

The first-time I heard this speech called a charge at graduation was when I first started at Montserrat in 2005. For 20 years I've wondered about the term. I've assumed that the speech is called that as its intent is to inspire as you all launch/commence/**charge** into your new lives.

This graduation – all graduations are unique to you as a group, to our Montserrat team, and in our moment in history. I had 28 of you in class. I met all 66 of you with masks, and many of you first met me as our Admission director walked you (virtually) around campus on his iphone and I popped up in all the classrooms! We all navigated the upside down in the best way we could. I now have the honor of being the first to address you as official alumni of Montserrat College of Art. You will forever carry the story and be a part of this school and its story, these people and this moment.

This morning, you have heard from incredible people – giving great speeches, and giving us all – graduates or not – amazing words to help enrich our lives. My goal with this speech is to help make those amazing words and feelings, and inspirations stay planted in your heads. Last year I attempted a “secret word” project where our graduates – unbeknownst to the rest of the audience – would scream and shout everytime I said the word Montserrat. The year before I used this speech as an opportunity to change the words to the Gun and Roses anthem – Paradise City. Perhaps the greatest compliment I get is when people say “Brian I can neer hear that song again without thinking about that speech and Montserrat.”

So this year... we have this... **Charge...**

A charge can mean many things – in fact a quick internet search showed me that there were 13 definitions – 6 verbs and 7 nouns. And I know there are more! Don't fret – I won't go through all of them....but I will go through some.

1. A verb to **charge** – to accuse someone of something – especially as a violation of the law. Such as – I saw all of your thesis projects and I charge you all with violating the status quo and asking us to think about our world in unexpected ways. Thank you. Thank you for sharing your visions, for giving us moments of wonder and disbelief, and for helping us – as artists and designers do – see the world through the eyes of others. As we confront a changing world and we need to make sense of it, we can't see the same way people have been seeing in the past. You can and do show us another way.

2. To store up electrical energy - also a verb— to charge. For four years you have been charging your brains and hearts with ideas and energy and projects and dreams. A college will not be your highpoint; your thesis is not your Masterpiece. You are, right now, full of powerful knowledge, passion and ideas, and confidence. This full battery is important. The next little while – 6 months a year – may test you. It will be easy to feel buffeted by the things the world will throw at you. But remember this day, remember the things you've accomplished in your years at this school and know that you are strong enough and powerful enough – your charge is strong enough – to get through tough times and thrive!

3. A thing that sets off an explosion – the charge that set off the rocket engines that sent the people into space

At the last of the senior dinners with me, one of the students (Anna) commented on the curriculum – I'll paraphrase – she said that for 3.5 years she felt like she was a student learning the skills she needed, and now because of thesis and her senior year, she feels like an illustrator. She is– you are – all now the charge that will set you off on your next bigger thing. Your next creative projects, your next career choice will be built on the great things you did here. The rockets that you will be will also light up this college – we will be a brighter campus in the future because of the great things you will go off and do next.

4. To entrust someone with a task – charge you with...

My charge for you is this :bring Montserrat out into the world. I implore you in a world that is so divided, a world that has so much hate and anger and suspicion of others – Bring your kindness, bring that acceptance that we tried to practice here Bring that creative joy and that spark. Bring that boundless curiosity, bring that constant exploring, bring that constant critique of ideas. And bring the skills about living in an unsettled world with care and humanity that we strive for here everyday – bring that to the bigger world –

I went to every senior show and I've talked to your faculty, and I've talked to you. From all of this input I will say – I am so absolutely proud and confident! Each one of you as individuals have taught us, taught each other, and have been taught by us to stare into the eyes of this changing world – to not run away from it.

5. To lead – to be in charge:

You will be the ones who will lead and shape the ethics of new technology, you will be the ones that help us understand ourselves, you will be the ones that help us live on a changing planet, and you will be the ones who tell the stories that shape a new generation and make shifts in how our culture works. In your time here I know you learned a lot about who you are inside. You showed us who you are, how resilient you are and who you can be in difficult moments. And believe it or not that makes me very excited about our collective future one where you will be in **charge**.

Montserrat will always be a place to support you, to welcome you back to celebrate your success and/or help you get unstuck. You will have access to the Career Design Studio, you will have five free classes, you will have access to our alumni events and artist residencies and conference and alumni trip that we'll be building in the years ahead – moment to come back and re-charge to take on the bigger projects in the world again.

At some point you will be watching an animation, or at a baseball game, or maybe one day be at your children's soccer games and you will hear that very special organ sound and you will think back about this day. I really really hope what we did together was to make it a joyful touchstone so when you think back to your Alma mater – you hear the name, see the people, you are filled with a feeling of joy, a feeling of success, and the love that we all have for you. When you get a letter from us or an email or a call from your friends – you will charge into that conversation, that event with the same energy you did a moment ago when you crossed that stage.

Now lets go out there and getum'

**Charge**