

logo not found or type unknown

Former U.S. Attorney General Loretta Lynch Delivers Exceptional Speech at UVI Convocation

Education / **Published On February 26, 2020 05:02 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **February 26, 2020**

Image not found or type unknown



Former U.S. Attorney General Loretta A. Lynch delivers keynote at a UVI convocation ceremony on St. Croix on Tues. Feb. 25. By. CRUSELDA ROBERTS FOR VI CONSORTIUM

ST. CROIX — Former U.S. Attorney General Loretta A. Lynch who served during the Obama Administration, delivered a powerful and exceptional speech to students of the University of the Virgin Islands on Tuesday during a convocation event at the Albert A. Sheen Campus's Great Hall. Using her life experiences that described dedication, hard work and the eventual shifting of careers to ultimately achieve her desire of servitude to her nation, while honoring the sacrifices her parents made to provide her with a stellar education, Ms. Lynch's talk was also very motivational.

Ms. Lynch, who first wanted to become a journalist with the desire of telling the important stories of others, had a wakeup call while working at CBS as an intern one summer. The experience made her ponder her career path.

"I wanted to be able to relay the most challenging issues and situations in people's lives in a way that provided guidance and hope for others, as it so often had for me," she said. "And so I thought my way forward was through ultimately becoming a journalist. And I will tell you that after one summer working as a CBS intern, I realized very quickly that I was not going to be producing award-winning documentaries right away. This was a bit of a shock to me, and I thought about what really was important to me about that goal and about that mission, and it was the ability to dig into an issue, the ability to find out what happened, the ability to solve the puzzle of either a good thing or bad thing in someone's life."

With her purpose somewhat established, the former U.S. Attorney General decided to pursue law school, "but even then my goal was set on being a media lawyer or First Amendment Lawyer," she said.

Out of law school, Ms. Lynch shared that she went to New York to work at a firm that had worked on the [Pentagon Papers](#), but quickly realized that those major investigations didn't come around too often. She had invested a lot of herself into the company, and the company had been good to her. But Ms. Lynch would often think on her purpose of public service, and questioned whether her lucrative job was the right fit. She asked herself, "What was I generating that was going to make a difference in the world around me?"

For Ms. Lynch, the answer eventually became a choice to go into public service, and while this field can be vast, the former A.G. reminded the students that they don't need to see the full vision at once. "What I would say is, for those of you who aren't sure yet what your passion is, you don't have to know right now. All you have to have right now is a way forward, a way to move along the path to explore as many things as possible that will let you find the thing that touches your heart," she said.

She added, "It was not preordained that I would make that leap, and I will tell you that for me, fate intervened. If you've ever thought sometimes in your life you wanted a sign, you've wanted some indication of which way to go, you've wanted someone to come down and give you that push in the direction that you need to take. We often have these feelings, we often have these views and we think it's going to be in the guise of a friendly counselor, a wise teacher. Perhaps a parent that's going to sit with us. But sometimes it's just the universe. "

(From left to right: UVI President Dr. David Hall, Former U.S. A.G. Loretta A. Lynch, and UVI Board Vice Chair Oran C. Roebuck. Credit: Cruselda Roberts, VIC)



For Ms. Lynch, her moment came while she was at her dream job at a law firm on Wall Street in New York, making good money. One night she was working on a project that was due the next day and passed out on her desk, and was taken to a hospital. Her diagnosis? Exhaustion, which Ms. Lynch didn't know was an actual diagnosis at the time. But the incident made her think. "I really began to ask myself is this what is meant for me with my talents and my gifts? Is this what my parents scarified for?"

The former A.G. spoke about her mom, who wanted to be an accountant while in college because she loved math and numbers, but was told at the time that it would be hard for her as a "colored" woman to find a job in the field of accounting. She became a teacher and had a fulfilling career nonetheless, but barriers had prevented the elder Mrs. Lynch from fulfilling her desire.

"I always knew that there were things that she wanted to do that the world would not allow her to move forward to. The world put barriers in her way, and I remember thinking as I was laying there: with all the barriers removed for me, is this the best use of my talent?" Ms. Lynch said.

That moment led her to the path of leaving her plush job that even her parents were pleased with, and instead taking a position in the U.S. Attorney's Office that came with a 65 percent pay cut. Ultimately, however, Ms. Lynch became the 83rd head of the United States Department of Justice, the chief lawyer of the federal government of the United States, and a member of the Cabinet of the United States as U.S. Attorney General. She was also the first African American woman to lead the U.S. D.O.J.

"So you see, that sign from above, it isn't always a benevolent push," she said of her experience of passing out at her desk. "The person telling you it's time to make a change isn't always the wise counselor sitting next to you. Sometimes the universe just knocks you out. And when it does, you better listen."

Ms. Lynch took a range of questions from students — from her experience of working with former President Barack Obama, whom she described as "the best boss ever," to potential biases in cases the U.S. D.O.J. had taken up under her tenure — answering them all with exceptional clarity.

Later the same day, Ms. Lynch entertained a full courthouse of guests during "An Evening with Loretta Lynch" presentation at St. Croix's District Court. The evening consisted of Chief Justice Wilma Lewis interviewing Ms. Lynch with a number of questions about Ms. Lynch's life and career.

Ms. Lynch, who has visited the territory several times in the past and who was married on St. Thomas, praised the Lew Muckle Elementary School Steel Band that provided entertainment prior to the start of the program.

"You want children to grow up and appreciate music and the culture of the Virgin Islands," she said.

On her career and desire to help marginalized communities: "It has always occurred to me that you could be at the mercy of the system that is fundamentally unfair. I've always thought there should be a system of law that works for everyone."

She also said, "I loved being a lawyer; I would not do anything else. The privileges of being a lawyer is not only to implement the law, but to implement justice — hold the law in one hand and

justice in the other. My quest has always been "how do we bring justice to communities who have consistently been left out of the justice system."

On her regrets: The appearance of Ms. Lynch's conversation on the tarmac with President Bill Clinton: "If you make a mistake, don't shy away from it. Face it and say you're sorry."

On feeling the weight of responsibility of being the first African American female Attorney General: "I think when you're the first of anything, you always feel the responsibility."

On her legacy: "I'd like to be remembered as the attorney general who went to Washington and took the Attorney General's office out into the country and brought justice to underserved communities."

Ms. Lynch highlighted the fact that as attorney general, she toured at least six U.S. cities to begin to listen to residents and law enforcement about the relationships the two groups have and how the two could better work together.