

Speech of Mr. Wong Yan Lung SC at the Graduation
Ceremony of HKUGA College on 9 July 2014

Dr. Shen, Mrs. Lo, Mr. Ip, Teachers, Parents, Students, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Congratulations to you Graduates. Many of you school leavers will be around 18 years of age. When I graduated from secondary school over 30 years ago after the A-levels examination, I was 19. I took the first flight in my life to go to England to study law, very apprehensive and yet full of excitement as to what was lying ahead.
2. At 19, you will have just stepped into adulthood, passed the age of majority, trying to be a man or a woman, despite your appearance and mindset as the oldest teenager.
3. In these days of the World Cup craze, the radio told the story of Tang Shi, a 19-year old soccer player from Shandong, who was headhunted and offered a contract to play with Brazilian club Botafago. A dream came true for this young man hitherto unknown, with a promising career in front of him.
4. At the other end of the spectrum, there is Justin Bieber, the “boy-next-door” teenage idol, who had already acquired great fortune and fame, being arrested last year, aged 19, with suspected drug offences and other brushes of the law.

5. Flicking through the newspapers, I am also reminded of the 19-year old Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip who fired at the Archduke of Austria at Sarajevo exactly 100 years ago, and who fervently believed the assassination could end tyranny and inequality. The young man's act triggered, or was used as a pretext to trigger, the tragic World War One.
6. Ahead of you, young men and women, is a world full of hope and great opportunities, but also a world with no shortage of temptations and pitfalls.
7. As you step out, be bold but with prudent feet that have been properly trained. Opportunities will only be unrealizable if you choose to believe they cannot be. Had I chosen not to study law, or not to become a barrister, against all the odds, I would have missed out on the wonderful and unique experience that have come my way.
8. Collectively you are the agents of change in Hong Kong and beyond. Your aspirations will also shape the community in which you live. The rights and wrongs in the human nature, and the ability to harness them, directly contribute to the fortunes and sufferings of this world.
9. So pitch your goals well and map out your paths carefully. Understand yourself and be honest with yourself. Know where your ability lies and accept your weaknesses. Be yourself and not somebody you or your parents wish you to be.
10. Pursue your dreams and what you really love to do. Or at least give it a try unless you are sure what you love is definitely not your forte. For unless you love what you do, you will not excel in it. And it is nothing but sheer pain to

have to toil with it day in and day out, burdened further with the lingering sense of regret.

11. Study hard, develop your abilities and sharpen your skills. The better you are the more choices you will have.
12. What cannot be emphasized more, however, is to put your talents and efforts to a good cause. A career dominated by the pursuit of self-enrichment, with little benefit to others, can never be truly satisfying in the long run. It is not naïve or shameful to listen to your heart to do something noble and good, instead of what appears popular, glamorous or lucrative.
13. Today in Hong Kong, however, what is noble? What is good? And what is beneficial to others? Even Professor Joseph Sung of the Chinese University lamented, *"I feel that I don't know this place anymore."* Although our reasons may differ, many of us are worried by what has been taking place in Hong Kong recently. It seems that Hong Kong is beginning to tear apart.
14. I have no intention to go into any political controversy. Hong Kong can do with a lot less of it. But for you, young people, the reality is that you are stepping into adulthood in Hong Kong at a time when even adults themselves are confused, and at a time when students are playing an unprecedented role in social and political movements. It will be very remiss of me merely to play to you the easy old tune of "global citizenship" or ceremonial exhortations.
15. Although almost everything can be politicized these days, I urge you not to be indifferent. There is nothing more disheartening to see young people being prematurely street-wise, whose eyes are focused on their own journeys to

fortune and glory, and oblivious to the inequality and sufferings of the world around them. Speaking for myself, I am still benefitting from the visitation experience of the homeless in the 1990's, which provides me with a much-needed anchor amidst my other pursuits in life.

16. You should seek success in life. However, as part of that success or in addition to it, I urge you to identify for yourselves what values are truly significant and worth seeking or defending, not just for you personally, but more so for anyone who calls Hong Kong home.

