



Aline Gregorio
Undergraduate, Geography Department

Aline Gregorio came to the United States from Brazil when she was 16 years old. Her first years of education were focused on catching up to the language. After many years of struggling with general requirements of High School, and later college, she felt inspired in her first geography course. From that point on, she decided to pursue her education in the discipline and to become a college professor. After college, she will continue her post-baccalaureate education at Cal State Fullerton in Geography. She plans to turn her focus to tropical rainforests and the geopolitical issues involving tropical rainforests conservation in Latin America. As a graduate student, she plans to contribute to the academic world with new research and findings, but mostly, she plans to inspire other students to learn as much as she has and take this learning to a personal level of experience.

As I stand up here, I cannot help but to recall these long years of college and its many challenges. I don't know about everyone here, but it has been waaaaaaay longer than four years! Looking back in time I recall a similar time from today, the last time I wore a cap and gown: at high school graduation when I thought I was ready to face the world... It was a time of confusion, of no certainties... Little did I know... Where was I to go from there? I envisioned no path, but I had no other thought but to keep on going, even if in circles, I said to myself "keep on going." And perhaps not in circles, but surely not in a direct path with a promising future, I kept on going...

In college, I changed my major multiple times: from Economics, to English, to Mathematics, to Advertising and Marketing, then finally I was sure... Interior Design! My schedule was set, and as an interior design major I still had to get those boring general requirements out of the way... And that was when I sat in my first geography class with Mrs. Grabiell. With her bright eyes and gestures I remember Mrs. Grabiell throwing terms around: Globalization, Cultural Identity, Social Inequality, World Poverty, Language, Religion, Global Warming, Environmental Degradation, Sustainability, and, our class's personal favorite, Coriolis Effect! All those terms were tossed at me with so much intention for the first time! I was stunned! I sat there listening to reality... Really listening to different realities... A reality that is whole,

interdependent, and undeniable. I was learning about the world: the very same dynamic world that is in constant change, and in constant need for change. **Revolution stirred within**. I felt needed as an essential member of a whole complex. That is when I asked myself the important question that has led me to be here today: I asked myself not what I wanted to **do** with my education, but who I wanted to **be**. The **real** question was: who did I want to **be** in this world. Was I to learn a trait, or was I to use this to **become** many things? And the answer is not only in what I learned, but in becoming what I learned. In geography, I became. I became an environmentalist, a humanitarian, an idealist, an activist, a skeptic, an outdoors enthusiast, adventurous, curious, expressive, rebellious, intelligent, a multicultural person, an international citizen among many other things... I am a geographer. I have become ready for the dynamics of this world: to **adapt to change** and to **provoke change**. As I keep on the journey of becoming, revolution **continues to stir within and eventually throughout**. As a geographer I hope to continue to grow, and perhaps provoke the same growth in others as the amazing professors that inspired each one of us have... And to all of you... Thank You... Thank you for helping me become.



Andrew Diaz
Undergraduate, American Studies

Andrew Diaz graduated magna cum laude from the American Studies department. Following graduation, he plans on entering the teaching credential program in hopes of becoming a high school history teacher. His main areas of interest are the 1960s and the Civil War. He wants to teach United States history, but is open to any opportunities to teach.

Before I begin today, I would like to take the time to thank the fantastic professors of the American Studies department. Especially Dr. Carrie Lane and Dr. John Ibson both of whom have been two of the best teachers I have ever had inside or outside of a classroom.

I would also like to dedicate this speech to three of the most important people in my life. My father, Miguel Diaz, who taught me how to be strong in the face of the most difficult trials in life, My mother, Peggy Diaz, who has been, without a doubt, the hardest working and most loving person I have ever known, and my very significant other, my girlfriend, my partner Shannon Beckman, who has helped me not only to become a better student, but also a better human being.

We all have our own ideas of what college was supposed to be. We came to this university with an idea of what we would experience, what we would learn, and what we would come away with. There are some that came here to experience the wild parties and the late night extravaganzas that only college can afford us. There are some that came here to merely fill their brains with that Oh so terrific knowledge.

My expectations of college were a little different. When I first set foot on this campus I knew what I wanted to take away. Maybe I inherited the notion from my parents, but I wanted this experience to broaden my horizons, alter my way of thinking, and cause me to question my very identity.

In my first semester here though, I found a reality that was a long ways away from my dreams. As an incoming transfer student, I discovered that my initial major's department wanted to narrow my way of thinking and halt my questioning of authority. I met professors who cared more about empirical evidence rather than thoughtful criticism.

