



Good Evening and Welcome. I appreciate you all coming out tonight and supporting St. Ignatius School. My name is Oscar Carrasco, a 2013 graduate of SIS. My favorite color is orange, and I am a go-getter.

St. Ignatius has played a pivotal role in my life and I am forever grateful for the staff and teachers that never gave up on me. I wasn't exactly the easiest of students when I entered SIS or while I attended. But that's why SIS is so special. You have teachers and staff members that stick with you, go to the ends of the earth to give you every opportunity to succeed. That's why my mom wanted me to go to SIS.

My life changed in 2013. I had just graduated St. Ignatius and was about to start as a freshman at Mt. St. Michael's. I was at St. Mary's Rec Center Pool in the Bronx and questioned the lifeguard, "What do I need to do to become a city lifeguard?" It had always been a dream of mine. He explained that I had to swim two laps under thirty-five seconds to qualify as a New York City lifeguard. My time was forty-five seconds, so I somehow needed to shave off ten seconds. I knew I needed to work hard to achieve that goal. I signed up for the test to fulfill my dream of becoming a city lifeguard at my neighborhood's Floating Lady Pool in Hunts Point.

The day of the swim test I leapt into the pool, focused on swimming the fastest I could. When I got out of the pool, the instructor said, "Come to the Chelsea Recreational Center next week." I asked him about my time, and he responded, "Thirty-two seconds." I had shed 13 seconds by training every day.

As a single parent, my mother worked hard to ensure that I fell asleep with a roof over my head and a full stomach. My mom worried constantly that her income is not enough to support my family. Even though she worked long hours, we barely had enough money for food and rent. Some days she would tell me about her day, and I would listen to her feeling guilty. She works hard for me, but back then I had nothing to offer in return. There was never enough money to buy any of the luxuries other kids had. All I wanted was to have some money in my pocket and help to pay the rent.

When the time came for lifeguard training, thoughts of how hard my mother worked for my family ran through my head. The instructor told us, “Look in front of you, behind you, to your left and right. Only one of you will make it and wear the orange uniform of a city lifeguard.” Throughout the training, I learned how much I am like my mother. I am willing to work hard with heart and hustle. She taught me the meaning of commitment and family responsibility.

I also realized at that moment, it was all the things that my teachers and staff instilled in at St. Ignatius that allowed me to succeed. Attending SIS was a blessing to me because for the first time in my life, I was encouraged to think about and dream about my future. Before attending St. Ignatius, I feared that I would be like so many other students in Hunts Point and drop out of school. I was introduced to the values that are central to a Jesuit education, including being “a man for others,” and seeking the MAGIS. The MAGIS along with the other values have pushed me to further my education. Seeking the MAGIS pushed me to go the extra mile, to discover who I am called to be.

My mom came to this country without an education. She always told me, “When I die, I am not leaving you money. I am leaving you the gift of an education.” And is that why she enrolled me at St. Ignatius. She knew SIS would change my life for the better and it has. She knew that SIS would instill the values to allow me to succeed. Her words and the lessons I learned at SIS ignited the hustle within me, and I eventually became a city lifeguard. I get paid more than my mother who has been working in a school kitchen for over twenty years. I share the money I earn with her. I can proudly say that I worked my way through high school.

In the fall, I will start a new venture in my life, attending Mount St. Mary’s College in Newburgh, NY on a full tuition scholarship. Somewhere in my dorm room I am going to hang my lifeguard shirt and the St. Ignatius Logo, so I can see it every day. They will remind me that orange is my favorite color and it will symbolize the personal hustle, achievement and responsibility that drives me. It will also remind me to go set the world on fire!

I want to thank each of you for helping to make all of this possible.