17. On my list, very high up, is a rule of law that marks Hong Kong out from other Chinese communities as a society imbued with a sense of fairness, justice, civility and mutual respect, forming the bedrock of the culture in which I would like my children to grow up. A city where justice and fairness are adhered to and not subject to any compromise out of fear or favour, where the law ensures basic rights and freedoms are not unreasonably limited, where the competing interests of different sectors of society can be reasonably balanced, and where the Government is accountable and dependable. A city where citizens respect the law and are confident that any dispute, be it between individuals or involving the Government, can ultimately be resolved by competent and independent judges who dispense justice according to the law, totally uninfluenced by who it is that is appearing before it.

18. Whatever may be the values you treasure, move on from being a mere beneficiary to becoming a steward: As beneficiaries, we tend to complain for not receiving what we are entitled to. As stewards, however, we strive to ensure these values are well preserved and enhanced.

19. Whatever might be the values you treasure or are motivated to attain, do not settle for the superficial or stereotype understanding. Truth has many sides and even many layers. Often times it can only be verified by multi-dimensional ways. Before you can meaningfully evaluate any new idea coming your way, you have to develop your own value system. And before this system can work reliably, it must be based on concrete knowledge, insightful studies, and preferably some experience.
20. The quest for democracy is the foremost issue facing Hong Kong today. Under the rubric of the democratic gospel, I urge you to dig deep as to what it means and entails, and what objectives it is supposed to achieve. One of the goals of democracy is to reduce inequality. However, even for the United States of America who prides itself on being the champion of democracy, according to Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel laureate in economics, “the American political system is overrun by money and the mantra of one dollar, one vote. Economic inequality translates into political inequality, and political inequality yields increasing economic inequality.”
21. As the Hong Kong jet Flight HK2014 (not MH370!) flies into the anticipated turbulences, expecting to be shaken by intricate and divisive issues and occurrences, I exhort you young men and women to fasten your seatbelts tightly and go onto high alert. Test all things. Before you endorse or embrace anything novel and controversial, think it through, talk it through, and debate it through, particularly with your parents. There are legal, political, and moral issues that are simply beyond you as teenagers: with your limited experience in life you cannot be expected to make a truly informed decision that may lead

to serious ramifications. The race to win the prize can be long, meandering and treacherous. So run in such way as to get the prize.

22. Be vigilant with the Internet. Do not lightly allow the very mixed seeds sowed indiscriminately through the cyber channels to take root. Postings responding to the news reports do sometimes exaggerate, promote hatred, subject concerned individuals to ridicule, and provoke antagonistic feelings. Taking advantage of anonymity, the obscenity of some of the messages is staggering. Refrain from pitching in despite the strong beckoning.
23. Above all, do not tolerate any form of violence. Violence triggers the meltdown of the rule of law, and replaces it with the law of the jungle. It must be firmly rejected and universally condemned.
24. Lastly, I wonder if you have come across a legal principle called the “the neighbour rule”? Essentially, the “neighbour rule” says you must take care not to do or omit to do anything that can reasonably be foreseen to cause your neighbour harm or injury.
25. The origin of “the neighbour rule” can be traced back to the Bible. In answer to a question put by an expert in the law, Jesus told the well-known story of the Good Samaritan, teaching us to love our neighbours as ourselves.
26. Compared with the teaching of Jesus, the law is obviously inferior. “The neighbour rule” is couched in the negative form: to refrain from doing harm, whereas the heart of the parable of the Good Samaritan is in the positive: to do what is beneficial to others in a proactive manner.

27. Amidst the tensions and where everything looks murky and uncertain, I believe there are still trustworthy directions. As long as we follow them, we shall be on firm ground, even though specific goals are not yet within reach. The Good Samaritan way cannot go wrong. In addition to advocating against injustice, inequality or other kinds of evil, consider serving the poor and the needy directly, and becoming the cure and the answer yourselves. Show mercy where there is hatred, be ready to heal rather than to break. With such experience comes fresh insight and solid grounding, putting you in a much better stead to make a lasting difference in the future.

28. Thank you for your patience in listening. May the Lord bless you all.