I met professors who were outraged at the fact that I would include personal opinion in my coursework. "It's unacademic," I would hear from them. I even met a professor who proudly considered himself a 'Footnote Nazi'. Needless to say I dropped that class immediately.

I felt disillusioned and disappointed in my college experience. I came here hoping to find open windows into exciting new ways of thinking, but instead I found locked doors. Lucky for me though, I took a class on women in American society. It was my first American studies course. It was in this class that I found exactly what I was looking for. As a class we looked at gender roles, we examined the media, and we discussed the structure of power in our society.

I can assume that I had the same feeling that many of you felt after your first American studies course. I was enthralled. I was hooked. I felt like Robert Downey Jr. circa 1996. I had to have more. I changed my major and began taking every American Studies course that I could fit into my schedule. I took a class on popular culture, on the American male, on prejudice, on the American body, on Hollywood, and my personal favorite, the 1960s.

In each course we learned the facts, the historical figures, and once in awhile, we even learned a date or two. But what made these classes stand out was that I learned the relevance and the importance of these moments in history. We also learned how these moments connected to our lives. In learning about the 1960s, I learned just as much about myself as I did about the SCLC. In studying the American Body, I discovered opinions and beliefs that I never knew I held.

My excitement extended far beyond the classroom as well. I met fellow students who introduced a new perspective in my life. Together we went to the edges of insanity; staying up later than we thought was humanly possible, completing papers we thought were beyond finishing. We drank coffee while sharing our opinions on such crucial issues as the economy, the war, and maybe most importantly Judd Apatow and Will Ferrell movies. Some of these students, I know I will remain friends with for many years, and I am eternally thankful to them.

With it all said and done, I found my ideal college experience in the American studies department. While I have heard this campus be referred to as a commuter campus time and time again, I like to think that we succeeded in creating our own little community here. Our own culture, if you will.

Before I end, it is only fitting that I throw in an obscure pop-culture reference. I would like to leave you with this: In the 1980s, GI Joe taught us that "knowing is half the battle." I have jokingly always asked, "Well, what's the other half?" It seems funny to me, that I now realize that the other half is putting your newly acquired knowledge into practice.

And now that we are better critical thinkers than we have ever been I suggest that we remember a quote that a teacher, a mentor, a friend of mine once told me. "Criticism is a form of optimism. Only silence is pessimistic." I hope that each of us will remember to be as optimistic as possible for as long as we can, and to never let our silence get in the way of the world we hope to one day create.

Thank you so very much.



Anna Schultz
Graduate, American Studies

Thank you, Professor Battan. Good morning! I am so grateful to be honored with the chance to speak this morning. I've had my head buried in a stack of books the last six months studying for the masters exams, as I'm sure many of my classmates have, and after I finally finished (writing 12 hours a day for 4 days in a row) I felt my brain couldn't squeeze out another complete thought for a good long time, and I know I'm not alone among my fellow graduates in my feeling of relief and exhaustion today. But we made it!

The master's experience started for me, with a theory and methods class, where, among other questions we dealt with a question that is as basic as it is big in this field--what is American Studies? I found it fitting that this was the content of one of the MA exam questions that I've been working through over the past few months—a nice bookend to my experience in American studies. The quick answer to that question is American Studies is an interdisciplinary study of American culture and history—we grapple with what it means to be an American in all kinds of contexts. But more than that, the program has given us a solid base for studying culture with an emphasis on context, diversity and respect. The program has trained our ears and eyes to recognize the nuances and contexts of cultural experiences and meanings playing out all around us, in contemporary American culture as well as historically. With these tools, I hope I can, along with my fellow graduates, continue to discover how culture works and try to get to the bottom of what it means. We have been equipped for this ambitious endeavor by our professors.

I am truly honored to be here with these amazing scholars. It has been extremely gratifying to work with these professors and learn from their own outstanding work, as they've guided and inspired us in our academic interests and pursuits. Particularly, Professor Pamela Steinle, our graduate advisor, who has teaches thought provoking courses but also works overtime to keep us on track, making the extra effort to be available to students and making sure we're been able to navigate the program successfully.

