

## 2017 Clover Park Technical College Commencement Speech

by Mark Lindquist

Congratulations, graduates! Does anyone have plans for tonight? Celebrate the victories, I say. And drive safe.

Congratulations also to the families and friends of the graduates.

If your phone is still on, feel free to keep it on. Tweet all you want.  
#Respect4Tech

Thank you President Loveday, thank you Clover Park trustees, thank you faculty, staff and students.

I'm Mark Lindquist, your County Prosecutor. There was a time in America when people didn't hate lawyers. Lawyers used to be counselors. They would give good counsel, rather than just cause trouble.

Tonight, as your lawyer, I'm going to be an old-fashioned counselor. My counsel to you will be in the form of five hashtags. You can hashtag that, by the way.

First though, I'm going to tell you a quick story about my background so you know something about the source. Before I was your Prosecutor, I was a writer.

Now, it's not unusual for lawyers to become writers. That seems smart. It *is* unusual for writers to become lawyers. That seems dumb, but that's what I did.

Here's how it happened: I grew up here in the Northwest, attended the University of Washington, transferred to the University of Southern California, and fell under the smoggy spell of Los Angeles and Hollywood and Venice Beach.

My first novel, which was published while I was in my 20s, opened numerous doors. I was lucky and it was kind of crazy. Suddenly I was driving through movie studio gates, hanging out with bands I loved, working with some of the most talented, charismatic people in the country. I was in way over my head, writing novels, screenplays, articles, book reviews, and I was doing it on a new computer called an Apple Mac, which had some glitches back then, by the way.

I'm going to leave out the rest of what happened over the next ten years because it was the 80s. If you've seen Ferris Bueller's Day Off, you have the general idea.

In the 90s, I finally got around to doing what my mother always told me I was going to do. I went to law school. During law school, I interned in the Pierce County Prosecutor's Office. I found my path. There is a long history of public service on both sides of my family, so you could say I went into the family business.

I've had three careers, if you don't count bartender and other odd jobs: a writer, a trial prosecutor, and your elected Prosecutor.

Most of you will have multiple careers as well. The world is changing fast and so are job opportunities. As your lawyer, here's what I've learned and can recommend as good general rules:

### **Hashtag One: #MakeFriendsWithGreatPeople**

This I learned in college. In fact, since I only have a vague degree in humanities, this is the most important college lesson I remember. A caveat: it's actually the only lesson I remember.

Mark Twain put it this way, "Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great."

The small people are the critics, the sour souls who resent the success of others. Do you know people like that? The great people are the confident ones, the joyful souls who celebrate the success of others. I *hope* you know people like that. Surround yourself with the right people, the ones who lift your spirit, and the possibilities are infinite.

### **Hashtag Two: #FollowYourBliss**

This I learned after college from Joseph Campbell, a professor who was a major influence on many writers, including George Lucas, the creator of Star Wars. Follow your bliss means, basically, discover your passion, and follow that path. Here's what I can tell you about following your bliss: if you do this, the universe will open doors for you. It will be like Obi-Wan Kenobi is riding shotgun with you.

So how do you know if you are following your bliss? There's a saying, listen to your inner voice, unless your inner voice is telling you to commit a crime.

Here's how I know I'm following Professor Campbell's counsel. Even the things about my job I don't like, I still love. I wake up every morning excited about the privilege of protecting our community, keeping us all safe. Also, I'm never bored. If you wake up feeling good about serving somebody or something, you've found your bliss.

### **Hashtag Three: #LiveWithGratitude**

This I learned from spiritual counselors in my life. At dinner, my wife and daughter and I go around the table and share what we are grateful for. Research shows that gratitude not only makes you happier, it makes you healthier. Furthermore, as the Dalai Lama said, when you live with gratitude, you develop respect for others.

Jimmy Iovine, a music producer, likes to tell a story about a time when he was sick of working for his boss, who was *the Boss*, Bruce Springsteen. The Boss is apparently pretty demanding when he's recording an album. Jimmy complained to Bruce's manager and said he was going to quit. The manager told Jimmy he was missing the big picture. *This isn't about you, Jimmy, it's about Bruce's record.* He advised Jimmy to put aside his personal issues, put aside his ego, and tell Bruce he supported him and would do whatever needed to be done. Jimmy did exactly that and the result was a classic album.

When you live with gratitude, you see the big picture and connect with something bigger than yourself.

### **Hashtag Four: #HaveFunBeGreat**

This I learned this from Zen actor Bill Murray. It's one of my mantras around the office. Have fun, be great. If you're going to do something, do it better than anyone has done before, be the best. Here's the trick: you do your best when you're having fun. We do everything better when we are relaxed. Think about the times in your life when you were performing well, in a game, at work, whatever. You were in the zone, as they say. You were having fun. When you worry, you tighten up and screw up.

There is a Zen maxim about worrying: *If you have a problem that can be fixed, then there is no use in worrying. If you have a problem that cannot be fixed, then there is no use in worrying.*

Another caveat: you are going to fail sometimes. If you're a life long learner, you actually need to fail because your best mistakes are your best lessons. Don't over do it though. You may not want to fail as often as, say, Abraham Lincoln. He started his adult life as a total loser. He had a business that failed, he lost an election for the state legislature, he had a nervous breakdown, and then he came back ... and lost five more elections. You know the rest of that story.

Learn from the failures, celebrate the victories, have fun. You'll be great.

### **Hashtag Five: #ThinkLikeAnArtist**

This I learned from writers and from Steve Jobs. Henry James advised artists to be someone on whom nothing is lost. I think this is true of all real artists. Artists pay attention, they look, they listen. Even more importantly, as Ernest Hemingway emphasized, artists pursue the truth. That's why there's more truth in a good song or a good novel than in news these days.

Steve Jobs liked to tell a story about building a bookshelf. You can put plywood on the back of a bookshelf because nobody sees the back, but if you do, you will know you used cheap wood. On the other hand, if you use quality wood, you will know that. If you insist on doing things with integrity, whatever it is, you will know it and good people will sense it. Yet another caveat: mediocre people will hate you for this, they will make up stories about you, it will drive them crazy. So that's a bonus. If you want to make everyone happy, sell ice cream.

No matter what you do for a living, you can think like an artist. If you do that, you will seek out truth. You will notice beauty. You will appreciate the world around you, which turns out to be this wild, dramatic, glorious circus of miracles.

So there you have it, #fivehashtags. As your lawyer, I recommend, in summary, *make friends with great people, follow your bliss, live with gratitude, have fun, be great,* and, no matter your occupation, *think like an artist.*

Thank you, God bless you, celebrate your victory tonight.