

Commencement Speech  
Laura Nixon - May 18, 2005

Good morning, faculty and staff, friends and family, my fellow graduates. I first want to extend my congratulations to all of the graduates that are before me. This is truly a day of celebration, accomplishment, and closure. We have finally completed our time at Murray State University, and for some of us that time has been a bit longer than expected, but well worth the wait. We have accomplished a tremendous goal today. We have finally earned our college degree and through this process we have prepared ourselves for the next step in our life. We have challenged ourselves to become more than we thought we could be, we have stepped beyond our comfort zone to learn more about our world, others, and ourselves, and we have grown to become the future leaders of our society. What an accomplishment! And, yet, today is also a closure to a part of our lives that has seemingly raced by in only a few short seconds. I was once told that the years that I will spend in college will be the best years of my life. And I have often wondered why only these years? What about the next 50 or 60 years? But, I believe that I know why many people call these years the best years. These 4, 5 or maybe even 6 years have been the years where you and I have grown more than ever before and have become the individuals that we are today. We have been growing throughout our entire life, but our time at Murray State has been the time where we have become the men and women that we are today. We are no longer following the pack that so many of us did while we were younger, but we have become the leaders of today and a unique group of individuals with different perspectives, opinions, interests, and ambitions. We have truly opened our eyes and have discovered ourselves during our time at Murray State University.

I have often wondered why I am the person that I am today. What has molded me to become this unique individual? Well, when I think about this I am reminded of a poem that I received sometime during high school. It's called "Bits and Pieces" and the author is anonymous. Let me share a few lines with you.

"People, people important to you, people unimportant to you,  
cross your life, touch it with love and carelessness, and move on... You  
find you are made up of bits and pieces of all who have ever touched your  
life, and you are more because of it, and you would be less if they had not  
touched you."

If you look around you today, at the friend that is sitting next to you or the classmate across the aisle that you shared a smile with, you'll find that even in the smallest amount of time, in the most insignificant interaction, you have become a unique individual shaped by each person that you have met, and by each experience that you have encountered. This is why the Murray State graduate is so unique. Our graduates challenge themselves in the classroom and take away a piece from a lesson learned or a piece from an inspirational professor to acquire the knowledge that we have today; our graduates challenge themselves outside of the classroom and leave with a piece of the experience, whether it be the sisterhood or brotherhood of a sorority or fraternity, whether it be the time you've spent talking and interacting in the halls of your residential college, or the various clubs that you have helped to build and to grow. If you think about everyone you have met during your time at Murray State and every organization, team, or activity that you have been involved in, then you'll see a reflection of yourself. We are a mixture of what we have done during our time here and who we have spent our

time with. I know that the pieces that I take from Murray State have molded me into the confident, educated, individual that I am today and I thank the Murray State community for leaving their mark on me and helping me to become a better version of myself.

But, in return, we must remember that we have left a piece of our self with each person that we have met and with each experience that we have encountered. Think about the piece of you that you are leaving here at Murray State. What will be your bit or your legacy that you will leave after you cross this stage? I encourage you to ask yourself this question today and everyday from now on, and to think about the pieces that you have left and what pieces you will leave in the future. Will you leave a piece that inspires a friend or a stranger, or will you leave a piece that hurts another. As graduates and leaders of our society, we must continually challenge ourselves to leave only the most positive and inspiring pieces in our society. We must remember that we help to shape others and the world around us. How do you want to leave your mark?

I can only hope that the piece that I have left at Murray State is as influential and inspiring as the piece that I will take with me. I thank all of you for sharing this time with me and molding me into the unique individual that I have become. I also thank my family for leaving their mark on me and allowing me to learn through my mistakes and to take risks, while always standing behind me.

Once again, I congratulate all of you on your accomplishment today, as well as the families and friends that have supported you. As we leave today, remember to thank your professors, your friends, or even an acquaintance or a stranger for challenging you, inspiring you, and helping you to become the individual that you are today. Wherever we may go in the world and whatever we may accomplish within our lifetime, remember to

always look back and within yourself at the pieces that have formed the person that you have become, and to remember Murray State and this piece that will go with you for a lifetime. Thank you.