

**PRESIDENT ISEKENEGBE COMMENCEMENT SPEECH
2018**

Good morning and welcome to the 58th Commencement Ceremony of Bronx Community College of The City University of New York! You marched into this tent as college seniors and will leave it as college alum. I am so proud of each of you! BCC Class of 2018, are you ready for your diplomas?!

Before we get into our program, I want to extend a warm Bronco welcome to all those sharing this wonderful day with you. Let's start with your families, friends, and loved ones. They went through college with you. They believed in what you can achieve and offered help to achieve it. Graduates, please stand and join me in thanking your loved ones.

I would also like to welcome the many elected officials and public servants who honor us today with their presence. They have tirelessly supported us and the mission of Bronx Community College for years. I would particularly like to acknowledge... Senator Charles Schumer,

And of course, graduates, we want to welcome our esteemed faculty and staff. They taught, advised, cared for, and mentored you – and yes, sometimes nudged you and cajoled you – but all of it was intended to bring you to this day. And since you are sitting here, it must have worked! I will now ask all the faculty and staff to please stand for us to show our appreciation (*Start clapping*).

Finally, and most importantly, I welcome YOU – the reasons for our celebration today. The Class of 2018. I am filled with pride in what you have done and excitement for what you will go on to do. Honored guests, may I present to you the newest graduates of Bronx Community College!

Let me start by telling you a bit about this amazing group. The Class of 2018 is 2418 strong. They are a reflection of a fundamental value here at BCC – Diversity. Diversity of peoples, languages, cultures and points of view. We don't believe in diversity because it is a noble cause or an act of charity. We believe and practice diversity because the great lesson of this country is that what

truly makes America great is the rich variety of its people and their contributions. You exemplify that vision of greatness. 50% of our graduates were born outside of the United States. In fact, BCC students come from over 100 countries and speak 26 languages. 904 are male, 1493 are female. Our two youngest graduates today are Chamil Moreno and Niya Swindell, our most senior are Maria Rivera and Reinaldo Jackson. And 32 are active members of the armed forces or veterans. I now ask our armed service members to stand and be recognized. Please join me in thanking them for their service to and sacrifice for our nation.

At last year's graduation, we celebrated the 60th year of Bronx Community College. With that chapter closed, we begin our celebration of the next 60. As we grow, so do our goals. But one thing remains the same. We seek to promise that a diploma is waiting for any student entering and leaving our gates. This graduating class shows that we are fulfilling our promise.

Now before I pass the microphone along, I would like to remind you of something very simple. It's an act of kindness that I see performed all over our campus many times a day. It is one of the many reasons I cherish BCC. We are a community of door openers. Have you noticed that? Whenever two or more of us approach a door, one of us is always ready to open the door and hold it for the others.

As you leave BCC, I ask you to keep this spirit of kindness alive. Be a door opener for the rest of your life. Wherever you go and whatever you do, if you get to a door first, open it for the others behind you. BCC was a door that opened for you and you have made the most of it. You now leave with the special understanding of how open doors can transform lives. Keep that lesson in your hearts, as we shall keep you in our hearts. And remember that the door that opened for you here will never close. This is a place where you will be forever welcome, where the wisdom you acquire in the next step of your journey will always be valued at the place where your journey began. So this is not good-bye. It is merely see you again. And hopefully sooner rather than later.

Congratulations. Don't keep the world waiting to see what you've got!