



**ΝΑΜΙΒΙΑ
UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY**

THE MULTI VERSATILE AMBIVERT

BY

MAVIS BRAGA ELIAS

AT THE

SPRING GRADUATION CEREMONY

ON

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AT

SAFARI CONFERENCE CENTRE

WINDHOEK

Good morning to you all.

I stand by the protocol that has been duly established.

Firstly, I recognise the presence of our Chancellor and the Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Honourable Dr Itah Kandjii – Murangi and our guest speaker, the Governor of the Bank of Namibia, Mr Ipumbu Shiimi.

Secondly, I welcome all the grandaunts and parents.

When I was in school, long before I walked into the doors of University. I was the student who teachers could not figure out. I was head of the history society and a debater. I was academically strong and very focused on my school work. Yet, I too was the student who was far too outspoken, half the time you would hope she would stop talking.

In my opinions, I too would cross boundaries which later has me deemed a problematic student. I was a mixture that was borderline good student and bad student. This became the basis on which I later gained myself my first award as most versatile student.

I entered the doors of university with a chip on my shoulder. Always so ready to fight everyone who tried to box me. I was dealing with the confusion of never truly fitting in, and having entered the gates of the Namibia University of Science and Technology made it all the worse, as I was here to study Civil Engineering.

I did not look (perhaps still do not) like what the world had come to define as what an engineer looks like. I recall the very first time I had to stand up in a crowded room and was asked the question – what do you want to be when you grow up? I said – an engineer. They laughed and mocked me, saying – girls like you do not become engineers. Never truly having explained to me, why... and what exactly a girl like me – means.

I perused engineering and was so afraid of the male dominated field that I hatched up a plan of action. I decided, in my first year of engineering, that I would go do radio to ensure that I taught myself two things.

1. I wanted to improve my vocabulary and ensure that I was eloquent in speech. This, I decided, was step one to ensuring that when I step into a male dominated room, I would in the least be able to articulate myself well. The second things I wanted to learn was how to withstand strong personalities. I was of the idea that engineering rooms would be filled with big muscular men who are intimidating and with large personalities. I decided that the radio industry would be the perfect place to practice, because it is filled with such large personalities. That is how my career in radio started. I worked for energy 100fm for 4 whole years while I was studying engineering.

Two years into studying engineering, I was to turn twenty one. I asked myself, what have I achieved on this earth in my 21 years of existence. If I was to die at that point in my life, what would people have to say about me? I was concerned with living an impact driven life.

I wanted to ensure that my life meant something, not from a place of self-gratification, but from a place of ensuring that everything my parents planted in me would bear fruit and that I would see out my destiny. I spent 6 months organizing my first charity fundraiser and fun day.

I went from door to door, asking for donations. My tenacity would not let up, and I had to ensure that I pulled it off before my 21st birthday. I did. What I did not know was that, that one single thought and moment that drove me to execute the very first charity event, would become a defining moment for my life. It is from that one moment that everything I today do in the social welfare sector stems from.

As the years progressed, I founded a charity organization called the EM Love Foundation. The foundation is today 6 years old and has done work over the years in over 6 towns across the country with a team of over 120 volunteers.

It accorded me an opportunity to meet the Queen of England, Queen Elizabeth the second as a Queens Young Leader award winner and I too was awarded the Pan African Award in the social sector. This from a time I decided to step out of my comfort and do what my heart truly desires. I have gone on to receive some amazing accolades for the work done in the social welfare sector.

However, in all that I do, it has at no single point ever been about the recognition that stems from the work done, it has always been about ensuring everything I do, is impact driven. I was then afforded an opportunity to serve on the board of the One Economy Foundation as a student director.

The One Economy Foundation is a non-profit organization founded and chaired by the First Lady of the Republic of Namibia. To date I serve on the board.

I then went on to start an events company that has hosted empowerment gala dinners and just last year organized the Namibia Engineering Week.

Earlier on, I started my story with an engrained love for reading. I have always been fascinated with books and how authors are able to tell a story.

It amazed me that they are able to put thought to paper, so I too started my blogging journey, all while still studying engineering. I would write for publications like *The Namibia*, the *New Era Newspaper* and *Monochrome Magazine*.

