

Gabrielle Agola

Not long ago I came across a transcribed lecture which was both compelling and resonant. The lecture, entitled “On Being Wrong,” was given by Kathryn Schulz, an author and journalist. From this talk I found the one collection of words that I would personally like to assign to this momentous occasion and that collection is: “The miracle of your mind is that you see the world not as it is but as it isn’t.”

To me this is such a simple and powerful statement from which we all can begin to mold our true aspirations. Since this is a graduation and these ceremonies generally focus on the progression of our lives and our rites of passage, I’d like to focus on our futures for just a moment. As most of us have found out through the years, there are an infinite number of ways to be incorrect but only a few generally acceptable ways to be correct. In the years to come as we face our respective realities, we need to remember that getting something wrong does not imply that there is something wrong with us. As Kathryn Schulz said in her talk, “Cogito ergo sum, I think therefore I am, is an accurate statement. But the more accurate statement is fallor ergo sum: I err therefore I am.” One of the greatest ironies is that our missteps often lead to our most pivotal realizations.

And now here is where I arrive at my mandatory graduation speech maxim: Embrace your own mind, and embrace the fact that you do not see the world through a clear glass window but through your own mosaic of stained glass, colored by your unique brilliance, resilience, and humanity.

To my teachers, administrators, and everyone who has led me along the way both at First Colonial High School and at the Governor’s School for the Arts: your guidance and support has been unparalleled, thank you. To my dear friends, from whom I have learned that humor is the ideal antidote, thank you.

And to my family, my anchor and ultimate source of fortitude, I owe the deepest gratitude. I love what we have shared over the years and I wish you all, from the bottom of my heart, the very best of luck.