



## Jacqueline Alvarino

### Undergraduate, History

*Jacqueline Alvarino graduated magna cum laude from the History department. She is a member of several organizations: the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program, Phi Alpha Theta (the national history honor society), the History Student Association, the Latin American Studies Student Association, and the Humanities and Social Sciences Inter-club Council. She also served as President of the European Studies Society for the 2008-2009 school year. Jacqueline is the recipient of several awards: the Carmen Delphine Bayati Memorial Scholarship, the Warren Beck Outstanding History Student Award, and the Pollak Library Prize for Undergraduate Research Papers and Projects. She also participated as a research fellow at UC Irvine's Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program (SURF). Following graduation, Jacqueline plans to pursue her Ph.D. in Latin American History with an emphasis on feminism and human rights in Central America. Eventually, she would like to work with international non-government organizations and Latin American policy think tanks.*

### Graduation Speech

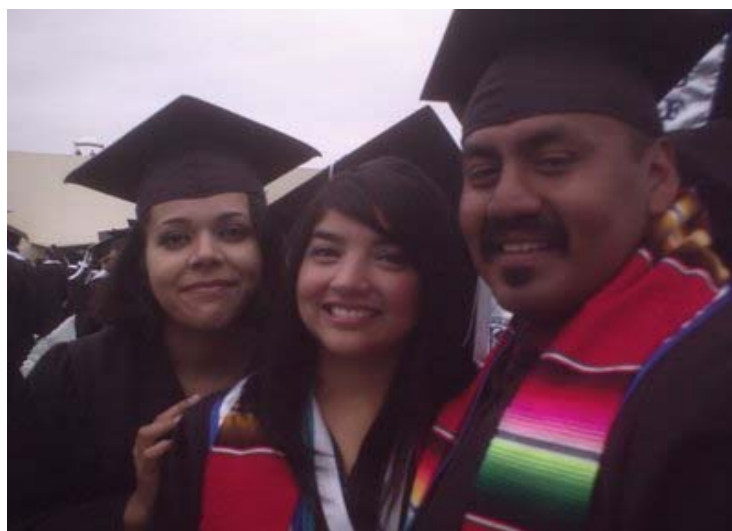
Many years ago, the celebrated writer and director Woody Allen once said, "If you want to make God laugh, tell Him your future plans." I'm sure Woody Allen was *not* thinking about the graduating class of 2009 when he uttered those words. Nevertheless, *I* find this quote particularly relevant to my fellow classmates and to myself. Graduation is not just a time to celebrate our accomplishments; it is a time to think about our futures. Some of us might use our degrees to teach; and some of us may pursue a graduate degree. Yet, in an economy such as ours, graduation can be a bittersweet ending. Many of us will struggle in the job market, or endure

personal and financial hardships. Nonetheless, in spite of these difficult times, we should maintain a positive outlook. We have been prepared as much as possible for the challenges we shall face in the future. We can only hope for the best.

I'm sure many graduates today have heard those dreaded words from friends and family members: "what are you going to do after graduation?" My fellow graduates: if no one has asked you this question in the past week, be prepared to answer it by the end of our commencement ceremony. I understand why so many people ask the same question—they're curious! Can you blame them? We graduates are in a privileged position; we have received an excellent education from some of the best professors at Cal State Fullerton. This is a time to reflect upon what we have gained and what we will carry into our futures. Think about all the books you have read during your time at Cal State Fullerton (the good ones and the bad ones); think about the conversations you had with your professors and classmates. *Did they stimulate your mind? Did they challenge you to think differently about your environment?*

Like many of Woody Allen's film characters, I exercised my intellectual curiosity and questioned my identity and surroundings. I began to see the world in an entirely different way. This would not have been possible without the help of Dr. Lynn Sargeant, Dr. Steve Jobbitt, and Dr. Philippe Zacaïr, three professors who challenged me to look at the world through a different lens. I would like to take this moment to personally thank Dr. Sargeant, Dr. Jobbitt, and Dr. Zacaïr for their patience, empathy, and support. Words do little justice to express my gratitude to the three of you. You invested your time and efforts to nurture me into a conscientious historian. I cannot put a price on what I have gained. I would also like to thank the History Department for all of their support. The department has provided me with a safe and intellectually stimulating atmosphere. I would also like to thank my family and friends for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to extend my congratulations to all of my fellow graduates. I commend you for working hard and for overcoming your personal obstacles. I wish all of you the best in your future endeavors. Thank you.



