

Graduation 2006

Acceptance Speech by Honorary Graduate Shami Chakrabarti

Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Sir Philip, Graduates, graduands, family and friends, it is massive delight to share in this wonderful celebration of achievement here today, even in this heat, the heat of intellectual endeavour clearly!

It is a complete honour. So many people here earned their degrees the proper way, by hours of painful labour. Sir Philip earned his honorary degree by a career of distinguished public service, legal service and judicial service. So, coming off my soapbox for a moment, I feel a bit of a fraud. And wrestling with my conscience, I tried to work out how I can justify taking this freebie honour but with my, what is it, my skill and my pragmatism, I've come to the following conclusion:

Perhaps degrees can be not just evidence of past achievement, perhaps degrees can also be evidence of potential to future endeavour and achievement. The rule of law, in my view, is essential in any society and it has to be fought for, not just in the courtroom but in the classroom, at the newsstand, in the living room and in wider society. I congratulate all the graduates here today. The law can be such a rewarding career in so many ways but let's never forget that we have to be public advocates for the rule of law as well.

Congratulations and thank you.