



8TH
COMMENCEMENT
EMPOWERED
CHANGEMAKERS

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Our Keynote Speaker Dr. Ezekiel Mutua, Board of Trustees and Council members present, the Vice Chancellor, Parents, Relatives of our graduands, staff of Riara University, our esteemed graduands, ladies and gentlemen

It is a special privilege for me to be here to celebrate the Class of 2024 and to preside over your graduation.

It always feels so fulfilling seeing so many young men and women ready to face the world and to make a difference. Congratulations. You made it so give yourselves a big round of applause!

This is a proud moment for us all at Riara University, for your parents and guardians, and most importantly, for you, the graduands. I want to sincerely thank you parents and guardians for the immense sacrifices that you have made to support these young bright souls, without which they would not be here today. For those of you who have sponsored your own studies, I salute you for denying yourselves many pleasures to graduate today.

I also want to acknowledge the faculty and the management for the tireless work they do to ensure the seamless transition of our students from freshmen and women to the proud graduates we are celebrating today.

And to our graduation class, the victory and pride is all yours. Your efforts are now rewarded, and may they enrich your life endlessly. Celebrate this day, for you have earned it.

A lot goes into ensuring that all the students we take in graduate on time and with outstanding skills and competences. At Riara, we strongly believe that beyond the degree, our purpose is to nurture holistic graduates who are equipped to handle complex challenges that you will face for the rest of your adult lives. Quality, not quantity, is our commitment.

The last census in Kenya showed that less than 5% (actually only 3.5%) of the Kenyan population have a first degree, which is very low compared to countries which have over 30%. You as the educated of this country must therefore step up to the plate to be counted among the change-makers that we need in this country. I note that our Graduation Theme of this year, which is **Empowered Changemakers** was truly inspired. This is because it was crafted before the GenZ protests yet it so fittingly describes what we expect of you. Nothing encapsulates the power of an educated populace than what we have witnessed in the last month. Your protests as Gen Z have brought in an unprecedented level of civic engagement in public affairs, causing real and permanent change in this country. I applaud you greatly and I ask the congregation to join me in applauding these brave young men and women.

This is what we had in mind when we came up with the theme of Empowered Changemakers and that is what Riara University has made you; Fearless, Tribeless; Crusaders; Defenders of Justice; Innovators; Servants of the People; and truly Patriotic Leaders who are driven by ethics and values! I applaud you all once again.

For those who are leaving, I don't need to remind you that the world is now a global village. Think of yourself as a global citizen, but remain a Kenyan. As they say, "Think global but act local".

It is not true that there are no jobs. There are so many opportunities in Kenya, Africa, and the world. What are lacking are graduates with the right attitudes, self-discipline, trustworthiness, time management, and above all, the right values!

As private universities and I know there are several represented here today, we pride ourselves in not just teaching knowledge but moulding values that connect students with true humanity. That is why for example here at Riara, Community Service is mandatory. I know some of you may have wondered the value of community service but it was designed to help you understand what ordinary citizens go through so that when you graduate, you use your intellect and powers, to craft meaningful solutions to their needs.

We emphasize values because we live in a world that has increasingly become what you guys call "woke". Being woke is not bad, but you must be driven by true values that will spur you to greatness, and not to running in the corridors of parliament running away from harmless GenZs the way our MPs were running away from you. Wherever you go and whether you get a big position or a small one, be the beacons of justice, hope, service, tolerance, and innovating solutions to all the challenges facing our people.

The future of this country and continent is in your hands. Go out there with audacity tempered with pragmatism and an undying spirit of learning. As the French Nobel Laureate, Andre Gide said, "Man cannot discover new oceans unless he dares to lose sight of the shore."

So, what shores are you willing to lose to discover new oceans of possibilities out there? So many opportunities lie ahead of you. Embrace them and never let one pass by.

Finally, my prayer for you is that the Almighty God may protect you, guide you, connect you with your purpose, and give you the courage to pursue the purpose for which you were created! Go make yourselves, your parents, guardians, Kenya, and all of us truly proud!

Congratulations The Vanguards, Class of 2024! Hongera sana!