Graduates, perhaps I should say alumni, let me introduce you to your fellows -- the Class of 1945. Born about 1923 during the presidency of Warren Harding, in the era of the Model T. Ford, Rudolph Valentino and silent films, raised during the great depression, the Class of 1945 were about 16 when Hitler invaded Poland and 18 at the time of Pearl Harbor. Only 408 degrees were awarded during the academic year 1944-45. 278 of those who started with the Class of 1945 joined the armed services. At least 12 never returned. A total of 5,723 Washington University students and alumni served in
World War II. They and their generation lived with courage, creativity and hard work. They have preserved the world peace for fifty years and enhanced human freedom and the economic well being of the nation and the world. Will the Class of 1945 please stand?

Graduates of the Class of 1995.

It has been a long journey. You entered as chosen students gifted academically, with high personal standards. Since that day, you have put in hours, days and nights, weeks and years of effort to get to this point. I congratulate you. You have earned your degrees.
I should like to say a few words about those who have made this day possible and then ask you to stand and applaud. Learning and culture are community affairs. Neither you nor I could be civilized alone. You would not be here without the confidence, love and sacrifice of your family, your parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters. Think for a moment about all those who recognized your gifts and unselfishly gave you a boost along the way. Think of faculty who have devoted their lives to you and to your fellow students. We are here today because of those past and present faculty, donors, friends, administrators -- all of whom have worked in so many ways to create a place of scholarly
excellence for nurturing tomorrow's leaders. Will the graduates stand and applaud those who have made it possible for us to be here?

Most of you will be leaving Washington University, scattering to the four corners of the earth, but wherever you go, you will be leaving something of yourself with your University. You have seen Washington University change. You have worked together with your classmates to bridge differences created by geography, ethnicity, race and life style and you have made progress. By your energy and imagination, and importantly your goodwill, you have made Washington University a better place. I thank you.
My charge to you is to keep going. Keep alive hope and good will. Pay attention to the good even before the evil. Put your trust in your fellow human beings and in your common future. Let high purposes guide your life. Make your law office, your hospital, your business, your laboratory, your studio, your family more excellent and more humane because you are excellent and humane. If you do, thousands of centers of positive activity will be started all over the world that can reinforce each other to start a mighty tide for human betterment. One life linked to others can make a difference.
Melissa Aptman's mother put it very well in her message to the seniors.

I want you to remember a very important message. We cannot let violence take over. We have to think about our lives, especially all of you who are embarking on yours. We must do something good. We must become something. We must go forward. If we allow this to stop us in any way from doing these good things, then violence has won.

If you take this and turn it into something positive, each and every one of you can do something positive in your lives. You can be
productive professionals. ... You can be caring, loving parents and raise wonderful children with great values -- knowing right from wrong. But, you cannot give in to senseless, random violence.

If she can say such words, can we do less?

I should like to close by envisioning you back for your fiftieth reunion on a beautiful day in May 2045. I see you sitting in this quadrangle looking out at the young faces before you. Memories flood over you. You know that the intervening fifty years have been good. You have had disappointments and setbacks,
but you have never let yourselves be defeated. You have held to grand visions, paid attention to the details and worked for the common good. You have a sense of satisfaction for fifty years well lived.

You will have the same hope and faith in those graduating that I have in you. You know that they will be worthy custodians of your accomplishments and capable of building beyond your dreams.