is a first-generation college student and considers herself a leader passionate about change. As a native of New Jersey, she is committed today making positive changes in the state's communities. Quaniya also earned her BA in social work at Rutgers school of social work. She is highly respected at the school and a faculty member has noted that Quaniya shows all that social work is about -- passion and commitment to serve and fight for those that are disadvantaged and depressed. We kept the last part a surprise for her. She is the receiver of the outstanding MSW award received upon nomination by faculty members and the Dean.

>> Good afternoon Dean Potter faculty staff parents' family friend. To the Rutgers MSW class of 2020 -- we did it. Many of us maybe at home on our comfort coaches in pajamas. I know this is not the way we intended for and I am bummed about the way it turned out about but it is a

celebration. We worked hard for this moment. We kept going when it got hard. We kept pushing when we felt like giving up. We leaned on each other for academic and emotional support. We formed friendships with each other that will last a lifetime. I have learned more about my encounters with you that support goes along way. I have also learned more about empathy through many of you than in my entire social work study. Sure, we got to school to get an education to better our lives. But it is the friendships that keep us grounded and motivated and pushing. And to those that have motivated and supported me in journey thank you. A special thank you to my mother family and friends all at home watching. I could not have made it without you. As with lift out of this pandemic, and dive into our careers, I have only the slightest idea of what society will look like. But if there is one thing I know for sure, is it that they will need each and every one of us. They will need us and there is no doubt in my mind we will be ready.

Besides an MSW career, we are pretty eligibility for a degree in zoom. We know now there is a difference between lounging pajamas and sleeping pajamas. In all seriousness we studied all we can about the DSM-5 child development theories. If you are a math student like me, we know the steps it takes to create and analyze policy. We also know schoolhouse rock. I am just a bill by heart. But is there

one thing that we all possess which led us to pursue a career in social work. That one thing is compassion. Compassion is not something that can be taught. It is not about having compassion for yourself or for your loved ones but it is about having compassion for those that you may never leave in life. It is the very reason why many of us will pursue careers as therapists, school counselors, policy analysts, researchers or some will consider running for office. But the career options don't end there. And that they are endless. All it takes is for you to find what drives you. I myself have received more no's in the pandemic than I would like however I will remain hope full, confident, and patient. For those of you who are experiencing the same things, I have faith that we will all persevere. This pandemic and the responses that have followed severely exposed why there needs to be more social workers in office and in the bills. We work with the population we serve and understand how to analyze a problem to find who needs the help and what the help is they need. I had a conversation with my peer talking about why quality doesn't equal equity. People have different starting points and issues in their journey however those in the government are more marginalized groups to reach the same finish line but we know this is not possible because marginalized groups are not granted the same resources and opportunities as those that are privileged. Because of this

we remember to fight the good fight for those that depend on us. It is important to shed knowledge and light on the injustices of this world however it is equally important we remember the fight will not be easy and it will not be short. MSW class of 2020 -- the time has come for us to answer our calling -- it is time to do the work we know needs to be done. Ignite your fire. Be inspired to change the world. I believe in each and every one of you and I know we can do it. When the going gets tough, we have each other to lean on. Workers MSW class of 2020 raise your glass. We are official MSW graduates.

>> Our PHD, MSW and BSW program directors will present the member of the graduating class of 2020 and the rest of the student award winners.

Presenting the Doctorate of Philosophy in social work awards -- Evelyne Orwenyo -- the deans dissertation award.

>> On behalf the faculty of the school of social work at Rutgers University, I am honored to present the member of the PHD social work graduating class of 2020. Our faculty has affirmed she met all requirements for the degree and entitled to enter the field with all rights and responsibilities pertaining to the degree. Congratulations title online participation social isolation by cultures and empowerment -- a virtual representation of women in north

America.

>> Dean Potter on behalf of the faculty of the school of social work at Rutgers University, I am honored to represent the doctor of the social workers of the class of 2020. They have met all requirements of the degree and are entitled to all rights and responsibilities pertain to go the degree. Congratulations to you all. (Listing graduate names)).

>> Presenting the Master of Social Work awards. (Listing names) winner of the outstanding clinical student award).

>> Winner of the outstanding management and policy student award.

Quaniya Jenkins winner of the outstanding MSW student award.

Dean Potter, on behalf of the faculty of the school of social work at Rutgers University, I am honored to present the members of the master's in social work graduating class of 2020. Their faculty have a firm they have successfully met all requirements for the degree and are entitled to enter the field of social work with the rights and responsibilities pertain to go this degree. Graduations (listing graduates) winner of the outstanding math student award) listing winners) winner of the outstanding MSW student award (listing winners) winner of the outstanding clinical social

work student award.) Continues listing names).

