

Dananjaya Hettiarachchi's Winning Speech

Speech Transcript:

You and I are not very different from this flower. Just like this flower is unique, **you** are unique. All of us have something special that makes us as beautiful.

Do you know what makes you special?

Now the answer to that can be a little difficult to find because **SOMETIMES**, life has a cruel way of **picking out your pedals, breaking you in two and throwing you into the trash.**

Now when **you're** **BROKEN**, it's very difficult to feel special.
Mr. Contest Chair, my **fellow flowers.**

I can remember the first time I broke. **I was 17 years old. I had already flunked high school and managed to get myself arrested.**

Now, I wasn't afraid of the cops. But there was one person I was very afraid of and that was **my momma.**

Raise **your** hand if **you** have an emotional mother...let me see.

Put them all together...**you get my mom.** I can hear her **scream** outside the police station, **even the cops were afraid.**

She came up to me...**held the iron bars. Looked into my eyes. And I saw a tear coming down her face.**

Now I've seen my momma cry before. But mothers cry 3 types of tears. **Tears of joy. Tears of sorrow. And Tears of Shame.**

And when a son sees a mother cry tears of shame, that's a life changing moment.

She looked at me and said son...I want you to be a better man!

That night when I drove home, my dad was waiting for me at home. Now my dad is a cool dad. **Raise your hand if you have a cool dad. Put them all together you get my dad.**

My dad came up to me and said son, it's okay. You flunked your exams, you already got arrested, that's fine, **you get that from your mother's side.**

I want you to start working immediately. And I said Okay.

So my dad took me to meet one of his friends called Sam.

Now Sam **was an accountant** who had an accounting firm and had **generously decided (an attempt at humor but no real laughter)** to make me his personal assistant.

And there he was. **He looked like a teddy bear.** But this man was special. I looked at him and he looked at me and then he said the most amazing thing he said son **I see something in you but I don't know what it is.**

If you decide to work with me, I can help you find that something.

And I was like WHOA, that's the first time in my whole life somebody **has ever told me they see something in me (Tiny bit of humor and audience reaction).** And I started working for Sam. And every day after work he used to tell me stories about the world. **About history about culture**

about philosophy. And it was much more interesting than what **I learned about in school (little humor)**

And I discovered I can dream. And I started dreaming **ladies and gentlemen**. **After one year** I went back into high school completed my exams and went into college.

After successfully completing college I found a great girl. **But not a job**.

I didn't know what I wanted to do with my life, **have you ever had that problem?** And when **you're** lost, it's difficult to feel special. So I went back to my cool dad. Dad I feel lost, he said "**you are like your mother**." **[CB as well]**

So my dad introduced me to this **strange club** that had a **strange name**, with **strange people, talking**. On the first meeting they told me to do **something called a Table Topic**. I aced it!

But while I was speaking I see a **strange man seated in the back row, humble, simple, the unfailing quality of kindness in his eyes**.

As soon as I finished he walked up to me **looked at me dead straight in the eye** and said, **Son I see something in you, but I DON'T KNOW what it is!**

If you come here **twice a month maybe we can find that something**.

And **ladies and gentlemen** I discovered I could speak and I love speaking. And that led me to become a teacher.

I know what it's like to not have enough money in **your** bank account. I know what it's like to worry when the bills start coming in and sometimes, in the middle of the night **I wake up my beautiful wife and I ask her, honey, why did you marry me?** She says, **I saw something in you. But I still don't know what it is**.

Ladies and gentlemen today I'm a dreamer, I'm a speaker, and I learned the unfailing quality of unconditional love from my wife.

I was broken, and I've been broken lost and broke many times in my life. But the people in my life were able to reach into the trash can and make me whole again.

If it was up to me I would have never been able to do that.

And this is why, if you have great people in your life, no matter how broke, how lost or how broken you've become, they can piece you back together.

Ladies and gentlemen, when I look at you, I see something in you, but I don't know what it is.

Word Count: 873

Speech Length: 7:17

Title: I See Something

OTHER NOTES:

Misc. Observations:

- Dananjaya used a rose prop (and trashcan) at beginning and end of speech.
- Gurus and side characters galore (done very well I might add).
 - **GURUS:** Mom, Accountant guy (job), Toastmasters guy
 - **Side Characters:** Dad and Wife
 - The many diff characters gave the aura of him having “people in his life” which bodes well for his overall message.

Feedback / Criticisms:

- The part about being broke seemed to be randomly tossed in. It could make sense because those times when you don’t have money can be tough and leave us feeling “broken.” But his premise and foundational phrase were about not knowing your path.
- Now I can’t say this is a bad thing, but the small stories really had no meat on them at all. BUT they clearly worked well. I guess they left more up to imagination instead of being overly detailed.
- When he introduces “Sam” he says “Called Sam” instead of “Named Sam” which is uncommon for English in the U.S. (The contest was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, though...)
- When he says “Today I’m a dreamer, I’m a speaker, and I learned the unfailing quality of unconditional love from my wife.” There could be a problem with the “I’m a speaker” bit. It’s like talking to a prospect and referring to yourself as a salesman. Part of the aura of good speaking is not letting the audience know that you’re a “speaker” – On the other hand, it did slightly tie in with his part about him learning that “he could speak” which ultimately led him to become a teacher. So, technically relevant.

COLOR KEY:

Humor - x 16

I included humor that got an audience response although the extent of laughter varies.

Foundational Phrase [FP] - x 4

The speech title includes a portion of the foundational phrase. Dananjaya didn't say it until 4 min mark of speech.

"You" & "Your" - x 18

I included these words that were directly aimed at the audience, dialogue excluded.

"Ladies and Gentlemen" [MF] - x 5

Now, this may sound inconsequential, but I assure you it's not. The [2016 World Champion, Darren Tay](#), used the same technique, only he used "My Friends."

Physical Descriptions or VAKS [PD] - x 6

Physical descriptions of people and locations (rather than metaphorical) and also words that are Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, or deal with Smell.

Call-backs [CB] - x 7

Most of humorous moments were call-backs to SOMETHING or SOMEONE from the speech journey - foundational phrases after the first one are call-backs as well.

Rule of Three [R3] - x 7

In this case, the [rule of three](#) was all inclusive. Whether used to make a joke or not.

Questions [Q] - x 2

Questions directly aimed at audience (rhetorical or not). I did not include questions in-character dialogue. Could argue that it's 4, when Dananjaya **told** (not asked) audience to raise hands.

Time Transitions [TT] - x 2

I included transitions/transition words that indicated that time has gone by and that the story had moved forward. There were other subtler ways of advancing story, but these were not included since the story never really took a break.