



Kathrine Switzer's 2018 Commencement Address

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Kathrine Switzer Address from [Syracuse University News](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Graduation season has arrived—and a flood of commencement addresses are coming with it. Not every speech delivered this year will be memorable, but a handful will likely be transformative—especially for those that find their way beyond campus boundaries, like the one delivered at Syracuse University on May 13 by women’s running pioneer Kathrine Switzer. Switzer, who completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Syracuse University in 1968 and 1972, received an honorary Doctor of Human Letters degree from the university this year before delivering a

message that zeroed in on the importance of being aware and open to unexpected opportunities to make a difference. “Sometimes the flash moments in your life, the least likely people and coincidences that happen in your life, will change the course of it,” Switzer told this year’s Syracuse graduating class. “If you can recognize those, you can be ready for them and act on them for your own life—but more importantly, perhaps for community and even world change.”

Watch Switzer’s commencement address in full above (courtesy of Syracuse University) and browse through a few of our favorite quotes from her speech below. The entire transcript of her speech can also be found on the [Syracuse University website](#).

“Often it’s the adversity in your life that gives you the greatest ideas. Sometimes the worst things in your life become the best.”

“There are plenty of ways to pick up a negative, turn it around and from it create a positive force for good. It can even enhance your career, or become a career itself.”

“The truth is, when you show up, and when you are bold, things happen. Nothing happens when you stay at home and sit on your hands. There will be constant reality checks—some terrifying and some gratifying. For better or worse, when you are in the action, you learn a lot.”

“Already in the 51 years since that Boston Marathon, women’s running has created nothing less than a social revolution. Fifty-eight percent of all the runners in the USA and Canada are now women. That’s because running is easy, cheap and accessible, and because it is a transformational experience. The simple act of putting one foot in front of the other gives people, women especially, a sense of accomplishment and confidence. It gives a woman the courage to do what she thinks she cannot: leave a bad relationship, find a better job or get an education.”

“I am telling you all of this because you don’t start things necessarily to change the world, but things often happen when you take responsibility for something along the way.”

“When people run—or work, strive and create—together, the world changes for the better.”

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