

Reflection 2017

Hey class of 2020! My name is Abdurrahman. I am a graduate of the class of 2015.

Reverend McGonigle approached me a couple of weeks ago and asked me to give a short speech tonight as a part of the illumination ceremony.

You know, Tufts is full of **so** many amazing and accomplished people (some of whom you've heard from already), so it is an **incredible** honor to be the Alumni speaker for this memorable occasion.

I just wanted to start by thanking Greg and the Chaplaincy, the Alumni Office and the University for this opportunity.

Honestly, I see myself as a somewhat average tufts graduate, so over the past few weeks I've been thinking pretty hard about what can I share from my experiences here?

When I reflect on my time at Tufts, I think of the amazing individuals here. The culture is such that **every single person** you meet while at Tufts (from friends to professors to staff) all have some amazing insight to offer you.

And the great thing about this is the opportunity it presents for personal growth.

It was the first time in my life that I was exposed to so many people of different backgrounds, religions, ideas, and values. It was honestly so eye opening.

You've heard from a lot of the Faith Leaders on campus tonight, so I was hoping to share one experience that I had with the Muslim Chaplain here at Tufts my freshmen year. It's something I still remember to this day and I hope it will be inspiring and applicable to you as it has been for me during your stay at Tufts and beyond.

I am sure all of you know that when you shine light through a crystal it refracts into the rainbow. What my chaplain explained to me was every single one of us has our own views and opinions and we represent those beautiful arrays of color. And this is definitely true at Tufts. But it's essential to remember just as light comes together from all these colors, so to must we.

At Tufts you are part of a community – the class of 2020, but also the classes above you. When you leave Tufts four years from now, you will join 120,000 Jumbo community members around the world, and at a very basic level we are all part of the 7.4 billion people around this world.

And It's really important to remember this.

When each one of us holds up our candle tonight, we represent our own experiences, beliefs and values. But it's so important that we understand our neighbor's experiences

too. Learn to understand where they are from, what they value and why they believe certain things. Let their light shine brightly too. Through this mutual respect and understanding, not only do we coexist, but we thrive.

I truly believe, and my faith also teaches me, that we have an obligation to check in and take care of one another. Our unity is definitely challenged now more than ever, but this lesson reminds me every single day that we are all equal.

Tufts graduates go everywhere around this world, so all the candles here on this hill represent a generation of Tufts students who will hopefully leave immersed in cultural understanding, tolerance and respect and take that wherever you go.

Going back to the beginning, maybe I am an average Tufts graduate, or maybe I am not. But what I began to realize and what I wanted to focus on tonight was not what I could teach you but rather what you could learn from your peers. The people who you meet at Tufts will be in your life forever.

Just as my peers have, your peers will teach you lessons which you'll hold on to for the rest of your life.

My undergrad experience had its ups and downs; and trust me, everyone's does. But I look back now and can honestly say that I am much better prepared for the world having graduated from this University. I have no doubt everyone here will be able to have these

formative relationships during your time here and be able to share your unique experiences and be a light for one another. If you don't know someone reach out, if there is a class you'd never thought of taking, just take it, if there is a student group you know nothing about go stop by their general interest meeting.

You know, I learned about Arabic, Art History, Media, and Social Justice while still managing to graduate with a Bachelor's in Biology and a Minor in Child Development. I was a part of religious, social and academic groups. Groups I thought I'd never be in.

But this is how I met some of the most amazing people in my life. Try to understand everyone's unique perspectives. I promise it will not only make your life better, but also those incredible lives around you.

Thank you and welcome to Tufts, Class of 2020!