

# Tearful Oprah to Howard grads: Know yourselves

By Hazel Trice Edney  
Special to Sentinel-Voice  
WASHINGTON (NNPA)

Superstar talk show host Oprah Winfrey, after weeping before a crowd of more than 30,000 at the 139th Howard University Commencement, said the key to success is to "know who you are" and to cleave to your integrity.

"Everyone has a calling. There is a reason why you are here. I know this for sure. And that reason is greater than any degree. It's greater than any paycheck. And it's greater than anything that anybody tells you that you're supposed to do. Your real job is to find out what the reason is and get about the business of doing it," she told the

graduates who often responded with shouts of "Amen!" and "Hallelujah!"

She continued, "Your calling isn't something somebody can tell you about. It is what you feel. It's a part of your life force. It is the thing that you're supposed to do."

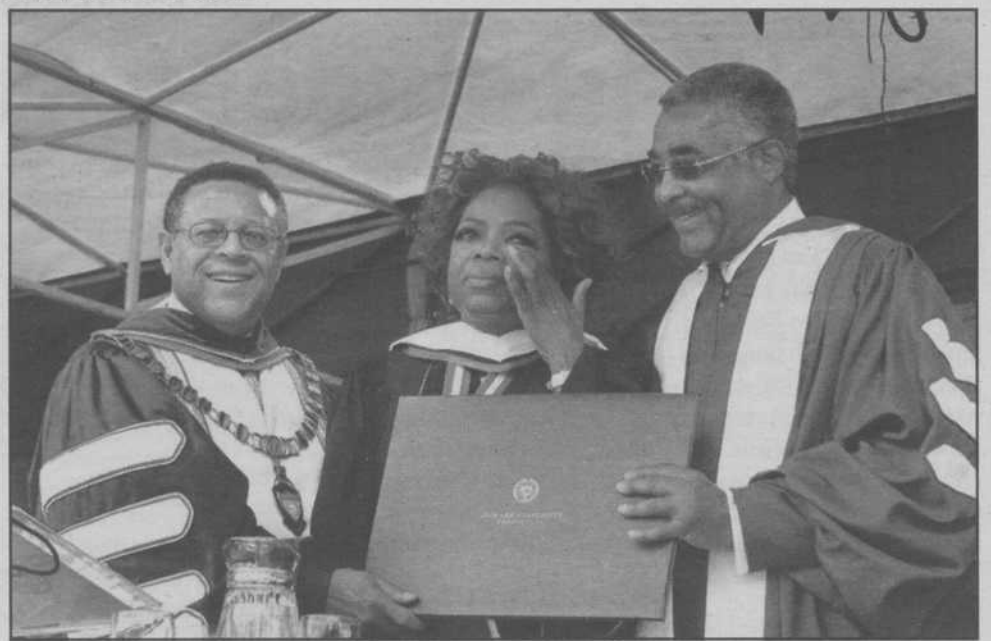
Though inspired and hopeful, many of the more than 1.4 million 2007 graduates across the U.S. will find themselves literally lost, unable to get the impressive job they'd hoped for and confused by advice from people in every corner of their lives.

Using a string of testimonies from her personal career, Winfrey told the audience at the historically Black university, known as "the Mecca" of Black education, to never

allow the words of others to stop them from reaching their goals.

Her father forbade her to quit the TV anchor job at WJZ-TV13 in Baltimore in the late 1970s. But, she disliked the job and her bosses repeatedly criticized her. When they finally took her off the anchor desk and placed her on a talk show "just to run out my contract... That was the beginning of my story," she said to cheers and loud applause. "Oprah" has been the number one talk show in the nation for 20 consecutive years and has 48 million viewers a week in the U.S. and abroad.

News anchoring "was my father's dream for me. But, God had a bigger dream for



Sentinel-Voice photo by Ron Ceasar, Courtesy of Howard University

Oprah Winfrey receives an honorary Doctor of Humanities Degree from Howard University. President H. Patrick Swygert and Chairman of the Board Addison Barry Rand bestow the award. The ceremony proved an emotional one for the billionaire media mogul.

me... And so I tried to live in the space of God's dream," she said.

The euphoric moment was emboldened by the fact that Howard University history has played such a major

role in the overall advancement of Blacks. The brainstorming for arguments in the Brown v. Board of Education began at the Howard Law School.

The late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison, civil rights activist Stokely Carmichael and singer Roberta Flack are just a few of the names in the university's alumni hall of fame.

But, even amidst the utmost fame and the success of having her own film company, Harpo Productions, and "O," her magazine, Winfrey warned the graduates that opportunities will constantly come to "sell out" what they believe to be right.

She said her producers tried to change her name to "Susie," but she resisted. And, over the years, she has been repeatedly warned that certain subject matters would cause her advertisers to flee.