With having done radio, I then became an MC and speaker.

Every single one of the different career paths that I have followed and touched on just now, all happened as I was a student at the Namibia University of Science and Technology. I was constantly juggling work and school. I would have a strict schedule because I had to be able to account for every single hour, minute and second.

My life was run on a strict calendar because engineering was demanding. I would work my calendar to the T.

I remember a time where during the week, I would spend my mornings in the library before my first class working on the events company, I would then go to class and during lunch I would have meetings with my business partners. I would then go straight back to class and then after my last class, I would go to the hostel to take a nap till five thirty.

There after I would go to the dining hall to have dinner and then go to the library at six thirty and stay there till nine. After nine, I would go to the engineering building to continue studying or doing assignments till eleven. I would then go

back to the hostel to sleep and I would repeat the next day. It was so engrained in my system, Monday to Friday.

Weekends I would work, it would be charity work, radio or business. I had to be very disciplined in my time schedule, because if I was not, I would fall behind on one task. There were times where I would be studying on a Friday night while my friends would be out having a good time, but because I had to MC the Saturday night, I had to capitalize on the Friday night to get the studying in to ensure that I cover everything.

There is this one specific time, I will never forget. I was set to MC the Namibian Annual Music Awards and I had about 6 tests a week before the gig. I was under so much pressure because I was literally between the engineering building, rehearsals and the library.

I recall a Wednesday evening, I called my father in tears, because I was so afraid of failing. I called him and asked him to please come see me. He showed up with the usual. Always a new mug, those hug in a mug sachets and a book. To date, I do not know if he just kept these in his office or how come he always had them on hand whenever I would have a break down.

He came to school and comforted me, and he told me these words – in life, there will be trying moments, but you persevere trusting that what will be yours will be yours and what is not, will pass you by. This was due to the fact that I was struggling to keep up with both work and school. I was under the impression that perhaps it may be best to let go of the MC gig with the Namibian Annual Music Awards.

However, I have the world's best support system and my parents honestly are God's gift to me.

I do not stand here to depict and paint a picture of luxury and accolades, but to tell you of the truth behind the scenes. Not to scare you or make you feel any less able, but to have you understand that in life, there will be three things you need to do.

1. Believe in yourself

You will have doubts about your abilities. It is absolutely normal to feel that way. You will want to stick to what you know, you will want to stick to routine, you will want to do what everyone else does, and take the road more travelled. However, when they say you are uniquely created, it means that your journey will not be like anyone else's. You will have to take chances and risks for the things that set your heart on fire. You will have to choose to start. You will have to believe in yourself before anyone else can believe in you. When the world says you cannot be an engineer who does charity and radio. You tell them, watch! Yes, I can.

2. Work hard

You will have to do your 100 000 hours. Each and every one of you will have to put in the work. No exceptions. You will have sleepless nights, you will have to burn the midnight oil and you will have to go above and beyond the call of duty for what you believe in. You have to ensure that you carve out your niche and set yourself apart in your career. You will have to strategize to ensure that your life has a vision in sight. You will have to decide what your north star is, the one thing you must achieve to feel like you have lived a life of impact and go after it with all your might and strength. You will have to work, and there will be no short cuts.

3. Live a life of integrity

In all you do, do it with honesty. Do not take any short cuts in life because what is done in the dark, will always come to light. Do not take cut backs and do not engage in corruption. Be a person of honesty, because they say integrity is what you do when no one is watching. Ensure that the life you live behind closed doors reflects the life you portray in public. Strive to be consistent in character and do not have two sides to you that contradict who you say you are. Integrity is tested in time and it is your duty to ensure you live life by the book. We do not speak about integrity enough and it stands to be the one thing that can steal years of hard work. If there is anything I hope you take with you today, it will be to live a life on integrity. Do not take

what is not yours, do not steal, do not take short cuts, do not take cut backs.
Be the person you tell the world you are, be consistent.

As the famous quote by Marianne Williamson goes –

Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate, our greatest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that most frightens us.

With that, I say thank you Ladies and Gentlemen and congratulations class of two 2019!