

Good Evening fellow graduates, I am very happy to be the speaker of the class of 2018, which is also the 50th graduating class at Herkimer College!

I would first like to thank my parents for always supporting me when I need it most, my friends and my professors for always encouraging me to do better and to try harder. I would also like to thank the On Point Staff for helping with my college journey from the first day I walked into their office, asking for their help with financial aid, from that moment, everything just started to fall into place. Last but not least, I would like to thank God.

Being the first generation in my family to graduate from college is an honor that I will carry with me throughout my entire college career and my life. Being a refugee is a struggle. When I first got to America, I didn't know any English- and having to learn a whole new language at the age of 9 was very hard. I have never given up, and I will always strive to do better.

I would like to say Congratulations to each and every one of you.

Although I may not know each of you personally, I know that you have had struggles, but I also know that you have succeeded because we are all here together today. There have been times when I failed - but that didn't stop me from trying even harder the next time.

These past two years coming to a close is bittersweet for many of us; it is not enough time to spend with all of you, but I am happy that I got to have this experience with you.

I know how difficult this is for many people where English is not their first language, like many of my fellow classmates we have to continually encourage one another; we have to be there for each other. Although our skin color may be different, it is our drive & determination that matters and we can be successful if we continue to encourage and help one another.

I am glad that I choose Herkimer College because I have built new friendships that will last a lifetime. College is about learning, but it is also about making friends and making memories: staying up late trying

to finish a paper that is due the next day, helping each other with projects & even brainstorming ideas together. We can't do it alone. If we didn't have our classmates to encourage us, or our friends to be there for us in both the hard times, and the not so hard times, we may not have made it here today. But... WE ARE HERE!

Congratulations to each and every one of you for finishing your first step in your college career. I know that many of us will go our separate ways, maybe it's going into the Military, or going on to complete our four-year degrees. Whatever your next step is, I encourage you to never give up. Always remember that you've got this. As a friend, as a classmate, as a refugee who once struggled side by side with you - I hope that you will continue to become something great. Keep working hard, keep encouraging each other and together we can make the future great!

Thank you.