

**NCAS/UC Commencement 2006 Address –  
Student Speaker Kehinde Togun**

Good afternoon. I am proud to be a member of the class of 2006; congratulations to all of us today. Our hard work has paid off. To the honored guests, administrators, professors and our families and friends, welcome and thank you. We owe much of our success to you.

For all that you have done for us, and for all that we have done for ourselves, it is now time that we “do” for the world. Beyond the concept of doing volunteer work, I mean finding different and creative ways to use our talents and the skills we have gained at this institution.

As alumni of Rutgers – Newark, we are leaving here with a wealth of knowledge: knowledge from our different academic disciplines; knowledge about how the world works; knowledge about how people interact with each other; and of course, knowledge about our own individual selves. We are also leaving here with knowledge about different cultures. As students from the most ethnically diverse campus in the nation, I hope we have gained a cultural awareness that transcends the superficial. I hope we have come to understand and accept that our diversity includes but goes beyond race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation. Our diversity is individualistic, not only collective: we all came here with a variety of talents; some of us are writers, musicians, mathematicians, and artists. Some of us love numbers, others love ideas, and others love active engagement. I am sure that all that we are and what we know have been developed beyond the classroom. We have become prosperous in our knowledge.

Yet as we exit Rutgers-Newark, we enter a world that is not so prosperous but is in need. On the global level, there are children, women and men living in societies that are poverty-stricken and afflicted with preventable diseases. On the national level, recent crises, such as the response to Hurricane Katrina have shown us that the country is even more stratified by race and social class. While living in the richest nation in the world, many among us are without shelter and are unable to provide food and healthcare for their families. On the local level, the city of Newark has over 40,000 children. The majority of them attend schools in which they will never reach their potential.

At every level, the problems are compounded by the lack of quality leadership. In this country, as in many parts of the world, our leaders lack a progressive vision. The city of Newark is also an example of what happens when the leadership has been inept and morally bankrupt for a long period of time.

Needless to say, quality leadership and quality service are both urgently needed. The world needs young people with bright minds and fresh ideas. We need to become leaders as well as public servants: Leaders and supporters of public institutions, private firms, nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations. We must become leaders with a vision and a mission to create a better society and live as a people committed to the realization of this mission for a better society. Our degrees qualify us to fulfill these needs. We must put our skills to good use in ways that help others and at the same time challenge our intellect and our hearts. It is my hope that whatever it is that we, the Rutgers – Newark Class of 2006 do, will bring us one step closer to making the world a more livable and joyful space.

Regardless of how we evolve, as parents, lawyers, accountants, middle level managers, scientists, or in other positions, we are all people who have worked hard to become more educated. I applaud each and every one of you here today. I am proud to call many of you my friends. I am proud that our class has accomplished so much and I look forward to what the future holds for each of us and what influence we will have. These four years have been an amazing learning experience inside and outside of the classroom.

Class of 2006, I thank you! All the best to us, our families, our friends, and our world.