

from other nations. In this country, our origins matter less than our dreams. What makes us Americans is our shared belief in democracy and liberty. Our Nation now faces a critical challenge: to build an immigration system that upholds these ideals and meets America's needs in the 21st century.

In Washington, we are in the midst of an important discussion about immigration. Our current immigration system is in need of reform. We need a system where our laws are respected. We need a system that meets the legitimate needs of our economy. And we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society.

We must address all elements of this problem together or none of them will be solved at all. And we must do it in a way that learns from the mistakes that caused previous reforms to fail. So I support comprehensive immigration reform that will allow us to secure our borders and enforce our laws, keep us competitive in the global economy, and resolve the status of those already here, without amnesty and without animosity.

I know convictions run deep on the matter of immigration. Yet I am confident we can have a serious, civil, and conclusive debate. My administration is working closely with Members of Congress from both sides of the aisle. We are addressing our differences in good faith, and we are working to build consensus. And I am pleased that some of those who had doubts about comprehensive reform last year are now open to supporting it.

There is a desire on the part of Republicans and Democrats alike to get this problem solved. And by working together, we can enact comprehensive immigration reform this year.

Our Nation deserves an immigration system that secures our borders and honors our proud history as a nation of immigrants. By working together, we will enforce our laws and ensure that America forever remains a land of opportunity and a great hope on the horizon.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:40 p.m. on April 26 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the

Press Secretary on April 27 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Commencement Address at Miami Dade College—Kendall Campus in Miami, Florida

April 28, 2007

Thank you very much, Mr. President. You're on your way. [*Laughter*] Christopher, thank you for your fine introduction. I know—see your mom over there. I know she's awfully proud of you. [*Laughter*] Dr. Padron; Dr. Gray; members of the board of trustees; members of the administration; faculty and staff; former Governor Bush—always *mi hermano*—[*laughter*]—Senator Martinez; Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart; *y tambien* Mario Diaz-Balart; proud alumni, especially Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen; distinguished guests; family, friends, and members of the class of 2007: Thank you for your warm welcome, and thank you for the honor of addressing you.

This is a joyous day for the graduating class at Miami Dade College. Yet on campuses across America, our thoughts turn to the students and faculty and staff at Virginia Tech. We remember lives cut short, teachers taken from their students, and young men and women who will never attend their commencement ceremonies. Members of the Miami-Dade community share this sense of loss. One of the young victims was a former Miami Dade student who transferred to Virginia Tech—Daniel Cueva. Daniel's family knows, or should know, that we pray for them today, and we offer our comfort to the families who grieve the loss of a loved one during this commencement season.

It is always a pleasure to be back here to Miami, and I thank Dr. Padron for asking me. It hasn't escaped my attention that when you were looking for Bushes to invite—[*laughter*]—I came in fourth. [*Laughter*] Laura spoke at your North Campus commencement in 2004, my mother spoke—[*laughter*]—brother Jeb has spoken here twice. [*Laughter*] Before I stepped on the stage, I asked him for some advice. I said,

“Jeb, give me some advice.” He said, “Floridians hold their politicians to strict term limits: 8 years for a Governor, and 15 minutes for a commencement speaker.” [Laughter] I will do my best.

This afternoon, some of you are graduating with high honors, and I congratulate you. That’s something I never experienced. [Laughter] Of course, today I have done something that most of you have never experienced; I made it to campus with absolutely no traffic. [Laughter] And I found a nice parking spot. [Laughter]

The members of the class of 2007 have worked hard for this day. When you arrived on this campus, you set a goal for yourselves, and you met that goal with determination and discipline. Today you are leaving this fine college with a degree with your name on it and a promise of a better future. And I congratulate you on this important achievement.

To reach this day, you had the support of outstanding professors. They taught you well; they gave you extra help when you needed it; and they inspired you to aim high. I thank the faculty members for their dedication to their students and for their dedication to the teaching profession.

To reach this day, you also had the support of loving families. Many of you had moms and dads who sacrificed to put you through school and to give you this opportunity. Others of you put yourselves through school while providing for your own families. Those of you with young children found yourselves keeping tabs on two sets of homework—yours and theirs. I ask all the families—the moms and dads, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, to receive—to stand and receive the thanks of the class of 2007.