We've all dealt with and worked through academic challenges along the way but we've also fought with traffic, searched aimlessly for parking and wrestled with self doubt. Most of us have had to make time for jobs and family—but we made it. And we would not have made it without these thoughtful and generous professors here, and the support of our families and friends. Our friends and family have supported us and put up with paper writing marathons, the late evening classes, and the general stress of being a graduate student. In my own life, I've relied my father to be a sounding board for my anxieties and toughest questions. And I've relied on my mother, who has given me more pre-paper pep talks than I can count, to give me that extra push when I was sure I couldn't make it. And my soon-to-be husband Chris, who put up with me on a daily basis through this process and gently encouraged me to quit whining and finish my homework.

I've been so lucky to have such a robust support system to help me along the way. I couldn't have done it without them. And in all of the faces I see here today, our parents, partners, our friends and family, our classmates and instructors; I know I'm not the only one who couldn't have made it without a lot of help and support, encouragement and willingness to sacrifice from all of you. And I am grateful for the opportunity to stand here this morning and say, for myself and on behalf of all the master's graduates here this morning, THANK YOU.



Erin Fitzgerald
Graduate, Anthropology

Erin C. Fitzgerald obtained two Bachelor of Art degrees at California State University, Fullerton in 2006 for Anthropology and Psychology. She earned her MA, at California State University, Fullerton, in 2008 with emphasis on Biological Evolutionary Anthropology. She has presented research on HPV at the American Anthropological Association, invited poster session, in Washington D.C. in 2007, which is in the process of publication. She has been a graduate assistant in the Department of Anthropology for three consecutive semesters in 2007-2008. She is a member of several organizations: Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, Lambda Alpha National Honor Society, Evolutionary Anthropology Society, American Anthropology Association, Southern California Applied Anthropology Network and Visual Anthropology Club. She has been the recipient of several awards: Untereiner Humanistic Anthropology Award, Professional Enhancement Award and the Meritorious Service Award. She has been accepted in the Ph.D. program at the University of New Mexico, where she will focus on Biological Evolutionary Anthropology, in the Fall of 2008. She was awarded the Hibben Fellowship and a Graduate Assistant position at the University of New Mexico.

Fellow Graduates, Faculty, Family and Friends;

The journey to today has been a culmination of hard work and sleepless nights, with relief that the last paper has been turned in, the last final has been completed and the end of the semester has arrived.

No more driving around in the parking structures to find an open parking space or agonizing over the dreaded oral presentation, which you didn't begin working on until the night before it was due.

For some of us, the dream of today has taken many years to become a reality. Working during the day and attending evening classes, balancing work, family and school.

But regardless of the path each of us has taken, as graduates, we all understand how much the support and encouragement of family and friends have helped us along the way. So Thank you, Thank you so very much!

Our degree in Anthropology has provided us with a wonderful opportunity to see the world and all of its inhabitants from a unique perspective by incorporating many diverse disciplines towards the understanding of humanity.

We ask the “why” and “how” questions dating from our early hominid ancestors to the present.

We are more cognizant of cultural diversity and human variation which is applicable in all aspects of our life and interactions with each other.

Some of us will continue on and earn a Masters or Ph.D., others will take the knowledge they have gained, paving the way with their own personal contributions at work, home and in life.

I can say without reservation that our accomplishments, which has led us here today, is only the beginning of our journey.

To quote Henry David Thoreau - “Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.”

The only limitations we have are the ones we set for our selves. So stand proud and hold your head up high. Each of us had challenges to overcome to get here today, but we did it!

Congratulations, Graduating Class of 2008!



Katie Manzer
Undergraduate, Psychology

Katie Manzer graduated Summa Cum Laude with a B.A. in Psychology in May 2008. While a student at CSUF, she was involved in many leadership roles including Director of Administration and Psychology Department Representative for the College of H&SS Inter Club Council, Editor of the Psychology Peer Mentor Newsletter, and President of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology. Katie is also a member of Golden Key Honor Society, Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society and Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society. Off campus, Katie works at a non-profit counseling center as the Office Manager, and volunteers her time at Laguna Road Elementary School. Katie will be starting a graduate program at CSULB in fall 2008 to earn an MA in Educational Psychology and Pupil Personnel Services Credential to become a School Psychologist.

Good morning,

For a number of years, I lived my life according to “the plan”. I had mapped out everything for myself, I was going to finish college by age 20, graduate from San Diego State University, establish a successful career as an MFT by 23, marry by 24 and have my first child by 26. I was determined to fill my resume with honor society memberships, and whatever else the Career Center told me would be useful. It all seemed so perfect, like the hardest part was behind me in the organization of it all. I was on the fast track with my plan; no super senior status for me, no messing around; I meant business; it was just me and my plan.

