



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
Office of Marketing and Communications
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Author Jon Ronson Delivers Opening Convocation Address

MAHWAH, N.J. -- Welsh author and journalist Jon Ronson delivered the keynote address at the Opening Convocation on September 5. Ronson discussed his book, *So You've Been Publicly Shamed*, which was chosen as the summer reading selection for first-year students. The book concerns the effects of public humiliation in the Internet age, with a particular focus on Twitter.

"Social media was really created to give a voice to the voiceless, and that's good thing," said Ronson. "But in addition to being a positive, it's also become a forum for negativity, like ridicule and inaccurate information which can be harmful." He said that some of the well-known "provocateurs" that use social media – newsroom figures, celebrities, people in the public eye, for instance – can handle the negative backlash from posting their particular views about social issues.

"Those folks typically have millions of followers so they are looking for reaction. But the average person with 25 followers is often not equipped to handle the negative, and it becomes a terrible experience for them," he said.

Ronson said response to the book since its release in March 2015 has been mostly positive. "But the first few months were difficult for me. People were really not welcoming the content or the message," which he said is that we must remember "we are all human."

"The sharing of information, especially when it's so instantaneous, can be a good thing. But let's care about others first," he said.

Ronson offered some words of advice to students, staff and faculty. "Curiosity is good. Finding your voice is good but be thoughtful about what your words can do. And if you witness a social injustice online, don't be afraid to speak up. That is more important than staying silent."

Ronson's works include the best-selling *The Men Who Stare at Goats* (2004) and *The Psychopath Test* (2011). He has published nine books and his work has appeared in British publications such as *The Guardian*, *City Life* and *Time Out*. He has made several BBC Television documentary films and two documentary series for British public service television.

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Ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as one of the top in the Best Regional Public Universities North category, Ramapo College of New Jersey is sometimes viewed as a private college. This is, in part, due to its unique interdisciplinary academic structure, its size of approximately 6,000 students and its pastoral setting in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains on the New Jersey/New York border.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include nursing and social work. In addition, Ramapo College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels. The College also offers eight graduate programs as well as articulated programs with Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, New York Chiropractic College, New York University College of Dentistry, SUNY State College of Optometry and New York College of Podiatric Medicine.