



PCWD Keynote Speaker
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Good morning everyone, let me take this time, to say thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to come and share with you and your family on this your very special moment.

First and foremost, to all of you my utmost and sincere congratulations. You have successfully completed the first phase of your career path. I am sure at times there were many challenges, and difficulties, that could have easily prevented you from completing your classes, but you found the ability and the strength to persevere. You were determined, because you had a much bigger goal in mind. No one was going to stop you, nor should you let any one. You are now on a mission.

Like some of you, I too had some challenges and hardship when I embarked upon my professional journey. As a Jamaican immigrant, my arrival in this country brought about many challenges. Of course the biggest that will always continue to be so and never forgotten, is getting used to this New England weather. I arrived here with my 4 brothers and sisters in the middle of February, a perfectly beautiful, sunny sub zero temperature just like the island; Wrong, actually I believe it was more like 10- 20 degrees below Zero. It was dark, solemn, and very depressing. I remember, thinking to myself, ‘what am I doing here, why did my parents bring us to this forsaken place. I can’t live here, I will surely die. It was nothing like we expected. That unforgettable day I was wearing my Sunday’s, best, very cute and pretty, pink summer dress, white bobby socks and my very first pair of white patent leather shoes. I thought I was the cat’s meow, after all. I was moving to the United States, and I had to look like all the little girls I saw in magazines, and story books.

The minute I walked off the airplane my challenges began. I had to deal with subnorm death defying temperatures; I wanted to run back to the airplane, get on and demand the pilot to fly me back home. I wanted to be where the sun was always shining, the birds were always singing, where the trees were green the flowers always blooming and where the sandy white beaches go on for miles and miles, but this was not an option. Crying spells ensued but were not tolerated, so as quickly as they came they had to disappear.

One week after arriving, I started school. This was indeed a nightmare, what kind of school allowed children to be picked on and bullied constantly even in the presence of adults and teachers? I was made fun of, I was laughed at, I was jeered, and I was told I would never succeed, or amount to anything. I felt defeated before I got started, but this feeling of defeat, only made me stronger and my desire to succeed bigger. I pushed myself harder, no one or nothing was going to prevent me from achieving what I wanted. Not even sub degree New England weather, and a culture that was not only still very new to me, but was strange and like nothing I had expected, so, so different for me. I completed high school successfully, and received a full scholarship to a very prestigious College in the Boston area. Congratulations was not what I received from my teachers, and fellow classmates, it was “how did you get accepted into that college on a full scholarship?” I smiled, my thoughts, I have only just begun.

At College, my nursing class consisted of about 230 students, there were only 5 minorities, 4 female and 1 male. At the end of 2 years, of the 5 of us only 3 remained, and at graduation, 4 years later, only 2 of us, were successful in receiving our diploma. Of the entire class of 230 students only 170 graduated. It was not easy, sometimes I found it extremely grueling, but I wanted it badly enough and I was determined to obtain that diploma. The joy, the excitement, the feeling of accomplishment I felt walking across the stage to receive my BSN degree. I had achieved a part of the America dream; the land of opportunity had served me well, very well indeed. To see the pride and joy on my parents’ faces made it all worth it. What they had not been able to accomplish for themselves, their first child, and daughter with their support and encouragement had been able to do. I did, and so have you, congratulate yourself, pat yourself on the back. You have begun your professional journey.

There are many challenges, and difficulties in our lives, how we deal with these will help shape us into the person or individuals that we become. You will get knocked down, but you will need to get up again, and again, because you are one never to be kept down. You will become stronger, you will be encouraged and with determination you will achieve your goals, no matter how difficult it is or how long it takes. Stay motivated and focused, keep you eyes on the final prize.

To some of you this might appear to be a very small step on your journey, but remember there is great significance in the baby steps that we take to get us to our final and grand destination. You have now graduated; your next step is your entry level job. These jobs in my mind will no doubt, add value to the next phase of your career journey. They will guide and prepare you further, in skill building opportunities, training and education that will help in the advancement of your career. Starting at an entry level job helped me to develop the technical skills and the emotional, psychological and intellectual maturity, necessary for professional growth and advancement.

My entry level preparation and my professional advancement have prepared me for the next challenging and exciting phase of my career, medical missions. Over the past 3-4 years I have traveled to about 8 different countries providing medical care, to the people of these countries that are less fortunate than we are. I have also taught, trained and

mentored nurses, nursing and medical students. It's such a rewarding and exciting feeling to be able to embark upon such a journey, you can too... Presently I am in preparation to go back to Liberia on a 3-6 month fellowship to train nurses, in not only technical and decision making skills, but also in becoming mentors and leaders. I will also be assisting in the writing of policies and procedures.

Graduates you have decided to take the first step on your amazing career path, because you are serious about working, about your future, about making a better life for yourselves and your families. Here at Partners your entry level job is an incredible opportunity, nurture it, and build on it, **WHY** because it's the start of your career investment. Take it seriously, but enjoy it, learn from it, give respect to not only those you work with but also those you work for, and also demand respect. You will become a very important part of the team, and you will make it whole. You will and are making a difference, an incredible difference, no matter how small you or anyone else might think it is.

Your graduation from PCWD is for sure not the end, it is only the beginning, you can learn more about a career in the medical health field, you can become nurses, doctors, and radiology technologists just to name a few. There is so much more, the field is open to you, grab it, hold it and run with it, take the challenge, climb that career ladder. Make a difference.

Allow me to say just one more thing, now as you pursue and attain your dream career, **LOOK BACK**, be grateful, always say thank you, to those who have mentored, tutored, supported and encouraged you. Your success was dependent on them. I also encourage reaching out, reaching back and grabbing hold of the hand of someone, now less fortunate than you. Be ready and willing to encourage, to mentor and to support them, on their career path. This makes everything so much more fulfilling, and rewarding.

IT'S THE BEST PART OF THE DEAL

Again my sincerest congratulations, you have only just begun, on your professional journey

THE HEALTHCARE FIELD AWAITS YOU