

Dear Students in Harvard University Class of 2014:

Thank you for naming me one of your ‘favorite professors’ in this unforgettable ceremony we call a Harvard education. Teaching members of your class has been a kind of gift exchange in which our mutual efforts of teaching and learning have created new knowledge about our studies and our lives, our capacities for work and for love. I’m grateful for what I’ve received from you.

I pass on to you for the long years to come a few clues in the art of living expressed by the late Pablo Neruda, Chilean poet and Nobel Prize Laureate in Literature. In his Nobel Lecture “Toward the Splendid City” he asks us to take up our ‘divided responsibility’ of loving beauty and loving justice. He writes,

“For I believe that my duties as a poet involve friendship not only with the rose and with symmetry, with exalted love and endless longing, but also with unrelenting human occupations which I have incorporated into my poetry.”

I follow Neruda, not as a poet but as an historian of religions, guided by the twin stars of “la lucha y la esperanza”, struggle and hope. I urge you to struggle throughout your lives to combine what you *enjoy doing* for yourselves with *doing good* in the world for others. That combination is what *Veritas* means to me.

David Carrasco

Neil L. Rudenstine Professor of Latin America

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