

Daniel T. Roach, Jr.  
Chapel Talk  
Founders Day  
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I want to talk to you tonight about St. Andrew's, the 21<sup>st</sup> century version of this great experiment in education begun some 83 years ago by a generous and thoughtful man named Alexis Felix duPont.

Each one of you in this Chapel tonight is part of this family, this dynamic movement of students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents and past parents who have written the history of this school in such exciting and important ways. A unique vision of education and a gift of deep generosity built the School many years ago. Now, we who follow, live in an exciting time for St. Andrew's, an era of creativity, innovation and regeneration. I look forward to working with you all in the coming months and years as St. Andrew's continues to articulate an intelligent response to a world in need of hospitality, generosity, stewardship and sacrifice.

Tonight I want to talk about one of the radical and enlightened ideas that has animated our School since its founding—the financial aid program, the commitment our Founder made when he sought to create a school open to all regardless of a family's financial circumstance. I talk about the School's commitment to socioeconomic diversity as I visit alumni, parents and past parents all across the country and world, but I have not had the opportunity to explore this important subject in depth with all of you here at the School.

Before moving ahead with the founding of St. Andrew's, Mr. duPont called Bishop Cook to talk to headmasters of other boarding schools to our north and south and gather their opinions about the pursuit of a new American boarding school. The headmasters unanimously agreed that there was no need for another school to serve the affluent; they pointed out that a school with a particular emphasis on financial aid would be a welcome addition to the community of boarding schools.

But I think Mr. duPont had another reason for choosing financial aid as a cornerstone of the School. In the words of former Assistant Headmaster Bill Cameron, duPont believed in the American notion of "equality of opportunity." He therefore began to explore the notion that a private school could respond to the spirit of democracy and give a broad range of students opportunities to study, grow and flourish as citizens and leaders.

It was a novel idea and conception, a commitment to a vision and to values decades before their time—today, schools and colleges strive and strain to achieve the kind of socioeconomic diversity Mr. duPont wanted at St. Andrew's in 1929. To achieve this goal, Mr. duPont not only built a school of astounding beauty; he endowed the school to assure that the commitment to financial aid would be strong, vigorous and transformational for generations of St. Andrew's students.

I am not sure our Founders envisioned the progress American society would make over the past 80 years as class distinctions, prejudice and discrimination began to diminish thanks to the women's movement, the civil rights movement and movements for social justice, but I do know that our Founder's heart would be proud to know his vision and courage gave St. Andrew's the energy, power, confidence and commitment to create a school culture dedicated to the radical doctrine, expressed and enacted so eloquently by Jesus Christ, that every member of the human family deserves honor, dignity, affirmation and opportunity.

We know from our collective study of history, religion and literature that we all grow, learn and change the most through the privilege of living with others who see and experience life and the world in profoundly different ways. St. Andrew's grew as a school as we moved through coeducation, integration and the celebration of our remarkable diversity as a national and global school. My vision for St. Andrew's in the future is to continue and deepen this commitment to opportunity and collaboration and to make this campus resound with the energy and creativity of a truly diverse school.

Mr. duPont taught us that our wisest use of the School's financial resources was the development of a financial aid program that would open doors of opportunity for students. His creation of the endowment represented a magnificent foundation for a school open to all, but today we honor his vision and generosity by building on that legacy, by raising funds to strengthen and protect this deep historical commitment. Today Mr. duPont's vision finds expression in a \$5.1 million financial aid budget, a program that helps families from all socioeconomic groups in our society. Almost half of our students receive financial aid; the average grant per student is \$38,000.

This program benefits both full pay and financial aid students in powerful ways, for our socioeconomic diversity helps us all to find inspiration from one another each and every day.

One of the ways I honor Mr. duPont and fight for St. Andrew's every day is to find generous men and women who share my belief in St. Andrew's and the transformational effect of financial aid. Over the past five years, we have raised \$4 million to strengthen and support financial aid at St. Andrew's. This development work is so rewarding and inspirational for me, for I believe these gifts literally change lives and bring new energy, excitement and vitality to St. Andrew's.

Our summer magazine explored the history of financial aid at St. Andrew's and offered a modern perspective of the program. During the 2011-12 year, a fascinating portrait of the St. Andrew's spirit unfolded and emerged through the teacher-student pairing of Tony Alleyne and Emily Grohs. In Hadley Roach's article, we celebrated the amazing web that connected Tony Alleyne first to the Prep 9 program in New York, then to St. Andrew's, then to Wesleyan University and then to the acclaimed Teach for America program, one of the most important educational innovations in public education over the past 25 years. Hadley picks up Tony's story in the following paragraphs:

*Between graduating from Wesleyan University and returning to St. Andrew's, Alleyne worked at an enormous public school in Charlotte, NC, as part of Teach for America. Statistically speaking, he says, the school where he taught couldn't have looked much 'worse.' 98-99% of the 2,500 students were from low-income families. Ironically, the school building itself was brand new—it had been designed to house the discards from four other public schools in Charlotte. 'When they built our school,' says Alleyne, 'all the principals from the district got to choose which kids they wanted to take out of their current schools and put into ours. We had pretty much the worst kids from four different schools, and on top of that we had a failing principal with an improvement plan. My whole policy with my students was just, this was our classroom, our world, and once I closed the door I shut out all the craziness for my 40 students.'*

*Walking around in the midst of that chaos was an 11-year-old girl named Emily Grohs. Although she was not his student, Alleyne quickly identified her: 'If you picture the insanity of that school—ridiculously crowded, fights breaking out in the hall—Emily would be that girl that's just navigating through it all . . . I started watching her, keeping an eye out for her to make sure she was doing okay, and I could just see this girl was insanely focused.'*

Through Mr. Alleyne's mentoring, Emily applied to and was accepted to St. Andrew's: she was exactly the student and person for whom Mr. duPont built this school in 1929. She graduated last year as school co-president and a young woman with a profound desire and ability to make a difference in the world. Here is where Emily picks up the story, writing in thanks to a St. Andrew's family that made a remarkable contribution to financial aid and to her career at the School:

*And, if there is one thing I have truly learned about being a part of St. Andrew's, whether a student, a faculty or staff member, a trustee, a family member, a friend, etc., it is that you never stop being part of the community, no matter how far you wander or how long you are gone! Whenever I get that queasy feeling and find myself thinking that things are ending, I remember that and know that, even though my high school career is technically coming to a close, the conclusion of this year is in no way an end to the things I have experienced here and the relationships I have formed.*

*So, here is the story of how I found out about where I will be next year. Imagine this: It is four days into Spring Break, and 17 other students and I are in Las Palmas, a small village in the mountains of Nicaragua, living with the families there and working with them digging new latrines from sun-up to sun-down. Only a week before this I was in Chapel Hill, N.C., for Finalist Weekend for the Morehead-Cain Scholarship. I was staying in the beautiful Carolina Inn, meeting the most amazing people, falling in love with the school and the scholarship, and attempting to calm my nerves before my interviews. About 60 of the 125 finalists there would be offered the Morehead and I knew I could use it for a lot of*

*amazing things. But the weekend was fast, a blur, and before I knew it, there I was, in the mountains in Nicaragua, having the most amazing time. The only drawback to being in Nicaragua at that moment, digging a latrine in the hot sun, was that the decision about the scholarship had come out three days before! I was going out of my mind, I knew that the other students all knew whether or not they had gotten it, and, as much as I was enjoying my day, I really just wanted to take a day trip to a town with some form of phone or internet so I could find out. And then, lo and behold, Tim Gibb appears! Tim was the fearless leader of our trip, a St. Andrew's alum who started the program, and also the only person for miles who had a cell phone. Mr. Roach and my college counselor, Mrs. Fritz, had been trying to get in touch with him but he could not get a signal . . . until, that is, he hit a very specific spot on the mountain and managed to get Mr. Roach on the phone. So, there you have it, I found out that I was chosen for the Morehead-Cain Scholarship in the mountains of Nicaragua with a shovel in one hand and a Blackberry in the other. I accepted the scholarship as soon as I was back in the country.*

I made that call to Nicaragua in March from the airport in Amman, Jordan. I was visiting John Austin '83, the Headmaster of King's Academy in Jordan. As I spoke to Emily and prepared to see John Austin's school, I suddenly realized that Mr. duPont's vision for St. Andrew's was expanding and developing in quite amazing and unprecedented ways. But that is the magic in generosity, generosity that intentionally creates opportunity, affirmation, hope and idealism. The gift, the spirit of generosity and the spirit of human possibility, expands and moves in dramatic and startling ways.

Now, it was not as easy as I have made it sound: Mr. Alleyne had to make the transition to Prep 9 and then to St. Andrew's as a young student of color—he had to work very hard and figure out how diversity of race, class and financial circumstance played out both at school and at college. And Emily needed courage, courage to move forward in her flawed school. Courage to leave home, courage to go to boarding school, and live and study and grow in a community much different from the one she knew at home. Financial aid opens doors, but amazing young men and women have to seize upon the opportunity in all its complexity and difficulty—financial aid guarantees nothing, but it gives students a chance, a shot, an opportunity to make gigantic strides and contributions to their schools, colleges and society.

Emily and any other student coming to St. Andrew's with financial aid might not, at first, know that Mr. duPont created this school for all, for every student regardless of background. She might not have known that he expressly wanted students on financial aid to know that this is their school, their place, their home, their community to love, honor, celebrate and explore. And Emily might not have known that all students (full pay and financial aid) choose St. Andrew's precisely because we believe that such diversity lifts all of us, makes all of us better thinkers, citizens and human beings. And Emily may not have known that most of the faculty here chose St. Andrew's as the place to teach and live precisely because of the school's historic and present commitment to financial aid.