I became obsessively focused on what my final destination would be, doing all that I could to reach that place as quickly and efficiently as possible. In hind sight, I didn’t realize that in doing this, I was missing all of the enjoyable and meaningful pit-stops along the way. Then one day, I found myself at a graduate school conference at USC in 2006 and just happened to sit down next to Laura Castro, last years Outstanding Undergraduate. Before I knew it I had transferred to Cal State Fullerton and got involved with the college of Humanities and Social Sciences Inter Club Council. I had ditched my idea of being an MFT and finishing in three years was out of the question.

I soon found that my life was taking many unexpected turns and I remember saying to myself, “This isn’t how it is supposed to happen. The place where I have ended up isn’t even on my map!” I didn’t know what to do; I had strayed so far from my plan that I was beginning to think I was going to be lost forever. Then I remembered someone had once told me I should just throw away the life plan, to just let it go.

I refused to entertain the idea for a long while. Yet, all of a sudden, I was connected to a university for the first time. Then Laura caught me outside the Humanities Building one afternoon and told me that I had to run for President of Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology- this was definitely was not in my plan! But nevertheless, I soon started to realize that life without this plan wasn’t all that bad. It had led me to this university, it led me to seek active leadership roles within the Psychology Department; and it led me to establish amazing relationships with faculty and peers. I found a career field that I am passionate about, and I worked with an amazing team of girls who together, along with the support of the entire department, earned Psi Chi the Silver Medal for Student Organization of the Year out of 268 recognized clubs on campus.

Looking back on it all, my fast paced life plan was keeping me from enjoying all of the wonderful things that the university and life have to offer. Had I held on to that plan and not taken the advice to let it go, I would not have stuck around to become President of Psi Chi, to share exciting headlines with students as Editor of the Peer Mentor Newsletter, to find that I have a passion for educational psychology and psychological testing, and to be standing here today, representing the department as the Outstanding Undergraduate. I had to take a few detours to get to where I am today but I hope that you can follow in my lead and immerse yourself in the opportunities of the now. Don’t get me wrong, a little direction and motivation is always necessary, but try to enjoy the ride, referencing the final end point only when necessary.

Before I finish, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank, on behalf of all of the Psychology Students graduating with me today, all of our mentors, professors, peers, family and friends who have made our lives meaningful and who have supported us without avail.

And to my fellow graduates, I hope that you will walk out of this gym here today and leave those suffocating, “life plans” in your seats; I hope that you will take time to enjoy the journey, and not fixate solely on the destination; you will reach it in due time. Congratulations Class of 2008. Thank you.

Katie Manzer



Kevin Livergood Graduate, Environmental Science

Kevin completed his Master of Science in Environmental Studies in December 2007. His final project “The Effects of Construction Activity on the Breeding Success of California Gnatcatchers: A Case Study of the Marblehead Coastal Development Project” was the culmination of his Masters studies and is an extension of his work with a local environmental consulting company, Glenn Lukos Associates.

Kevin’s undergraduate work was in Communication Theory and Human Resource Management at the University of Arizona, which led to a career at Fluor Corporation. Following a layoff, a time filled with reflection, prayer and volunteerism, Kevin found the Environmental Studies Program at CSUF, which ultimately led to his current career as an environmental consultant.

Kevin finds great joy in his family, which includes his wife Amy and daughters Abby and Kendra. With the completion of his degree Kevin looks forward to resuming his outside interests in mountain biking and enology.

Faculty, students and guests,

It is an honor to be standing before you today.

As I started graduate school my life was in transition. I was emerging from a year of unemployment following a layoff from a lifeless career in human resources at a Fortune 500 company and I had just started a part-time job at a local wilderness park in an effort to chart a new course.

My academic pursuit began shortly thereafter and firmly set me moving in that new direction. I advanced on faith with the hope of making a difference in a new field.

Shortly after getting started, about 3 weeks actually, the first of my little girls, Abby, was born. This alone should have counted for at least 60 or 70 extra units, but to no avail, so I continued with my education adding Dad-in-Training to my class lists.

4 years later I have 2 beautiful girls and I’ve charted a new course that never would have come to pass without the love of my beautiful wife Amy, the support of my parents and a faith in the true Master’s plan that promises to give me hope and a future.

