

Remarks

by

First Lady Jeannette Kagame

On the occasion of the

Green Hills Academy Graduation Virtual Ceremony

20 June 2020

Kigali, Rwanda

Chairman of the Board,

Head of School,

Principals of the nursery, primary, middle school, and high school,

Members of the faculty and staff,

Esteemed parents, students, and alumni,

Class of 2020 'Indahigwa',

Good morning to All !

I am pleased, once again, to be part of this very special moment at Green Hills Academy. This is a moment, when we celebrate the achievements of yet another set of brilliant young minds, as they embark, on a new journey to independently navigate the world.

As we have all seen and experienced lately, the world today has brought about unforeseen changes and challenges, that have pushed each one of us to shift and question our way of life, in order to adapt to the 'new normal' as best as we can.

For this class of 2020 and for many of your peers across the country, the four walls of your classrooms, the reassuring presence of your teachers, and the familiar faces of your friends, have been replaced with lessons on laptop screens and

numerous phone calls. All happening during the toughest phase of your high school journey.

I can bet that you miss the rush of your morning routines! Singing the national anthem and dashing to make it to class on time. Would you not do anything to be back in your school uniform? If given the chance, I am sure you would do it in a heartbeat!

There is no doubt that, in this transition, something was lost; but I truly believe that a lot has been, and is yet to be gained. You have adapted successfully and embraced a new way of learning and sharing, and you must be commended for it. Today's graduation is a testimony to this achievement.

Dear Graduates,

The challenges you have encountered throughout the year have brought tremendous opportunities. In many ways, it has laid bare what is important and what is not: revealing to each one of us what really matters, where our weaknesses are and where is our strength.

Regardless of our origins, whether we are from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, South America, Asia, or even Antarctica, our homes and environment have all been affected by a common enemy. This has forced us to rethink our way of life in order to triumph over the COVID-19 pandemic. And the fight is not over.

As fresh high school graduates and as young adults with open minds and big dreams, the responsibility to innovate and build a new world, is in your hands. I am certain that the past few months have awakened your awareness of what the future or the ‘new normal’ may hold, and of how creative and flexible one can become in the face of uncertainty.

But knowing the work that has gone into preparing you for the future, and having seen the accomplishments of those that graduated years before you, I am more than confident that you all have what it takes.

In addition to the predicament caused by COVID-19, we have also witnessed these past few weeks the harsh reality of racial injustices toward people of colour to this day, as expressed through the “Black Lives Matter” movement, calling everyone to

reassess systems and structures not conducive to equality and equity.

As young adults stepping into the future, you all have a responsibility to ensure that justice is done for all. And I know that Green Hills Academy has prepared you to build and forge strong alliances with people from all walks of life.

I know that most of you have already secured places in notable universities around the world, while others have opted to take a year off. Notwithstanding your decision or the circumstances, your time at Green Hills will no doubt bring you steps closer to realising your ambitions.

And as you begin this important journey, I encourage you to take an unfiltered look around you: take in all the realities, thread them into the fabric of your new experiences. Use them as a beacon to guide your dreams to not only serve you, but also those in your community, your country and the world at large.

Esteemed Parents,

This is indeed a proud moment for each one of you. These difficult times have shown us that you have raised your children to overcome what may seem insurmountable.

As such, allow me to commend you for being their steady rock and for giving them the support and resources they needed. Thank you for your patience and for investing in their future which will certainly provide them with unlimited windows of opportunities.

Your trust and faith in the Academy has played a pivotal role in the success we are celebrating here today. **'Indahigwa'** is really what it is thanks to your sacrifices and dedication.

Valuable members of the faculty and staff,

I salute you !

This year has again shown that teachers and educators are some of the most precious assets any community can have.

Day in and day out, you have supported your students and carried their parents hopes and dreams on your shoulders.

Your perseverance in times such as these has shown us that, even in the face of major challenges, you have fulfilled your mission '**Towards Excellence**'. For this, we count ourselves fortunate, and are forever grateful.

'Indahigwa',

As I conclude, it is my deepest wish that, what you have achieved here at Green Hills Academy will contribute to your future success, and will result in gains for those who matter to you the most.

And let's remind ourselves, that COVID-19 is still with us and against us: I urge you to take all precautions by observing social distancing, washing your hands frequently and wearing a mask correctly, and continue the global fight against this pandemic.

'Indahigwa', congratulations once again. We are all rooting for you!