We can open our eyes to the complexity of socioeconomic diversity. We have preconceptions and prejudices about people from affluent backgrounds. We have preconceptions and prejudices about people from modest backgrounds. You know the myths, and the stereotypes and the lacerations they cause. No one wants to be labeled, simplified, scorned or derided for his/her financial situation, whether rich, poor or anything in between.

The energy of St. Andrew's diversity comes from our understanding and rejection of those ridiculous stereotypes and expectations. I learned all of this anew this week when I read so many powerful student essays submitted as part of the application process for the Student Diversity Conference. As I wrote this talk, Josué Chavez's essay startled me and moved me.

With his generous permission, I will read his beautiful essay:

*Socioeconomically speaking, my family is in the lower middle class. My life has taken place in clustered city apartments, among the honking of public transportation. We don't have the most ideal situation but I coped because I understood our limitations and there was nothing I could do. Suddenly, I arrived to St. Andrew's. Calling my arrival here a blessing is an understatement because it is too simple. I was overwhelmed, ecstatic about coming here but I was also apprehensive. Added to all the fears an international student can have when studying abroad, I could see without a doubt that wealth flowed like a river in this place. I was happy to be here but a voice in my head told me how the heck I was going to survive in a place where everyone is so different. How is the poor guy going to live up to the standards of the rich?*

*My socioeconomic situation haunted me like a ghost. Many nights, while skyping my family, I felt guilt. Why was I here? I would see my mother and grandmother telling me they were doing alright; but as weeks passed, I knew that in my family the stress of running out of money would be expressed through fights and screaming. It was guilt that told me to go back and live through it with them. It was fear of judgment that told me to go back because it is easier to be in a place where everyone is in the same economic class. I couldn't do much about my guilt; however, the fear of judgment was a parasite that infected me with self-consciousness.*

*During the first week of school, the buzz of summer resonated as everyone was talking about their amazing trips to France, sailing to Bermuda, skiing in Europe; all those activities I often heard in movies. And then they asked me what did I do, and I replied, "Not much, stayed in the city mostly". I said this one day and I remember someone who laughed and mumbled, "That's exactly what you would expect from this year's charity boy". The statement was painful, embarrassing and the worst part was that I didn't have the guts to do what I would have loved to do: stand up, firm and proud, and fight for myself, for my family.*

*I ignored this episode and continued with my life. However, that comment lifted my own prejudice: the generalization that rich people look down on poor people. It made me hide from big crowds and lie to those, who in my head were judging me. I don't know why I let my fear and prejudice distort my reality so much. I couldn't see the things in my life that proved my prejudice false: my friends, my host family, my teachers, they were all darkened by a stupid comment that triggered a stupid fear. It didn't lose its grip on me until a particular weekend when many parents had arrived. I was in my room, reading, and a senior came in to talk with me. Somehow, the conversation turned into why I wasn't downstairs and I admitted that I was intimidated, afraid of judgment from the people downstairs. He pushed me out and made me experience diversity: painful yet enlightening. It was easy to talk to some people, harder to speak with others, but the most important thing was my realization that prejudice and fear prevented me from knowing people by who they were.*

*This showed me why diversity is an important learning device. It is painful and hard because it forces us to be outside our comfort zone but it destroys misconceived ideas about different groups of people. This has allowed me to connect not only with my peers at St. Andrew's but people from home, people outside this community. Now I know that I have to be myself and accept who I am. However, acceptance is a work in progress in which I always wish to have more courage to show truly who I am. The only way to help others understand my position is to talk about it without shame and with courage. If I were to hear that comment about me again, I would try to summon the courage to say, "I didn't go to Europe, but I saw this amazing movie, did you see it?" Hopefully a conversation will start and he'll know me for Josué (not the charity boy) and I'll know him by who he is and not as the annoying rich boy.*

It is hard to add anything to this remarkable insight into the work of courageous students experiencing both the opportunity and complexity of boarding school. When I read Josué's essay, I wanted him to know immediately that St. Andrew's and Founders Day are all about him and the countless numbers of St. Andreans who have made a courageous voyage to this community. Josué's essay exposes the fear, the pain of being judged, assessed and dismissed, but it also shows us the human spirit as he and a senior friend refuse to allow prejudice, stereotype and mindlessness to define his St. Andrew's experience. In the end, rich and poor, gay and straight, able and disabled, male and female, we are human beings looking to live, learn, grow, love and serve.

Mr. duPont somehow made this great and powerful and joyful experiment possible.

Thank him by living graciously, humbly and generously through all the days of your life.