

Don't Believe Me, Just Watch...

Los Alamitos High School Commencement Speech, 2015 by Joshua Arnold

Students, Families, Faculty, and Friends... Before we get started... we're kinda' into the whole Social Media revolution here at Los Al, and if you don't mind, I'd like to memorialize this moment with a selfie. (Selfie Stick included, of course.)

Graduating Class of 2015, care to help me out? We're using the hashtag #LOSALGRADSELFIE for all pictures today, and we'd appreciate everyone's participation ☺

(Take picture.)

Thank you. Now, if I may... allow me to speak some final words to the Graduating Class Of 2015, and *my* last words ever as a high school principal. I must warn you, this speech does have opportunities for a bit of audience participation, so pay attention to my hand gestures like so (*hand gesture*), and look out for your speaking part when you repeat after me. K? Here we go...

Graduates, as you look for bits of wisdom heading into the big-bad world of college, careers, independence and opportunity, I can imagine there are many quotable resources for you to choose from in this digital age. You can "seize the day" like Robin Williams for example, or "Let it go," like Elsa from Frozen. You can rely on funny Mark Twain quotes about *statistics* and *majorities*, or... you can just do what I do, and listen to any verse in this year's smash hit **Uptown Funk**.

I'm not kidding...

You see, it's not Steve Jobs or Abraham Lincoln who define who you are as a person... it's Bruno Mars, baby! And for anyone who doubts, or even questions your abilities, capacities, ingenuities, and prowess. For the rest of your life, I want you to look them in the eye and tell them... "Don't Believe Me, Just Watch!"

That shouldn't be too hard either, cuz that's what you've been doin' these last four years at Los Al. Making believers out of friends, fans, and followers in Academics, Athletics, Activities, and the Arts. Ladies and gentlemen, these graduates, your children, are absolutely unparalleled...

And if you don't believe me? Just watch...

Watch what happens when a student graduates from a high school in the top 1% of America, that gives more AP Exams than any school in California, and exports culture to the tune of millions of YouTube views, radio shoutouts, and television mentions. It's not normal what we do here. And that's because we're not interested in normal results. At Los Al, we're the exception, not the rule. And this graduating class of 2015 has made our school literally famous for doing things our way, their way, and making "believers" out of those who "just watch."

It doesn't change after today, Griffins. The expectations, I mean. Your desire for success and outcomes, actually, only get stronger from this point forth. But it's because of these last 4 years, and the relationships you've formed with each other (the experiences with greatness that you've shared) that you're now poised to change the world. Just like you've made our school, you're going to make this planet different. And I dare someone not to believe me... As they'll just have to watch it unfold...

Back-To-Back National Championships in Show Choir. Best in America, year after year. In part it's the talent, but in whole it's preparation and work-ethic that make this possible. The same values you'll show off, wherever you are during 1st Semester Finals next Fall in College. **Don't Believe Me? Just watch.**

Hey, let's go undefeated in Boys Tennis this year? Or, how about we break every track & field record this school has ever had? I know, let's take 8 buses down to South County for a basketball game, and act like their gym is our gym, and then lead the world's biggest halftime rollercoaster just for good measure.... See, it's not just the CIF Championships people talk about when they mention Los Al Athletics, it's the way you graduates rallied around each other, believed in your abilities, and demonstrated just as strong of a culture in the stands as on the court. It'll be that way at your job, too, as an adult. Where you create and innovate, and make those around you better, just like you did in high school. You're leaders already Class of 2015. **Don't believe me. Just watch.**

And then... there's US. Our relationship. Students and principal. I bet if you tried to explain the way we interact... most folks in other schools and different settings wouldn't understand it. You, who create traditions, leave schoolwide legacies, and are attending some of the world's finest institutions of learning next year. Me, who edits Instagram videos and creates hashtag contests, and may have even started an "I Believe That We Will Win" Chant at a volleyball game a time or two. You, who's energy and enthusiasm is inspiring – setting example after example for high school students across this nation. Me, who 3-years ago had no idea what a perfect match all of this, and all of you would be.

Like your parents and family members, today... I simply could not be prouder of who you are, what you will become, and your influence on me as a

principal, educator, father of two beautiful kids, husband, and overall human being. You've changed ME Class Of 2015. And I will be a better man because of you. Don't Believe Me... Just Watch.

So what's it look like after today? I mean the world is full of adults, and rules, and bills, and taxes... What are you going to do to be different? To be you? To change things. To say, "I think we can go farther." "I know that we can do better?"

I hope you look back at these last few years when you come to that moment. And I hope you think about the school you came into as Freshmen, and the one you're leaving behind as graduates. I hope you see those places as different. Both versions of excellence, but different. The school you leave today has all of you all over it.

And that's how to live your life Class Of 2015. Your way. The Los Al way. With excellence at the forefront. Contributing, creating, and constructing a world that's better than the one we live in now.

And they'll do it Ladies and Gentlemen. I know they will. Don't believe me? Just watch... JUST WATCH. JUST WATCH.

Congratulations Class Of 2015... Change The World, The Way you changed me.