



Spring rain can't dampen enthusiasm of Rutgers graduates 2,055 begin careers amid shaky economy

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GANNETT NEW JERSEY
May 23, 2008

NEW BRUNSWICK — After four years of waiting and working for the moment, clouds and rain couldn't ruin their afternoon.

Despite the weather, as well as an uncertain economy and a skittish job market, 2,055 Rutgers College graduates culminated their four years with a rousing graduation ceremony on Voorhees Mall Thursday afternoon.

Joined by thousands of relatives, friends, mentors and professors, the graduates stepped into their future with the volume pumped up.

And as umbrellas mushroomed to deflect the spring rain, the keynote speaker, Rey Ramsey, the co-founder and CEO of a global nonprofit organization working on behalf of low-income people, encouraged the new graduates to think of themselves as near-blank canvasses and then to create.

"To the future teachers, doctors, the philanthropists . . . the nurses, the engineers, the scientists and the citizens of the world, I see all of you as artists," said Ramsey, a 1982 graduate of Rutgers who now heads [One Economy Corp.](#) "We are artists of this world, and we have a unique opportunity."

Through anecdotes drawn from his life, first as a young lawyer intent on making money and then as the head of philanthropic nonprofit, Ramsey also told the graduates that life's most salient moments sometimes appear unannounced.

Those "defining" moments, he said, "are moments of choice and consequence," of which graduation was but one.

"But you won't have many more," Ramsey, a past chairman of Habitat for Humanity International, said. And one of the greatest challenges is in recognizing when those occur, and then to take advantage of them to promote change for the better.

Those moments, he said, "might just affect your community, they might affect a country and they might just affect the world. This is your portrait."

And newly minted graduates, he said, remained the "best hope" to take on the world's most complex challenges, whether global warming or lasting peace.

"Seek the bold, the bright and the solid. And as Emerson said and as many others have lived: "Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." You, my friends, are artists. Paint that portrait well. Congratulations."

Despite what one speaker called the symbolic nature of the day, Chinwe Acholonu, who graduated with a double major in philosophy and a combined degree in history and political science, said the day nonetheless carried import.

"I'm very happy to be done, especially in four years and with a high GPA," said Acholonu, who also took a psychology minor.