

College Graduation

Salve grads told ‘service comes in many forms’

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Philanthropist and author Malaak Compton-Rock addresses the graduating class at Salve Regina University in Newport. She told them “the world needs your boldness, your vision and your dedication,” and urged them to commit to serving others.

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NEWPORT — Malaak Compton-Rock, philanthropist, author and wife of comedian Chris Rock, called on the graduates of Salve Regina University to commit to serving others.

Addressing the 680 graduates and hundreds of friends and relatives under a white tent overlooking Narragansett Bay, she quoted child-rights advocate Marian Wright Edelman: “Service is the rent we pay for living.”

But she emphasized that “service can come in many forms,” whether it’s donating money or time, working for a nonprofit organization or advocating for the disadvantaged.

“It is clear that the world needs your boldness, your vision and your dedication,” Compton-Rock said at the university’s 60th commencement Sunday.

Service doesn’t require taking a vow of poverty, she added, but rather always looking for ways you can help. In fact, she said, “the more money you make, the more you can give.”

Compton-Rock is author of the new book, “If It Takes a Village, Build One: How I Found Meaning Through a Life of

Service and 100+ Ways You Can, Too.” After working in public relations and special events in the entertainment industry, Compton-Rock became interested in public service when she took a job with the U.S. Fund for UNICEF, where she recruited celebrities to raise money and awareness. She founded the Angelrock Project, a Web site that promotes volunteerism and social responsibility.

In her commencement address Sunday, Compton-Rock described a family vacation to South Africa, where she visited with grandmothers caring for children orphaned by the AIDS epidemic.

“One grandmother stopped me [and] said, ‘What are you going to do?’ ” Compton-Rock recalled. “I said, ‘What do you want me to do?’ ” The woman told her the children needed money for education. Compton-Rock returned in three months with help for schooling and nutrition.

Later, she founded Journey for Change: Empowering Youth Through Global Service, a program that takes at-risk youths from Brooklyn, N.Y., to Johannesburg, South Africa, for two weeks of volunteer service.

Compton-Rock acknowledged that Salve graduates would be struggling to find jobs in a difficult economy. But she urged them: “Even as your mind is focused on job-getting, keep your heart focused on what that job will allow you to give.”

This year’s graduating class was the largest ever for Salve Regina. The university awarded 507 baccalaureate degrees and 177 graduate degrees (four graduates received two degrees).

Under cloudless skies with gentle breezes off the Bay, the graduates and their families were treated to a postcard-perfect day. U.S. Sen. [Sheldon Whitehouse](#), who brought greetings from the Senate, assured anyone who’d come from out of state that “every day in Rhode Island is just like this one.”

The university conferred a doctorate in humane letters on Compton-Rock and also on Newport artist Richard Grosvenor.

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