"If I could count the number of times I've been asked to compromise and sell out myself for one reason or another, I would be a billionaire 10 times over. My integrity is not for sale — and neither is yours," she shouted to the cheering crowd.

Winfrey, who received an

honorary Doctor of Humanities, is known for her passionate and compassionate style of communicating. Howard President H. Patrick Swygert introduced her by the words of poet Maya Angelou, "The only thing greater than Oprah's accomplishments is the size of her heart."

Her talk show topics often espouse themes and anecdotes that tug at the heart. Her speech was no different.

"You receive a lot of awards in your life. But, there's nothing better..." she said as she choked back and wiped away tears, "...than to be honored by your own."

Just as quickly, the audience broke into laughter as she quipped, "I'll be calling myself Dr. Winfrey on Monday morning."

Oprah largely credits her ancestors for her success.

The loudest applause and cheers during her speech came in response to her recalling the advice of her beloved grandmother, Hattie Mae Lee, a maid, who worked for Whites. Her grandmother charged her to grow up and "get some good White folk that are kind to you," Winfrey recounted. "And I regret that she didn't

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## Your Horoscope Says... May 17-23

### ARIES

You are the best person that you can be. Evaluate your strengths and celebrate them this week. So often when self-evaluating we concentrate on weaknesses. Well, this week weaknesses don't count. You are wonderful and you are becoming better everyday. Nobody is perfect, and if we all were, our journey would be boring at best.

Soul Affirmation: I am patient with all that comes my way this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 13, 45

### TAURUS

There's a general feeling of catching up, from correspondence to current fashion. Indulge your love of fashions by buying something new. You'll want to catch up with someone you haven't heard from. Seek old friends out via email. Voices from the past will bring good news.

Soul Affirmation: Anticipation of a beautiful night will light up my week.

Lucky Numbers: 31, 46, 55

### GEMINI

Confusion exists over some question, and every time you think you've got the answer, circumstances will change and new information will come to your attention. Don't worry, things are going to clear up and work out. Take it easy. Worry will create the exact problem that you're worrying about how to avoid.

Soul Affirmation: I remain conscious of other people's feelings all week long.

Lucky Numbers: 42, 45, 46

### CANCER

Cool jazz! Fly dark glasses! Give yourself a chance to show off. It's good. Let others know how much you like yourself and how many ways you can present yourself. All the ways are real. Start fixing the fantasy in your

mind and make preparations so you can make the fantasy true just by stepping into it.

Soul Affirmation: Seeing my past clearly this week gives me a clear vision of my future.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 20, 45

### LEO

Surprises are in order this week. Keep yourself open and alert for the unexpected. Put yourself in the presence of people whose spirits are akin to yours. The surprise is likely to be a spiritual one, an awakening, a realization.

Soul Affirmation: I stay calm when all about me is in an uproar.

Lucky Numbers: 14, 19, 20

### VIRGO

You need to be with someone this week who does not place too many demands on you, and who is creative, intelligent, a good conversationalist, and highly spiritual. Perhaps you should be out looking for that person now with eyes wide open! You know what you need.

Soul Affirmation: My mood is enhanced by the company I keep.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 23, 26

### LIBRA

Work calls and you're not completely happy with current divisions of labor. Do more than your part as a member of the team, and you'll be glad that you did. Your reward will come from someone who also did more than their part.

Soul Affirmation: Generosity of spirit brings generosity to me.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 19, 20

### SCORPIO

Business looks good this week as you discover a new way of increasing exposure to your product — even if the product is you. Let hope and optimism lead you into new beginnings and fresh starts. All vibes are good, Go!

Soul Affirmation: When I feel good

about myself, the world feels good to me.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 15, 22

### SAGITTARIUS

Everybody should be in a good mood this week, and you'll want to join friends or family in sharing food and feelings. You may be asked to change your opinion about something you believe in. Make the change. It will enhance your spiritual growth.

Soul Affirmation: Clinging to the old will inhibit my growth this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 23, 37

### CAPRICORN

If you seem spaced out this week, don't worry about it. Fill your mind with a vision of love for the entire planet. Use your gifts to assist others in seeing the world as you do, in glorious color. Check the details on paperwork that you have to do, dreamer.

Soul Affirmation: Emptiness inside creates the space that I can fill with love.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 21, 29

### AQUARIUS

Heavy vibrations could cause you to slow down and think a lot. That's good because slowing down is just what you need. Remember to think of the positive. Reject the negative and you'll have a wonderful week.

Soul Affirmation: The slowness of my week gives me time to refresh my energy.

Lucky Numbers: 8, 29, 30

### PISCES

Give your busy brain a rest and work your body this week. It's a great week for physical activity that can loosen up muscles and relieve tensions. Also, think about your weight problem if you have one. You'll receive some practical advice from a distant relative.

Soul Affirmation: I let my mind go slack and tighten up my body.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 29, 40

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The members prayerfully  
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