

Ladies and gentlemen, dear classmates, all through these 10 years, 755 students have warmed these seats behind me. 109 of them are present here tonight, 20 others once had the chance to stand here in my place.

What remains of their memory could be names engraved next to the teachers' smoking lounge, or numbers proudly recited in the Mission Laique's conferences.

But I ask you to listen to the echoes of these walls. Hear their whispers as they remember every cry, every laugh, even every sigh we have pronounced through these years. Look deeper into the classroom boards that forgive but never forget. Take a look at our names, names that we once childishly wrote on small trees, that today bloom with prosperity; and that is how you will measure our journey.

Tonight we part.

How many times have our thoughts drifted away from classrooms to this moment, where we'd occasionally imagine ourselves stumbling down these stairs, but mostly, thinking about the moment where we'd be holding our diplomas up high, with our heads reaching the sky. We try to ignore the fact that once we walk out of these doors tonight, there is no coming back.

The truth is, now that the moment is here, we're clinching onto our seats, (refusing to leave). Why? Well frankly, I'm not sure. It could be the fear of embarking into the unknown, opening a new page, back from scratch. But I guess it's the bitterness of turning this page. A page that we have spent a lifetime coloring: from kindergarten Crayolas to philosophy courses' stabilos.

I'm sorry teachers, if I don't quite recall the lessons on your board, but Albert Einstein once said: "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what he learned in school." We have not been taught; we have been educated. And every single person here has been an educator to us. From the hard working janitors, to these enlightening mentors, to our dear parents, and even these persons behind me, who once were strangers whose faces I knew, and that have become friends with whom I have shared my life-lessons.

In fact I came here tonight with a speech entitled: "Goodbye". But I cannot say goodbye to those whom I have grown to love, for the memories we have made will last a lifetime and never know a goodbye. And in the end, we must all ask ourselves: How lucky are we to have something that makes saying farewell so hard? Thank you.

Ahmad Wehbé