

Graduation Speech 9/1/17

Goodafternoon ladies. For those of you I don't know yet, my name is Eve Mazarella and I'm one of the tutors in education. It's an honor to be here today to share in the celebration of your achievements.

I want to first talk to you about the paralegal program here at the camp, and second, to give you some words of encouragement as you continue your journey.

Almost a year ago now, we launched a paralegal program through the education department combining a correspondence course through Blackstone with live classroom instruction in various areas of the law. Since last October, 22 women have invested their time and money in obtaining their paralegal certificate and developing skills for a new career path. Today we get to celebrate our first group of successful graduates!

Would the Blackstone graduates please stand? In addition to this group I'm happy to report we have another graduate who is not here today because she's gone home and is working as a paralegal for a firm in San Diego. If anyone is interested in the program, please ask any of these ladies about their experience or see Mr. Fertel or myself.

Ok, now on to the fun stuff...

Please pull out the picture from your program. I'm a huge boxing fan and in many ways boxing provides a metaphor for our lives.

This picture represents one of the greatest moments in the history of sports. It's from a heavyweight champion fight in 1923 between Jack Dempsey and Luis Firpo. At the time, Dempsey was boxing's superstar -- think of him like a heavyweight version of Floyd Mayweather.

The details of the fight were described in Eric Greitens book entitled "Resilience."

Toward the end of the first round, Firpo had Dempsey on the ropes. He landed a vicious combination of punches which didn't just knock Dempsey down, but out of the ring. And it got worse. As he fell, Dempsey's head hit a reporter's typewriter and gushed with blood. The ringside reporters pushed him back onto the canvas just in time to beat the count and stay in the fight.

Dempsey managed to finish the first round -- bloody and beaten -- down, but not out.

This was the most devastating and dramatic knockdown of Dempsey's career. Sound familiar? What was your knockdown moment? Your arrest? Conviction? The moment your sentence was handed down? Or maybe the day you had to say goodbye to your family and surrender here. Whatever it was, and no matter how painful, remember this -- that round is over and you survived.

In the second round, Dempsey came out of his corner full of fire and fury and in 57 seconds he knocked Firpo out with a blow to the jaw.

Today is your second round. It doesn't matter what in your past has knocked you down, dismissed your dreams, or held you back. Today you've proven your ability to get back up after a devastating blow and come out swinging -- in the process winning back your

life.

When we are suddenly deprived of purpose -- whether your purpose is rooted in your role as a mother, or wife, or in your career or anything else -- we feel lost. Our challenge in the time we spend here is not just to overcome the trauma we've faced, but to find meaning and take steps to rebuild our lives. Education is an important and worthy part of that process. You should feel pride in your achievements, but more importantly, confident that you have the power to set goals and to reach them.

The story about the Dempsey/Firpo fight doesn't end at the knockout. Here's how one spectator described what happened next:

"And then, in a moment of almost heartbreaking pathos, the tiger of just seconds before turned into a lamb, stooping down to help up his bloody, beaten foe as the more than 80,000 in attendance at the Polo Grounds roared their approval."

Now Dempsey may have been a superstar, but he was one of boxing's most disliked champions with crowds often shouting for him to be knocked out. Imagine the thrill of seeing someone like Mayweather not just knocked down, but thrown from the ring -- that's what it must have felt like to watch that first round. But in the moment Dempsey lowered himself to help his opponent rise, everything changed. The world saw him humbled, pushed to his limit, and still triumphant.

What will the world see from you at the end of this fight? What will your children learn as they watch you dance with adversity? A tough opponent can take you down or push you towards greatness. Ladies, this is just the beginning. Let this camp be your training ground. Make the most of your time here so that when

you walk out these doors for the last time, you will be unstoppable.

To the graduates here today, I know I speak for all of the tutors when I say we are very, very proud of you.

I'll leave you with a final quote from another boxing great,
Muhammad Ali:

"The fight is won or lost far away from witnesses...in the gym and out there on the road, long before I dance under those lights."

Ladies, your fight is being won right here, right now, and people who love you are waiting to watch you dance in the light of your freedom.

Thank you.