

Mount Kenya  **University**

SPEECH

BY

CHIEF GUEST

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AT

**MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY
16TH GRADUATION CEREMONY**

ON

FRIDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 2019

1. Salutation

- ✓ Guest Speaker, Dr. Charles Mulli, Founder and CEO of Mully Children's Family,
- ✓ Prof. John Struthers, Chancellor, Mount Kenya University,
- ✓ Prof. Simon N. Gicharu, CBS, Founder of Mount Kenya University (MKU) and Chairman, Board of Directors,
- ✓ Madam Jane Nyutu, Co-Founder of Mount Kenya University,
- ✓ Members of the University Board of Directors,
- ✓ Prof. David K. Serem, Chairman, University Council,
- ✓ Members of the University Council,
- ✓ Prof. Stanley W. Waudu, Vice-Chancellor, Mount Kenya University,
- ✓ Your Excellences, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present (Dr. Richard Masozera, High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda),

- ✓ Honorable National and County Government leaders present,
- ✓ Distinguished Guests,
- ✓ Members of Management Board and Senate,
- ✓ Staff,
- ✓ Graduands and Students,
- ✓ Ladies and Gentlemen.

2: Preliminary

I first of all commence by appreciating the MKU management for this invitation. I am therefore happy to be here this morning to join this distinguished congregation in marking the 16th Graduation Ceremony of Mount Kenya University.

3: My thoughts

It gives me great pleasure to be addressing the convocation here today. For the graduands, today marks not the end of a journey but at the beginning of a life-long learning journey. It is as challenging as it is rewarding. I recall slightly over 3 decades ago when I was in the position you are in today. It was a time of great optimism and great hopes. MKU has been your second home in which you have received training and now you are equipped to go out into the world. Your parents have great expectations and so are your friends.

Likewise, you have great expectations that the world around you will recognise your credentials and offer you the job you have always looked forward to have.

At this point in time, Mr. Chancellor Sir, I would like to share a few thoughts that are mainly shaped by my own life's journey.

- 1) We learnt as children that the rainbow is made-up of seven colours: The rainbow according to physics, is a spectrum of infinite colour but our minds will chose to place this complex rainbow reality into a conveniently manageable 'box' of a few colours. In a similar way we fit our careers, skills and opportunities into manageable boxes. The truth however, is that like the rainbow, our career 'box' contains an infinite spectrum of possibilities.

2) I graduated from the UON and my 'box' at the time was 'a veterinary surgeon' - to practice clinical medicine and surgery. It was a year later that I discovered that my 'box' was a rainbow with infinite possibilities. I could repackage my 'box' to work in public health, in a research laboratory, in the pharmaceutical industry, in a feed manufacturing firm, in a medical research laboratory and the list goes on. The one thing I did not have at the time were additional skills required for each of the colours of my rainbow.

3) So, I decided to venture in scientific research and went on to study at Masters and PhD levels at the University of Nairobi subsequently moving on to become an academician and a scientist. It is these new qualifications that opened new opportunities and horizons in medical research.

This is how I ended up in the UK to undertake neuroscience research through a grant funding from Wellcome Trust- one of the biggest funders of medical research in the world.

4) Lessons Learnt

I however, would like to humbly emphasise that all these few achievements have taken time to be realised and are not without failures, anxiety and the stress of modern day living. But one thing I have learnt in my journey is to remain focussed, patient, dedicated and committed to the desired outcomes.

I want to express my great faith in our education system even with the inherent imperfections that you will still find in education systems in developed countries - is the foundations and building blocks of what I am today.

I have looked at the quality of courses offered by the various faculties at MKU and want to implore you to have faith in our education system, in the courses offered here at MKU because they are stringent and of high quality standards.

To survive in a world of accelerating change and challenge we must do more than thinking 'outside the box' by being creative. Rather, you must think in new boxes, which means deliberately creating a range of fresh mental models and methodically exploring and prioritizing them- this is an important paradigm shift.

While in the UK I explored my 'box' further and undertook a certificate course and a Masters course in Education. I expanded my education portfolio by adding skills in ICT and e-learning. Looking back, my 'vet surgeon box' exploded into academia, a research neuroscientist and educationist. I dare say that the limit to what you can do or achieve is only in your mind.

We often hear that tired statement that nothing new is waiting to be invented. But today we are witnesses of the Mpesa revolution - a thinking within the 'box' that is the telephone.

It is possible that today hundreds of thousand shillings are being held here by this audience. Some of you are doing business transactions as you listen to me...all that is made possible through the small gadget in your hands. We have Facebook that started as a social media tool by a university student. Today he has changed the world we live in. These and all big achievements in your life cannot be realised without strong ethos predicated on dedication, commitment and hard word.

My big question and challenge to you the graduands and the audience listening to me- What is in inside your box? It is the time, as the MKU motto says, to 'unlock the infinite possibilities' inside your box.

The theme of today's graduation being 'service to the Community' require as to evaluate our individual contribution to the societies and communities that we live in.

We have always understood the concept of 'brain drain' as the process in which a country or area loses its most talented and educated workers to other countries or areas' more often for economic gain. Allow me to disambiguate 'brain drain' to mean our individual and cooperate failure to give back from our talents and skills to the communities that have contributed and shaped our growth and development.

I want to challenge all of you graduands today to think carefully as you go out to that new job to remember that you are needed by your communities. Remember the young people who can benefit from a few hours of your mentoring, the young entrepreneur who needs your advice, the farmer who can benefit from your business training and so on.

Remember MKU - the institution that has faithfully trained, mentored and served you to be who you are; and invest your new talent or new skill- or better still join hands to serve the community alongside MKU.

5. Partnering with MKU

I feel very privileged today to be invited here and to partner with MKU. I bring back skills that I have gained along the way. I have been discussing with MKU with a view to setting up a life science museum which will be a centre of excellence for teaching biological sciences, an educational outreach programme for the country as well as to serve as tourist attraction in Thika. I will work with MKU to develop their e-learning portfolio, the educational quality assurance and above all to create linkages with research institutions and universities in the UK that I collaborate with.

At the moment I have written a proposal for funding in which MKU will partner with me to engage the public on prevention measures to contain the non-communicable diseases epidemic such as Type II diabetes and hypertension.

As I walked within the Heathrow airport on my way here- I met with a Kenyan lady who informed me that she had gone to London School of Economics and she is a PhD holder in Public Health.

She is working together with economists to make the world a better place. In the course of our conversation, I invited her to come and visit MKU and above all join hands to serve in whichever way possible because while our qualifications are diverse, they have hazy boundaries and are interdependent.

6. Conclusion

As I conclude I would like to say that I am challenged and inspired by the works of one individual, namely, Dr Charles Mully who is here with us today; and I would likewise challenge you to make use of every opportunity to impart the talents, skill and giftings to the communities around you.

To the graduands, I congratulate you for making it this far. I urge you to remain focused to your dreams and retain your connectivity with MKU always as your Alma Mater.

To all of us who are here or listening to us, please remember that, the future, growth and development of our country and continent at large, lies in our connectedness and not in working in isolation. Therefore, go forth, connect, relate and transfer your knowledge and skills to the communities for the greater good of humanity.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Prof. Raymond Macharia
University of London, UK