

Class of 2018 Nicole Goffena's Commencement Speech

(Play sound: Baby heartbeat): There once was a fetus named Nicole who had a rapid heartbeat. She loved her time spent inside the warm compartments of her mother's womb. She was born with Colombian roots, which grew and grew in Oregon.

Out of all the members of her family, Nicole's Colombian roots were the first to grow outside of their home country. These roots were watered every day, nurtured with love, laughter, education, safety, passion, food, excitement, and even adversity.

She attended St. Anthony's from kindergarten through 8th grade, where she grew with a family of 40 special people. Once 8th graduation came, she, as well as other classmates, knew Jesuit High School would be the next destination.

Today, Nicole is giving a high school graduation speech.

Good morning, teachers, faculty, members of the Board of Trustees, and class of 2018. I am no longer a fetus. My name is Nicole Goffena; however, throughout my time in high school, many know me as "Jamba." We'll get into that later.

Earlier, we heard Jack reflect on the past four years. I am here to talk about the future. I have learned techniques for healthy living, one of them being mindfulness.

Listen to this sound:

Silence: a sound which society is trained to find comfort in during relaxation. We say, "Get rid of all the noise in your life; find moments of silence." Why not be mindful of the types of noises in your life, the good and the bad?

Guys, is it just me, or are we in such an uncomfortable position in our lives right now? We are graduating high school, but not just any high school. We are privileged enough to go to Jesuit. What is reality outside of our privileged, as Jack called it, "suburban bubble?"

Am I prepared for life on my own? Am I good at meeting new people? Will people like me? Do I know how to do my own laundry?

In order to accept and cope with this important transitional phase, I personally remember moments which make me feel ineffable emotions that ground me. Bring me back to my core. Let's focus on sound.

(Play sound: Kahoot): My classmates will recognize this noise: Kahoot: The sound of pure competition, sweat, tears, appropriate usernames, and occasional victory. For families and friends who have no clue what this sound is, it is called Kahoot: a quiz that teachers make for students that is accompanied by a truly exceptional soundtrack which forces the quiz-takers to think fast and click on the right answer.

I'll miss the noise of Mr. Flamoe rightfully questioning certain usernames, my classmates cheering, or even growling.

My family will recognize this noise, but everyone can relate to it: this is my little brother laughing.

(Play sound: Mateo laughing): Mateo has the most amazing laugh. Whenever I hear it, I can't help but smile from ear to ear. Although Mateo is only seven years old, his sense of humor and mine mesh together in an indescribable way. I'll miss the noise of laughter when I hear his typical potty jokes or when I tickle him.

We all have that one person in our lives whose laugh is indescribable because of its tone and how it makes us feel.

People who work at or attend Jesuit will recognize this sound:

(Play sound: students singing “Down to the River”):

This is the sound of individuals linked hand-in-hand, singing at the top of their lungs, rejoicing over their experience from my favorite retreat, the Encounter.

Since freshman year until the end of my junior year, I thought it would be hilarious to tag along and hold hands with a person on the never-ending line of students belting out “O sisters” or “O brothers, let’s go down to the river to pray,” because I didn’t understand why they went around singing through school during break, until it was my turn.

I’ll miss the noise of a cheering, observant community, whether oblivious or aware of the meaning behind the Encounter.

Why am I being so insistent on noises? In Mrs. Milton’s speech during our College 101 meeting, she emphasized how we should use our phones. My Instagram and Snapchat username was Jamba Mamba, but freshman year when I came to Jesuit, it seemed like my real name.

I had experienced the ups and downs of social media since 5th grade. It seems as if our generation was flooded with the innovation that comes with social media. During my sophomore year, I deleted the social media applications on my phone. Jamba was gone, but it felt so good.

Through the extra time I chose to put in my life by getting off my screen, I began to intentionally listen to the sounds around me. The *meaning* around me. I know we teenagers have heard adults harshly critique “how much time we are always spending on those darn phones.”

But they rightfully critique us. I am saying the same thing, except from teenager to teenager: spend less time on your phone. I draw importance to sounds because they ground me. I have personally become more grounded and aware of my environment ever since my time on my screen has decreased.

When we are off at college or wherever we go, I am sure we will hear sounds, noises that have an indescribable ability to bring us emotion, whether it be overwhelming or a little reminder of our experiences.

Here is the last sound I want you all to listen to: **(Play sound: Heartbeat):**

This is a heart. You’ll notice it is slower than a fetus’s heart, which beats fast. Our hearts have been the same since we were little, but they continue to grow in both a literal and metaphorical manner.

Be mindful that we have walked an amazing four-year journey together where I have personally learned so much about myself. These last weeks of my high school experience I’ve come to realize that the human heart has been emphasized for the Class of 2018.

For example: Lara’s beautiful drawing on the cover of the Senior Reflection book, our class’s Pilgrimage quote from Pope Francis, and during retreats.

In the next few years, we will walk another journey with different people and hopefully with the same hearts that do not keep from closing in on themselves, but listen. Hearts that are mindful of not only the present, but find *meaning* within the present.

Class of 2018, keep your heart’s rhythm beating with meaning.