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# ENGLISH SPEECHES

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## LADY GAGA

### BE KIND

<https://youtu.be/3XFalEtQ4xE>

Greetings to graduates across the nation. This is Lady Gaga. Two weeks ago, I recorded a very different commencement speech to help celebrate the wonderful accomplishment that is your graduation. My speech at that time reflected and referenced the shared experience of the Covid-19 global pandemic that has devastated the world this year and how important it is to be a force of kindness in the world as you take the next step forward in your promising lives. My speech was recorded before the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent activist movement protesting police brutality and systemic racism in this country.

While my original commencement speech may not be directly relevant to what this country needs most right now, I wish to tell you today, that although there is much to be sad about, there is also much to be celebrated. You are watching what is a pivotal moment in this country's evolution. You're watching society change in a deeply important way. This change will be slow. And we will have to be patient. But change will happen and it will be for the better. In rewriting my speech, I asked myself how I viewed racism and America as it relates to graduation.

When I looked past the rage that I feel about the systemic oppression, and physical and emotional violence, that has tortured the black community endlessly, my mind turned to Nature. When I think about racism in America, I imagine a broad forest, filled densely with tall trees. Trees as old as this country itself. Trees that were planted with racist seeds. Trees that grew prejudiced branches, and oppressive leaves, and mangled roots, that buried and entrenched themselves deep within the soil, forming a web so well developed and so entangled that pushes back when we try to look clearly at how it really works. This forest is where we live. It's who we are. It's the morals and values system that we as a society have upheld and emboldened for centuries. I make this analog between racism and nature in this country, because it's as pervasive and as real as nature. It is some part of everything the light touches.

But in this moment, all of us are being invited to challenge that system and think about how to affect real change. I believe in my heart that the people who are going to make this change happen are listening to me speak right now. I know this is true, because it is you who are the seeds of the future. You are the seeds that will grow into a new and different forest that is far more beautiful and loving than the one we live in today. I believe the path forward to eradicating the blight of racism relies on three principles, which form the basis of my faith and my perspective on nature and what I believe

humanity needs to thrive. These three things are time, sufficient effort and divine grace. We need these three things to be replanted anew, whole and with full hearts, healed and inspired as a country, as a forest of seeds that have been mutated, nurtured by new and ingenious ways of watering and divine intervention, that speaks to us all through the great Mother Nature with a voice of compassion. We can control time and sufficient effort. We cannot control divine grace, but I believe divine grace is the faith we can choose to place in each other, to prosper lovingly and effectively.

I believe you beautiful seeds have been presented with a wonderful gift. The opportunity to reflect in this powerful moment, on your morals, your principles and your values, and how they will guide you through life as it presents itself. And as you wonder where it will take you, your morals, principles and values, I strongly believe now, must be sincere and authentic to you. Your principles must come from your heart. Your values must come from your brain. Your morals must be derived from the whole you, that you contribute lovingly to humanity, your service to the global community will be kindness that's custom made by you for the world.

In my original speech, I ask the question: What would it take to be kind all the time? Perhaps, this question is still relevant today. I wish to frame this answer by saying something seemingly obvious on an occasion where you've already proven yourself smart, capable humans. People can do hard things. You can do hard things. You can rip up and replant the forest to be a vision only you have. Sometimes, being kind is hard. I'm sure you could think of a few unkind classmates, friends, family members, strangers, people, teachers from your school or even times that you've acted unkindly. Even if you've witnessed though a lack of kindness, still moreover, that does not cannibalize the ability for people to do hard things. So, since being kind can mean doing a hard thing, sometimes, even in the absence of kindness, people can still do the hard thing and be kind.

I encourage you to be kind. I do this to set the example I wish to, with the tremendous privilege I have in giving you this commencement speech today. When I include that bit about kindness, that's me making sure during this moment between us, that I am equipped with my morals, values, and principles for a very important topic. What do we do now? My answer of kindness is simple. But it's mine. Because right now, more than usual, we're trying to talk to each other. Let's talk. But just as you did in your classrooms almost every day, let's also listen. If we don't listen, we don't learn. Congratulations to the class of 2020. I can't wait to see your forest.

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