

Alfred North Whitehead, a great Mathematician and philosopher, said this once,

*No one who achieves success does so without the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude.*

Remarkable words, I believe Cicero puts simply as,

*Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues but the parent of all others.*

Good evening, everyone.

I am Alpha Boakye, from Ghana, and currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Creative Writing, an experience, I must add, is profoundly shaping my journey as a writer. It is indeed such a great honour to stand before you today to deliver this speech. The opportunity to study at this prestigious institution, renowned for its legacy of excellence, is a direct result of the generosity of donors like you. And I know I speak not only for myself but for all my fellow scholars when I start by saying ‘thank you’.

I have been thinking about seconds lately. You know, the fleeting moments that, in an instant, can alter the course of our lives. And when I do, I think of a particular second in my life. It was a fatigued Friday dusk, the kind that makes you question everything. I was exhausted—not just from the day or week but from the weight of uncertainty. Uncertainty of the future, of my hopes and dreams. Then, my phone buzzed.. And in that second, everything changed.

Receiving the news about my scholarship was unexpected because I had given up the hope of getting it, for the 3rd time. But there it was, in my mail. As I stared at the screen, my jaw dropped

in disbelief, and for what felt like ages, I remained frozen, grappling with the overwhelming weight of it all. When I finally managed to compose myself, I couldn't help but jump around.

“I got in!”

“I got it!”

Donors, I don't know if you know this, and if you do, there is no mistake in reiteration, but that single second altered the trajectory of my life. It changed the life of a young boy who used to go to bed each night dreaming of being at this very place, learning with people who are creatively, creatively amazing and being taught by industry experts with the hopes that one day he will finish his novel and get published.

This scholarship, this belief in me, in us, is not just about the financial support but it's the ripple effect. It is like a cascading series of dominoes, where your support served as the crucial initial push that set everything in motion. A nudge we needed for the chips to fall into place.

So today, we say thank you for seeing us, for believing in us when all you had was a single page outlining our potential and what it would mean to us if you decided to take a bet on us. And you did. Being offered this scholarship means I get to have an entire year dedicated to writing my debut novel. This novel, which explores the tragic reality of some women who endure isolation, violence and systemic oppression fueled by superstition and patriarchal norms, I believe will start conversations that matter. Yet, I struggled to complete it, weighed down by the responsibilities of life and the sheer ambition of it. However, since I started my MA, something has shifted. I have been reintroduced to the story. That is all I think about. It is all I geek about these days. That is another ripple effect of your generosity.

Writing is my life, the heartbeat of my existence—and I am sure I can say the same for other scholars here and their respective fields. Among other things, I have spent my life striving to improve my writing—to create work that resonates, challenges, and sparks change. Now, being part of the highly esteemed Creative Writing Program here is a dream that has been realized. And you made this possible. Your support reignited hope that once felt distant. A dream once whispered in the dark is now spoken aloud. And now, I can boldly dare to dream.

I—and I know so do other scholars here—promise to work hard. To remain worthy of this life-changing opportunity.

To my fellow Scholars,

I believe this doesn't end here. We are fighters. We have the spirit of the fight in us. We fought through life's adversity, through doubt and forged on when the odds were stacked against us to become excellent at what we do—to be one of the chosen few. This is just the beginning. We did not come this far only to come this far.

Take a minute. Look around you. Yes, you are here. This is real. And it gets better from here. At least, that is the hope or promise. The real question is: What will you do with it?

We are more than just students. We are more than just recipients of a scholarship. We are visionaries, changemakers, storytellers, scientists, innovators, the voices of our generation. This opportunity is not just for us—it is for every person who never got the chance. It is for the ones who dared to dream but never had the means.

We owe it to ourselves, to them and to the ones who will come after us to make this count.

So, I urge you—don't just pass through this experience, let it pass through you.

Let it transform you. Let it shape you. Let it ignite something in you that refuses to be put out.

We are here now, but the world is waiting.

Waiting for our books to be written.

For our research to change lives.

For our voices to challenge the norm.

I believe in us. Let's have the courage to continue.

There is a saying in my local dialect, Twi, that goes,

*'Bakofo nsa nso Nyame ani kata'*

*One person's hand won't be enough to cover God's eye.*

This proverb emphasizes the power of collective effort—no single individual can achieve everything alone. It speaks to the importance of community, collaboration and shared responsibility. I believe that by being recipients of our various scholarships and being here today, we are already in a community. Let's not lose that. Let's make the best of it and connect for the future.

CONGRATULATIONS once again to all scholars here.

Thank you.