>> Presenting the Bachelor of Arts in social work awards. (Listing names) winner of the dean's recognition award for excellence and social work education.) Listing winners and accomplishments on screen).

>> Dean Potter -- on behalf of the faculty of the school of social work at Rutgers University, I am honored to present the members of the BA in social work graduating class of 2020. Their faculty have a firm they have met all requirements of the degree and entitled to advance further into the field of social work with the rights and possibilities pertaining to this degree. Congratulations class of 2020. (Listing graduates on screen)).

>> Troy Albert is receiving his degree in the words of Dr. Sarah Plummer his advisor; he embodied the concepts and principals we learn in the program resiliency compassion and empathy. He was the kind compassionate and considerate soul we all came to know and respect. He wanted everyone to succeed and was the bigger cheer leader for classmates and everyone around him. His passion laughter and light touched many lives and him and truly there was no one else on earth like troy.

>> We are delighted to have Bryan Terrell Clark -- an accomplished actor and philanthropist address the graduates and address an issue important in this time.

He returned to broad way in 2019 as George Washington in the hit Hamilton. He played the role of Marvin Gaye in Motown the musical and received an award for the best musical theater album. He also starred in the drama fences. You may have seen him in many TV appearances like admire and Netflix queen sugar. There is not a network he has not starred on. He is the cofounder of undefined -- an initiative teaching young people to use their voices to erase labels in society. A few years ago, after a student reached out to him, he engaged in a conversation with one of our classes and brought him as Convocation speaker and it was the best. Am thank you for coming back today.

>> Hello. Graduates. It is my honor to celebrate your graduation with your friend, your family, and this virtual community. I have the honor of being the speaker in 2018 where I won this amazing beautiful award the voice for social justice award. And it is my honor and privilege to be joining you again. Now I know this is not the most ideal way you were thinking about graduation. I am sure when you were putting in all those hours to write papers tests study and cram in information, I doubt that the rest of your time at Rutgers was going to look like this. Who knew we would to have been stand 6 feet away and wear masks? Who know you would not get the opportunity on to walk on the stage after the hard work you of done to get to this point. We will never

forget the year 2020. 2020 is going down in history. There is going to be something special about the class of 2020 because what you will bring into the world from this experience is going to be something we have never seen. It is an unseen time and birthing people that are innovative, strong start and creativity and specifically for the social workers and those in the field, you are on the front line. You are the warriors. History has its eyes on you. I had the privilege of playing George Washington 8 times a week in New York City on Broadway -- a community that has been rocked by COVID-19 and when I think about my broad way brothers and sisters and where we are as a country -- on your special day on your graduation. I think of the song I sang 8 times a week. History has its eyes on you.

I was younger than you were now when I was given my first command. I led my men straight into a fight. I witnessed their deaths firsthand. I made every mistake. And felt the shame rise in me and even now I lie awake knowing the history has its eyes on me. History has its eyes on me but let me tell you what I wish I had known when I was young and dreamed of glory. You have no control who lives who dies who tells you story. I know that we can win. I know that greatness lies in you but remember from here on in history has its eyes on you. History has its eyes on you.

And I believe what it sees is something beautiful.

It is interesting my mother was a minister and she would always quote the scripture saying all things work together for the good. In the worst of times there could be good. I think lord as I pray and meditate in the morning, what could possibly be good about the situation? I have 8 really close friends affected by COVID-19 and many family members that have lost their lives due to this disease. I think to myself what could be great about this? I think to myself; I can't cut my facial hair -- not too much to worry about here but I think about the gym and my family and think what could be positive? I looked up the positive effects of this time has been around the world. It is interesting we find significantly less pollution. France reported clearer water and air. No school shootings in the month of March since 2002. The canals in Venice are clear. Animals and wildlife are coming back and part of our ozone layer have healed. Although those are positive things, I think about the work you have dedicated your life to, we still need you now more than ever. Social workers are the warriors on the front line. As an advocate, you have my up most respect and admiration. Passion leads to purpose and it can fuel your cause in the fight for justice on the difficult days. As you step into the shoes of a graduate and step into the field fighting the fight of justice, I want to remind you on the road of life that the compass -- the GPS really is your passion. I asked my mother