Through the Environmental Studies Program I learned about environmental policy, had a few crash courses in biology and along the way it opened my eyes to the issues that face the world we live in. There were obvious yet important issues like global warming and recycling. But we also learned about things that we don't hear about on the evening news. Things like environmental racism, the effects of poverty on our planet and environmental conditions that can affect entire communities, cultures and even nations.

I believe we have all been charged with the good stewardship of the world we share. We've been called to be responsible consumers, wise planners and safeguards of our natural resources. As we ponder what it means to be good stewards, let us consider the effects of choosing conservation and compassion over consumption. Let us consider the effects of embracing something larger than ourselves, something that takes us out of ourselves and let us endeavor to make a difference with our lives.

Today marks a milestone in many of our lives. While it marks the end of academic life for some, it can mark a starting point for all of us.

Let today be the day that we wake up and choose to take the courageous step of faith required to advance in the direction of all that we've hoped for and all we've been called to do even if that takes us to a place that is unpopular or uncomfortable.

As we end the transition through this life stage, let us take all that we've learned through our academic disciplines with us, but let us also take hope, honesty, good character and integrity back to our jobs and into our homes and then... watch us change the world.



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Lisa Ho
Undergraduate, Asian-American Studies

I'm a double major in Asian American Studies and Women's Studies. My plans for the Fall of 2008, I will be pursuing my Master's Degree in Asian American Studies at UCLA. Eventually, I would like to work with international government organizations or non-profit organizations that aim at providing resources and education to women of underdeveloped nations. In my free time, I am a connoisseur of Asian Cuisine.

One of the most important things that I have learned during my education at CSUF is that there is never an easy answer. Things are not always black or white. True or false. There are never simple answers but only explanations that are riddled with contradictions. Our experiences are filled with complexities that can never be narrowed down to a simple category. Our social locations are impacted by multi-faceted intersections that create conditions that can either complement or conflict with each other. The Chinese American writer Maxine Hong Kingston once said that "I learned to make my mind large, as the universe is large, so that there is room for contradictions." I have learned to embrace complexities, contradictions, and the comfort of living-in-between. It is only when we expand our minds and our hearts that we can embrace each other and can accept one another without judgment.

As a student at an educational institution like CSUF which is committed to diversity, I have met those that have been raised in difficult conditions, whose experiences I can connect with as a child of immigrant working class parents. I have also met and created relationships with those whose material wealth has granted them social privileges. Privilege is a powerful tool; it can either open gateways of opportunities or close them. However, privilege does not only exist within material wealth. The ability to speak English or to even receive education are privileges that many of us here today hold. What I have learned during my time in CSUF and in the community is that we need to challenge our privilege. We need to realize that the comforts that we enjoy are not enjoyed by all.

There are those that struggle to continue to their education because it is unaffordable. For some, equality is not a right but a privilege that can be stripped away at a whim. As educated members of the community, we must understand these realities and to realize it is not enough to have well-intentioned politics. We must act upon them.

My growth as an intellectual would not have been possible without the mentorship of Dr. Marjorie Jolles from the Women's Studies Program and Dr. Thomas Fujita-Rony from the Asian American Studies Program. Even though I have only spent two years with Dr. Jolles, her guidance has instilled a passion within me for intellectual exchange, that the power of ideas can dramatically change how we see the world and ourselves within it. I also I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Fujita-Rony whose belief and encouragement in me has motivated me to achieve what I thought was impossible. As my mentor, Dr. Fujita-Rony has gone above and beyond to help me grow as an intellectual. I remember being so frustrated last semester when I was applying to graduate schools and juggling schoolwork, that I asked him "Have I had an original thought this entire semester?" To Dr. Fujita-Rony my question was almost comical but it reflected how instrumental he has been in my life. Once again, I want to thank Dr. Jolles and Dr. Fujita-Rony for their guidance and how much they have cared for me throughout my time here at CSUF.

For many of us, our success would not be possible without our families, whether it be the ones we are related to by blood or the ones that we have created by fortunate circumstance. I have been blessed to have both types of families. I would like to thank my best friend, Brenda, whose kindness has inspired me and who has taught me to be a better person through love. Luis, whose courage and loyalty knows no limits. Also, to those that are at their respective ceremonies here and at other universities for their constant love and support. Lastly, I would like to thank my family. My little brother, Kevin, whose wit keeps me on my toes and takes care of me almost like I'm his little sister. My Father and Mother, whose sacrifices are never-ending but continue to make them so that I can have a better life, all of this would not possible without either of you, and I will be forever indebted to the both of you.

