

Inauguration of Professor Andrew Crouch, Vice-Chancellor

Congratulatory Message delivered by Miss Louise Marcel Crouch

Good morning, ladies, gentlemen, honoured guests. I hope I find you all well, and in good spirits. For those with whom I not acquainted, I am Louise Crouch, the second eldest of Professor Crouch's children. I'm incredibly grateful to have been invited to share a congratulatory message on this very special day.

It is quite a singular experience seeing your parent, who you look up to, reach such a significant and extremely special milestone - and being myself a communicator by trade, I'm going to hope that I have chosen only the sincerest language to express my gratitude and happiness for this day.

Many people don't know this but my older sister, Ahn-lynn nourishes a rather long held grudge against my parents - my father in particular - one that pre-dates even her own birth. You see, once upon a time in a faraway decade that was the 80s, my father was completing his doctorate at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. During this time, my parents got married and my mother moved to join him there.

When they set foot back in South Africa a few years later, my parents were 7 months pregnant with my older sister, thus beginning her lifelong mourning of the loss of potential Canadian citizenship and the effortless mastering of the French language - all because they couldn't wait just two more months.

To be fair, I don't think she was the only one who thought my parents mad for returning to South Africa given all the turmoil our country faced at the time, but what many also don't know is that my parents' return in 1987 was brought about by a promise.

You see, during his time studying in Canada, my father become acquainted with a South African expat, who ended up funding his studies. He impressed upon my father his own hopes for South Africa's future, the importance of education in uplifting our people - and there was a born within my father a life-long determination to share all that he knew, and he then swore to return, to plough his skills back into our country.

Since then, he has gone on to shape the minds, and futures of young South Africans - some of whom are either here today, or watching via the live stream. But as children of educators, having a scientist as father has also been an experience, and has had its own unique impact in mine and my sibling's lives.

My siblings and I have watched my father run a kitchen like you would a science laboratory - organized, with great precision, and considerable warning not to put glassware at the edge of any table, because were that a chemistry lab and were it to fall, it could have rather explosive consequences.

He has also helped us apply simple scientific principles to everyday life. The force of inertia - which has helped me get a lot of tomato sauce unstuck from the bottom of the bottle, or Newton's law that espouses that "what goes up, must come down" - true of most emotional upheavals in our lives,

except for the sunflower-like hair fringe I sported as a younger child. That thing defied even the strictest laws of gravity.

It should also come as no surprise that to myself and my siblings our own education was a central tenant of our upbringing. My father inspired us to work hard, learn all we could and grasp every opportunity - but not only because of his understanding that education could help us attain academic or professional success, but because he always understood that education unlocks unquantifiable value to the human character and to the human spirit.

He showed us that education and real learning would enable us to think deeply, to question everything, to constantly unravel and rebuild what we believe to be true. To have patience, respect and compassion for world views that might not be same as ours, but to honour our beliefs just the same and to never betray our conscience. He understood that education gives us the gift of humility, because there isn't a person alive or anyone who has ever or will ever live that will ever know all there is to know. So the closest thing to it is to remain teachable.

Out of all valuable gifts that my parents gave me, my education is one that treasure most, not only because of the places it has taken me or the career I have been able to forge as a result of it... but because it has made - and continues to help me to strive to be a better human being. It has deepened my own character, allowed for a safe, but infinite environment for my own imagination to flourish and the courage to live with a mind that is unbound and constantly curious.

Pappa, I think I speak on behalf of Ahn and Lyndon when I say that as we grow older, we are perpetually surprised by how energized you remain, living with your authentic desire to make a real difference through education, and to see you come full circle to a point where you are able to do so in Kimberley, your home community, makes us prouder than we can say.

We have in you a father who honours his promises, even 34 years on. Who operates with deep integrity, has always lived by the courage of his own convictions and has always been clear about who he is and what he stands for. I truly believe that out of all the privilege we have ever held or will ever hold in our lives, having a life-long teacher such as you are amongst the greatest.

I would like to take this opportunity to dispense with this fallacy that pride is purely a parental concern, because we are incredibly proud of you... and I certainly think that on a day like today, it is safe to say that Ahn-Lynn has forgiven you for returning home to South Africa as you did all those years ago.

And so I will end off by saying, congratulations Pappa, we wish you continued fulfilment and success in this incredible journey. And to the faculty, staff and students and Sol Plaatjie University, I might be biased, but I do believe you are in good hands.

Thank you.

Louise Marcel Crouch