

Amor Omnia Vincit

**George Brown College
Convocation 2017 Keynote**

Dr. Kwame McKenzie



The following is a transcript of the keynote address delivered by Dr. McKenzie to the 2017 George Brown College Convocation ceremonies for the Spring 2016, Fall 2016 and Winter 2017 terms, at the Sony Centre For the Performing Arts, Friday June 16, 2017.

Madame Chancellor, Madame President, Members of the Platform Party, Graduates, George Brown Faculty and Staff, family and friends.

Thank you for inviting me to speak with you briefly on this very special day. I would like to thank the Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies for nominating me for this Honorary General Arts and Science Diploma.

I have the pleasure and luxury of being able to do what I love for a living. One of those pleasures is only working with people and institutions I admire, those that are really making a difference to the health and happiness of people.

Professor Jaswant Kaur is one of those people. Her work has revolutionized the lives of many people with mental illness and is now helping refugees get into higher education.

And George Brown College is one of those institutions. I have been working with the Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies for eight years. I love what George Brown College does and it has been an honour to be able to work with staff and students here.

At convocation people usually tell stories about their life. Their aim is to offer important advice.

I am going to offer you one piece of advice but I am not going to tell stories. The reason is simple.

I grew up as one of six children of Caribbean immigrants in England at a time when racism was common and in your face.

As a child, I had one aim. I wanted to get out of Southall, the poor area of London where I lived, because I thought there was more to life.

I used education to get opportunity. My local school had a Latin motto - *Labor Omnia Vincit* - which means "work conquers all." I took that to heart.

I worked my way up through the state school system, taking advantage of free University education to become a Physician, a researcher and Policy Advisor. I have given advice to

Governments, The World Bank, and my kids – two out of three actually listen. You can work out which two.

But the basis of everything I have done has been science. Science tells you that two heads are better than one. The plural of anecdote is not data. For any subject, the scientific literature will give you a better answer than one story. Given what is happening in the world I want to underline the importance of science over story.

I wanted to give you one gift on this special day for you. It is a gift from the science literature. It will make you richer and happier. It is the one piece of advice I really wished I had known when I graduated.

The literature is from the Foresight Report from the British Government. They asked over 400 academics what the UK needs to be economically competitive. It was one of the biggest scientific undertakings of our time. They commissioned literature reviews on everything from artificial intelligence to greenspace. Most people thought that technology would be the key to the UK's success. But one of the most important factors identified by the literature was a new concept – mental capital.

It turns out that if you are in a high-income country and you want to succeed, you need to be smarter than your competition. You need to develop your brain power.

Your brain power is not just about certificates, diplomas and degrees.

Mental capital = IQ+ EQ+ mental health

If you want to succeed in your life you need to build your IQ – how much knowledge you have in your head. You have started down this road by graduating today. Well done. But that is only a third of the work. You also need to develop your EQ.

EQ is all about understanding how what you do impacts others and how to work with others. It is about knowing yourself and being able to understand others. Apple is such a high performing company because it has more EQ than most of its competition. Apple understands you better and that is why it is able to produce technology that people love.

Ninety percent of high performers have high EQ. Fifty-eight percent of your job performance is linked to your EQ. People with high EQ earn on average \$30,000 more than those who have low EQ. You can learn how to build EQ just like you can build your IQ – look online.

But the most important part of your mental capital is not your IQ or EQ, it is your mental health. Without mental health, you will find it difficult to use your IQ and EQ. Preserving your mental health and developing resilience require you to keep your life in balance.

Any time things are going wrong for me, it is because my life is slightly out of balance.

The literature tells us there are five things you have to do to keep balanced and to be mentally resilient: connect, stay active, stay mindful, keep learning and give back.

Connect: Stay connected with friends and family. It is important for your health. Give support and take support. Stay part of a community, in person and virtually. If you feel you are losing contact, do something about it.

Stay active: They say a healthy mind leads to a healthy body and it does. In fact exercise helps your brain to regenerate. Twenty minutes on an exercise bike actually builds brain cells.

Stay mindful: There are great things happening all around you. Enjoy them. We are blessed to live in one of the greatest cities in the world. Taking time to enjoy the everyday – being mindful - is good for you. If you cannot enjoy the day to day, it is an indication that your life is out of balance.

Keep learning: Life-long learning is key to your health. It does not have to be a course. Keeping an interest and continuing to learn increase your resilience to mental health problems.

Give back: Volunteering, supporting others, working with your community: all help you to develop connections, put your problems in perspective and give you joy. If you are there for your community it will give you joy now, and increases the likelihood that community will be there for you when you need it.

My school motto was *Labor Omnia Vincit* - “work conquers all.”

Change it slightly and it becomes *Amor Omnia Vincit* - “love conquers all.”

I think the latter is a better motto – love of yourself, love of humanity, love of community are the basis of mental health. They are the basic values that power the five factors of resilience and mental health.

If I had known when I was graduating that I needed to develop IQ, EQ and mental health, that I needed to balance my life by connecting, staying active, being mindful, keeping learning and giving back, and that love conquers all, I think I would have enjoyed things more, and would have achieved more.

That is my advice.

But there is one thing I need to ask you.

I am especially pleased to be speaking to you just before Canada's 150th birthday. It is important for all of us to consider what it is to be part of this great Canadian project. How can we foster a greater sense of belonging for all and support meaningful reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters?

This is an opportunity to build a lasting legacy for future generations.

I want to ask you to get involved and help build Canada. Many people complain about the world and worry about the future, not understanding that they are the future. In the US elections, and in the UK Brexit, decisions were made which many younger people felt would impact them badly. But younger people were the least likely to vote.

I respectfully request that you get involved in Canada 150 to make sure it builds the right foundation for the future. Use your vote, if you have one, in every election. Make sure your voice is heard.

The world that we all live in starts with what we do not do. And, the world you want to live in starts with you. Enjoy your day, build your mental capital and make a difference.

I would like to congratulate you all on your achievements and wish you the best of luck going forwards.

Thank you.