As this graduating class goes forward, you enter a world of unbounded opportunity. America’s economy is prospering; our trade with the world is flourishing; and new possibilities are opening every day. And the key to unlocking those possibilities is a good education.

Here at Miami Dade, the college administration has teamed with local industries, from health care to aviation to information technology, to make sure the students who leave here do so with the skills that will enable them to succeed. The school slogan is “op-

portunity changes everything.” And in newspapers and billboards and buses around this city, people can see how high you can rise with a degree from Miami Dade.

Kathy Sparger graduated from Miami Dade with a degree in nursing, and today she is vice president of patient services and chief nursing officer at South Miami Hospital. Jimmie Allen graduated from Miami Dade with a degree in architectural technology and went on to start his own architecture firm. Robert Parker graduated from Miami Dade with a degree in criminal justice, and today he is the director of the Miami-Dade Police Department. These people have followed different paths in life, but they all have one thing in common. Their road to success began right here at Miami Dade.

And today you join their ranks as proud graduates of this fine college. If you leave here determined to succeed, as they did, you will achieve your dreams as well. I ask you to dream big, to be confident in your future, and use the diploma you receive today to stake your claim in this land of opportunity.

The opportunities of America make our land a beacon of hope for people from every corner of the world. It says something about this college that more than half of the students were raised speaking a language other than English. Some of you are the children and grandchildren of immigrants who risked everything to give you opportunities they never had. Others of you are immigrants yourself, who came to this country with the hope of a better life and the determination to work for it. Over the years, this school has helped open the door for opportunity for hundreds of thousands of immigrants, and that is why Miami Dade proudly calls itself “democracy’s college.”

This college has had a significant impact on thousands of our citizens. Take, for example, Gwen Belfon, who graduates today. As a single mother in Trinidad and Tobago, Gwen dreamed of attending college. But she put her own dreams on hold to raise her four children. A few years ago, Gwen came to the United States and enrolled at Miami Dade. Today this proud mother fulfills a lifelong dream. When Gwen crosses the stage this

afternoon, she will receive her associate's degree in education. And she's not done yet. Next January, she will return to Miami Dade to start on her bachelor's degree.

Another immigrant who knows what a Miami Dade degree can do is the president of this college, Dr. Padron. At age 15, he left his home and family in Cuba for a new life in the United States. He arrived with a desire to learn and a will to succeed. At Miami Dade, he earned a degree in economics, while still learning the English language. Today, he is the first president of this college to speak English as a second language. Some people might say I am the first President of the United States who can make the same claim. *[Laughter]* Dr. Padron has gone on to serve as a leader in the academic community and an inspiring example for immigrants studying at this school today.

Immigrants like Gwen and Eduardo Padron came from different countries, at different times, under different circumstances. They are evidence that in America, your origins matter less than your dreams. They prove that if you work hard and make a commitment to learning, you will find that the doors have a way of opening for you. So my call is this: Use the degree you earn today as the first step in a lifetime of learning. By doing so, you will build a brighter future for yourselves and your families and help maintain the promise of the United States of America.

Maintaining the promise of America requires that we remain an open and welcoming society. This college serves the City of Miami, which is one of the most vibrant and diverse communities in our Nation. Miami is home to people whose families have been in Florida for generations and to those who have only just arrived. This diversity is one of the great strengths of this city, it is one of the great strengths of this college, and it is one of the great strengths of America.

Over the years, America's ability to assimilate new immigrants has set us apart from other nations. What makes us Americans is a shared belief in democracy and liberty. And now our Nation faces a vital challenge: to build an immigration system that upholds these ideals and meets America's needs in the 21st century.

In Washington, we are in the midst of an important discussion about immigration. Our current immigration system is in need of reform. It is not working. We need a system where our laws are respected. We need a system that meets the legitimate needs of our economy. And we need a system that treats people with dignity and helps newcomers assimilate into our society.

We must address all elements of this problem together or none of them will be solved at all. And we must do it in a way that learns from the mistakes that caused previous reforms to fail. I am a strong supporter of comprehensive immigration reform that will allow us to secure our borders and enforce our laws once and for all, that will keep us competitive in a global economy, and that will resolve the status of those who are already here, without amnesty and without animosity.