not long ago when the first time I said I wanted to be an actor or expressed passion for the arts. She said before you can talk. I said really. When is the first time I said it. She said no your favorite shows were on TV and you would run up and just bounce. It was her job as apparent and teacher to use her gifts to guide my passion down the road to give me the discipline and technical skills to go out here and do what I love. That is what this experience is for you. Something guided you to this experience to learn what you learned and be able to stand at all with the degree you have to go on the field but on the field from this point forward, you need fuel for the fire. This is a long-distance race as some of you already know. I believe part of the fuel you will need is your reason why. Purpose. What is your purpose? What is your reason why. When times are hard and difficult for me and my family and the broad way community, I think about my dad. He was a drug dealer that hid from us for 7 years he was dealing drugs. Once he became addicted to drugs and hit rock bottom he was in and out of rehabs most of his life have when they figured out, he was chemically in balanced they conquered his true disease -- his drug addiction. I asked what helped you overcome this? He shared with me he had gone to rehab 22 times. I don't know about you but I like to walk in authentic and after about 5 to ten times, I would have said my name is Bryan Terrell Clark. I am an addict.

I tried it didn't work. He kept going. I think once you find your purpose and you get into the field, one of the most importance things you will have besides your passion guiding and making you innovative, auto I think you will find that resilience needed in purpose will be there. It will be there. And because you have passion, purpose, and resilience along with this degree you are about to walk away with, I know the world will be better off because you are in it. There is no one else that you. You are uniquely you. If you can find a way in every space you maintain that sense of authenticity with your passion an purpose, I know the work will not only be done with a level of excellence but with a level of gratitude because you will walk away from that experience seeing how your uniquely impacted the world in a way the rest of us can't. In closing it is important to get tips for the world ahead. Having passion and clarity of purpose are the beginning. I asked a friends of mine Debra 3 who is a dope social workers. I asked what you would say someone would have told you about the work in the field. She said I wish someone would have told me and really stressed the importance of self-care. As a social worker, we are always there for our clients and often bring work home with us rarely leaving work for us to do serious self-care. The idea of self seems it would be an obvious thing to do as social workers however we don't always do it and I wish someone would have told me

how important it is to practice self-care y the second question I asked is what advice she would give to her student self. She said you will make mistakes. They will not break you or your client. Be true to your values even if the people around you are not. The third thing I asked is what does your industry need more of? ?

>> She said real social workers. We need people that love to do the work. We need those people doing it. We need to be sure we are at the table effecting change and policy. With that, I want to say walk with passion. Walk with purpose and please be the best social workers and social change makers this world has ever known. Congratulations class of 2020. Cool. I think that was good. Let's see if I can -- all right. That went well.

>> Christina Danielle Hickes is a member of the class of 2020 MSW and will perform the song rise up. She is a singer song writer, speaker and a top ten on the voice seen 15. She engaged in music opportunities including singing in hospitals and youth centers. Music was a central part of her life but that came to a halt with an emergency surgery. She was told she may never sing again. She regained voice and is giving back through music. She is passionate about mental health and social work. She is honored to be a Rutgers graduate as she gives awareness to mental health through the power of music.

>> You are growing tired of living life on a merry go round. If you can find a fighter, I see it in you so we can work it out and move mountains. We can work it out and move mountains. And our eyes are rise like the day. I rise up. I rise unafraid. I rise up and I will do it a thousand times again. I rise up. I rise up in spite. I rise up and I will do it a thousand times again. For you. For you. When the silence is quiet and it feels like it is getting hard to breathe and I know you feel like I can but I promise we all take the world too steep and move mountains. Take it to and move mountains.

And I rise up rise like the day. I rise up. I rise unafraid. I rise up and I will do it a thousand times again. For you. You. You. All we need all we need is hope. And for that we have each other. And for that we have each other. We will rise we will rise we will rise up. I rise up rise like the day. I rise up in spite of the ache. I will rise a thousand times. I rise up high like the waives. We rise up in spite of the ache. We will rise up and I will do it a thousand times again. Oh, for you -- for you -- congratulations class of 2020. We did it. We did it so proud of all of you. Let's celebrate.

>> Graduates you have prepared for a language long career in social work by faculty field instructors we wish you every success. We know you will each find creative way

tell us to make a difference if had the world in the lives of people and in the communities you serve. You are entering a new world at a time of great crisis and need. You are the future of our profession. This is not the ends of our time together. You are a Rutgers social work graduate now and will lead alongside the school for years to come. We are so very proud of you. As Bryan said, history does indeed have its eyes on you. You are the class of 2020. Please be safe and well and congratulations again. (Applause)