

Kyle Lowry
Doctor of Humanities
Acadia University

Acadia Class of 2021. Kyle Lowry here, with the Toronto Raptors. And I am truly blessed and honoured to be here, celebrating with you virtually, this amazing accomplishment.

I want to first start off by thanking University President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Peter Ricketts, along with the trustees, faculty, and staff members. I am genuinely honoured to be in your company and also to be receiving a Doctorate in Humanities, alongside my fellow honorees. You are all truly inspiring.

Like you, today is extremely special for me and my family. I'm a kid from North Philadelphia, one of the toughest places in America to grow up. And I'm going to be honest with you. According to the statistics, I shouldn't be here with you today.

I grew up in a rowhouse in 20th and Lehigh with me, my mom, my brother, my grandma, and my cousin. A place where you needed to be in the house when the streetlights came on just to avoid the gangs, the drugs, the shooting, and all the violence that went on. Basically, the hood.

I would go to the park and you have to be careful who you hung out with because honestly, you never know what was going to be the situation. Might be a drive by shooting. It might be some drug activity. And honestly, some mornings when I used to walk the school, you would see the ATF getting ready to raid a house. It's kind of a tough situation to be in, but I figured it out. I found a way to make it through.

Growing up the way I did, it defines you, it hardens you. I had to protect myself and my family. I mean, who could I actually trust that wouldn't bring harm to my family? That's all I had was my family. But over the time, I had to slowly learn how to adapt, adjust in my way of thinking to allow other people to help me.

It was then when I allowed myself to open up, that I was blessed and fortunate to have some really great people come into my life, that hands down would play a major part in my trajectory and my future.

Today, I can humbly say and I can humbly confess that I am not standing where I am on my own volition. There are two facts that I've learned throughout my journey.

Success can not be obtained without struggle, and it definitely can not be accomplished alone.

My mom worked two jobs. My grandma worked also. They did everything to provide, to take care and protect me and my brother, no matter what the situation was and how hard they had to work. I had guys like Dave Distel, who drove an extra 20 minutes outside of his way. When you had to go to New Jersey, he would drive 20 minutes to

make sure that I got home so no harm would touch my way. People like that are very important to me and my life.

Then I had coach Jay Wright. Jay Wright was one of the coaches that basically helped me, you know, become a man. And he told me, "One thing about it, Kyle, is that you have to always be a legit man, no matter what the situation is."

It's because of people like that, the ones that I just mentioned, is the reason a kid from North Philadelphia had a real shot to make it out truly and making a life for himself. And here's the thing. They didn't have to do that. And I knew that. Which further inspired me to maximize the opportunities that I've been blessed with.

And I vowed that I would always pay it forward. No matter what the situation is, I was always going to pay it forward and give back, no matter what it looked like for me. My service wasn't dependent on whether I became a professional athlete or not. I always knew that no matter where I ended up in life, that I would always give back in everything I had.

Whether that be my time, my financial resources, my mentoring, whatever was needed of me because I know what it looks like not to be seen. I know what it looks like to be overlooked. I know what it looks like to be stereotyped, forgotten, counted out. All of that just because of where you're from, how you grew up, what you look like, where I lived, where I came from. I just wanted to make, I just want to make... a real impact no matter what. I'm proud to say, my wife, Ayahna and I, we were able and blessed enough to start the Lowry Love Foundation.

Our family's foundation is committed to assisting and providing resources and opportunities to economically and socially disadvantaged families in both Philadelphia and Toronto, with hopes to help them experience a better, equitable quality of life.

But Class of 2021, look at you guys. You guys made it. After countless hours of studying your craft, pulling all-nighters. Some of us pulled all-nighters. Well, some of you guys pulled all-nighters.

You've also managed to navigate through an unprecedented and unpredictable pandemic. Your determination, your perseverance and resiliency to make sure you made it here, is truly admirable. You and those ones, the individuals that have supported you along the journey, are real champions today. Congratulations.

Before I go, I want you to leave you with these questions. How will you serve? How will you pay it forward? What will be your impact in your community? And how will you be a change agent for the next generation? If we do not, then who will?

Booker T. Washington said, "Those happiest are those who do most for others." So, remember Acadia family, leading is not only about achieving your own goals, but is also uplifting others to achieve theirs. Success can not be accomplished alone. It's because of my family's sacrifices and those who genuinely cared to invest in me and who I am, that I beat the odds and became a first-generation college student, attending Villanova

University before embarking on my NBA career. And now receiving an honorary Doctorate in Humanities from Acadia University. Wow, it's a lot to take in.

I'm thankful. I know my grandma is smiling down on me right now, and she's extremely proud of me. And she was my biggest fan. I miss you grandma.

And my mother, like many of yours, is extremely happy of this esteemed accomplishment. As well as I honour her and thank her. Thank you, mom, because I wouldn't be here without you. Thank you also to my wife, my sons, my brother, and to all my family members who believed in me and all the people around me that believed in me. I wouldn't be here without you guys. I wouldn't be able to give this speech without you guys. Thank you.

Thank you again, Acadia University for this prestigious honour. It is one I will cherish forever and never forget. Yours truly, Dr. Kyle Lowry. Sounds even better when it's official. Acadia University 2021, Congratulations. We The North.