At Miami Dade, you know firsthand the contributions that immigrants make to our country. You see every day the values of hard work and family and faith that immigrants bring. This experience gives you a special responsibility to make your voices heard. One of the great strengths of America is that the most important issues are decided by the will of the people. That's why an educated citizenry is so vital to the success of our country. As graduates of Miami Dade, you are well-equipped to make a contribution to these vital debates. Speak out on the issues that matter to you. Participate in your Nation's civic life. By taking part in American democracy, you will be active and responsible citizens and you will make our country stronger.

Many of the graduates of the class of 2007 have roots in countries where the opportunity to participate in an open debate does not exist. One of those countries lies just 90 miles from our shores, on the island of Cuba. In Havana and other Cuban cities, there are people just like you who are attending school and dreaming of a better life. Unfortunately, those dreams are stifled by a cruel dictatorship that denies all freedom in the name of a dark and discredited ideology.

Some of you still have loved ones who live in Cuba and wait for the day when the light of liberty will shine upon them again. That day is nearing. The reign of every tyrant

comes to an end, yet the desire for freedom is never-ending. In Cuba and across the world, all who struggle for freedom have a friend in the United States, and we will stand with them until that struggle is won.

The advance of liberty is the great story of our time. Some of your fellow students have played an important part in that story. Hundreds of veterans of the United States Armed Forces are taking classes at Miami Dade. Sixteen veterans graduate from this campus today. We thank all these brave men and women for their service and for their courageous decision to wear the uniform of the United States of America.

One of those veterans is a young man named Jimmy Zapata. Jimmy's family emigrated from Colombia when he was 14. After he finished high school, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. In 2003, Sergeant Zapata helped provide convoy security and supplies for units pushing toward Baghdad as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Sergeant Zapata fought for his adopted country with honor and valor. He has earned the gratitude of his Nation, and today he earns his associate's degree from Miami Dade College. The United States will always be proud to have immigrants like Sergeant Zapata, and I know Miami Dade will always be proud to call him one of your own.

I ask every member of the class of 2007 to learn from Sergeant Zapata's example; step forward to serve a cause larger than yourself. Volunteer in a local soup kitchen or shelter. Take time to check in on an elderly neighbor. Be a mentor to a child in need. Use the skills you have learned here to help build a better nation. Our armies of compassion need men and women like you. The great test of this generation will be how you answer the call to extend the promise of America and make our Nation a more hopeful place for all. The character of the class of 2007 gives me great faith in your success and confidence in the future of a nation that makes one people from out of many.

Congratulations on your achievement. *Que Dios les bendiga*. May God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Eduardo J. Padron, president, Miami Dade College; Christopher Miles, student government president, and Gregory Gray,

president, Miami Dade College—Kendall Campus; and former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida.

The President's News Conference With European Union Leaders

April 30, 2007

President Bush. Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the Rose Garden. I want to welcome Angela Merkel and Jose Barroso here. Thank you all for your friendship. Thank you for what has been a serious set of discussions.

I told the Chancellor and the President that the EU-U.S. relations are very important to our country, that not only is it important for us to strategize how to promote prosperity and peace, but it's important for us to achieve concrete results. And we have done so.

I thank the Chancellor and Jose very much for the transatlantic economic integration plan that the three of us signed today. It is a statement of the importance of trade. It is a commitment to eliminating barriers to trade. It is a recognition that the closer that the United States and the EU become, the better off our people become. And so this is a substantial agreement, and I appreciate it.

We also talked about Doha, and I thank Peter Mandelson and Susan Schwab for briefing us. The first thing I told the group in the Cabinet Room was that I am firmly dedicated to a successful Doha round. I believe it's in this country's interests that we reject isolationism and protectionism and encourage free trade. I'm under no illusions as to how hard it will be to achieve the objective, but the first thing is, there must be a firm commitment by the leadership to get a deal.

Secondly, I reminded the people that this country is dedicated to working to eliminate poverty and disease, and the best way to help the developing world is through a successful Doha round. We told our trade ministers, "Work hard; work often; work constructively." And I believe we can be successful.