Finally, I would like to extend my congratulations to all the graduates here. I wish all of you the best in your future endeavors and know that anything and everything is possible.



Lynna Landry Undergraduate, History

Lynna Landry is graduating Cum Laude with a B.A. in History and American Studies. President of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society and Vice-President of History Students' Association, the History Department selected Lynna to deliver the student address at its graduation ceremony. A member of the University Honors Program, Lynna, mentored by Dr. Nelson Woodard, completed her Senior Project on global leadership and peace in the Cold War's final decade. Lynna attends St. Linus Catholic Church in Norwalk, volunteering for six years in youth ministry and Life Teen programs. She will spend July in Australia for World Youth Day 2008 events hosted by Pope Benedict and attended by young people from around the world. In January 2009 she will begin working towards a teaching credential for 11th grade U.S. History.

Good morning, faculty, students, family and friends!

I when I learned I would be up here today, frankly, I was shocked.

I was in Dr. Woodard's class, waiting with the other students for him to arrive. When he entered the room, he came over to me, pounded on my desk, and wagging his finger said, "Dr. Haddad would like to see you in his office after class!"

I was taken aback, and the only thing I could say was, "Is it bad?"

Dr. Woodard said, again, shaking his finger, "I can't tell you!"

Just then my classmates around me responded with, "Oooooohhhh, you're in troooooouble!"

Yes, at that very instant, I experienced what every historian dreams of: time travel... albeit directly back to the fourth grade.

But in all seriousness, I am glad that Dr. Haddad called me into his office. It is an honor that the he and the faculty have chosen me to speak at such a momentous occasion.

Before I could give a speech, I had to write a speech. And thanks to our excellent training in 300B Historical Writing, I knew before I could write anything I first needed a primary source document. I scoured speeches and letters from presidents and revolutionaries, but nothing seemed to inspire me. Then I realized what I was reading... wasn't me... it wasn't us—because I'm here today to talk about what it means to be a student of history at Cal State Fullerton, and here is my primary source.

This is a vibrant program with eager students and faculty alike. Looking back at my time here, I recalled moments that I believe capture our student experience.

The first thing that stood out: our professors. Did you know they make us work hard? I mean, really, really hard! Whether we have to write papers or take an exam we are expected to know our stuff, inside and out. Recalling names and dates is not sufficient because we're not collecting trivia; we're learning about yesterday to help us understand today and plan for tomorrow. It's rigorous, but we are better scholars for it because our professors' goals are for us to have a deeper understanding of history.

Even if faculty members are not your professors, they still encourage students to flex their academic muscles. Dr. Burgtorf asked me multiple times when I would present my work on the Cold War at any upcoming conference: this surprised me since I have never taken a class from him so I didn't know what he thought of my scholarship, but he believed in me anyhow. Without support such as his, I don't think I would have had the confidence to present at the Phi Alpha Theta Biennial conference in Albuquerque this past January, or take on the role of panel commentator at the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference last month at Chapman University. We are very lucky to have professors such as these who want us to strive continually for excellence.

Don't worry, I didn't forget about you, the student body! As president of Phi Alpha Theta this year, I've had the absolute pleasure of seeing how excited you are about history! At Phi Alpha Theta and History Student Association socials, our \$1 book sales, even when I would come to visit some of the classes, I always encountered enthusiastic students—especially when we would throw a Welcome Back Semester Pizza Party... but now I'm kind of starting to think that had something to do with the free pizza. Regardless of the food, the Welcome Back parties were a sight to see, this room to my left buzzed with welcoming faces, friends happy to see one another again, and fervent chatter flying between professors and students. The camaraderie of it all was a pure delight, and it is something I will miss very much.

But I think one of the moments that best represents the sentiment of our time studying history here occurred in one of Dr. Rietveld's classes, Democracy on Trial, a course on the Civil War. On the final day of the instruction and after another stirring lecture from Dr. Rietveld, the classroom burst into applause. We didn't applaud because it was the last day of class; the applause came from genuine gratitude and amazement that we—students and professor together—shared such influential learning experiences, ones that often felt like literal journeys back in time.

My fellow graduates, this is your day. I hope that you recall some of your own favorite moments and professors, and use what you've learned here to look back at your past and see what stands out, ask why it's meaningful, and find the lesson for your promising future. As historians we've all heard the saying that history is written by the victors. Graduation is just one part of your history you are currently writing; and today, class of 2008, remember: you are victorious.