

May 14, 2006 – Billy Joel – Syracuse University

Thank you for inviting me to be here with you today, and thank you for this doctorate you're going to give me. Now I can get out of this dead-end job; get a real career going for myself. (Laughter)

You being here today is proof that you've learned a lot, and I hope that the time you were here you've learned something very important, and that is that you've learned what it is you love. If you haven't learned it by now, I hope you learn it soon in the future because if there's any advice I can give to you, it's do what you love. Don't do it for security, or status, prestige, money, or-- for crying out loud--don't do it for somebody else. Do it for love. Because if you love what you do, you'll always do what you love.

And if you're doing what you love, you're going to become very good at it. And this is a country that rewards excellence. And actually, I think this is my fifth or sixth doctorate I'm getting, and I didn't graduate high school. I went to the college of the road, I guess. I admire you for having the gumption to stick it out. I didn't do it, and I sometimes wish I had more of an education in what it is I do. That's why I like to try to help music programs. (Applause)

I want you to really think about what it is you love and to go forth from here and do that. You're going to do us all a favor if you're good at what you do because--amazingly--you're going to find how much incompetence there is, and mere competence nowadays is rewarded--and recorded, too. (Laughter)

How is this showing up on that screen? [reference to scoreboard close captioning] I don't have a script. (Laughter)

Anyway, we need more people who are good at what they do. And if you're doing what you love, you will be good at it. Money may come, money may go, but you can always fall back on love. It's something you can always depend on.

I'm not here to give you a big song and dance. Maybe a song. (Cheering)

I scribbled a little thing on the way up here. You have to help me out with this, okay?

This is sung to the tune of an old song called "Down in New Orleans."

(Sings)

Hey, hey I said hey, hey, hey, yeah Well come on everybody, take a trip with me Upstate to Syracuse University A lot of hard work is what it takes You can get an education in the Finger Lakes You get a bachelor of science or an arts degree Here at Syracuse University

I said hey I said hey, hey, hey, yeah

Come on everybody take a trip with me Up to Onondaga County, that's where I'll be Oh, you're going to be a lawyer or an engineer You can even study music in the college here With any luck you'll even get a Ph.D Here at Syracuse University

I said hey I said hey, hey, hey, yeah

Thank you!