**Jesus Cortez**  
Undergraduate, English and Chicano/a

*My name is Jesus Cortez, I majored in English and Chicano/a Studies. I was born in Mexico and was raised in the city of Anaheim, and I am 28 years old. I am also a first generation college student. I am part of the Alliance of Students for an Equal Education a group that fights and advocates for the rights of immigrant college students and immigrant rights in general.*

Buenos Dias, Good Morning for my non-Spanish-speaking friends. I remember when I landed in the city of Anaheim in 1989 the only thing I cared about was reuniting with my mother. Who would have thought that 20 years later, I would be graduating from Cal State Fullerton with a double major; I didn't and certainly not many people who have known me throughout the years. But in those 20 years, many experiences have shaped my life, and changed the way I see myself and the world. In those twenty years, I have lost friends to both distance and the bullet—I have experienced poverty, hunger, pain, but I have also seeing hope, whether it is in my mother's eyes or in the smile of my nieces and nephews. I have gained knowledge from street corners and alleys, but also from my ancestors through my mother; yet, much of this knowledge had gone unappreciated for years—until I arrived at El Profe's class. It was in Dr. Gradilla's, Mexican/Chicana Intellectual Thought class that I began to appreciate the knowledge of my mother, and the beauty of my culture that I had neglected for a long time. I will not deny that for a period of time in my youth I felt shame in who I was, but through the years I have learned to be

proud of my roots and the knowledge that I have received. El Profe made me realize that everybody's knowledge has value. So today as I stand here, I tell you that it is not the degrees that make me who I am, it is my experiences that have shaped my life that make me who I am. I am thankful for all the forms of education and the types of knowledge I have acquired, whether this knowledge comes from the classroom or from the streets and alleys of West Anaheim.

Yet I feel it is useless to receive an education if we do nothing with it. The money we earn is not what matters; it is the impact we make with our lives that truly matters. Now that we have received this great education, we have a bigger responsibility with our community. We have the duty to teach but also to learn from our communities, so together we can create real change—we must struggle together. We must learn to appreciate our individual but also our collective struggles. We can not wait around for others to advocate for us and our rights; we have the power in our hands to create change. It is in the spirit of unity that I would like to say that I share the honor of being up here with all of my colleagues. I also share this honor with those who were unable to receive a college education and those who got stuck in the educational pipelines; but, especially with those who did not get to live as long as I have. I share this honor with my creator; with my ancestors; with my mother—MADRE MUCHAS GRACIAS POR TODO EL APOYO Y EL AMOR; with my brothers and sisters and the rest of my family; also, my immigrant brothers and sisters—my AB540 brothers and sisters; last but not least all the members of the ALLIANCE OF STUDENTS FOR AN EQUAL EDUCATION, especially those close to my heart—you know who you are, and Mr. Marco Antonio Firebaugh, rest in peace. I thank everyone who has supported me along the way and I assure you that my struggle will continue, but also that your struggle is my struggle too. To those in the audience who have not yet graduated or even started college, I assure you that your time will come as it has for me. As long as we have the support from our communities and our families, there is nothing that can stop us, not even budget cuts. As the great Tupac Shakur said “if you believe, then you can achieve, just look at me”. Lastly, I would like to recite something I wrote for this special occasion that hopefully reflects the lessons I have learned through these last 20 years.

There is no liberation without struggle  
There is no struggle without love  
There is no love without people  
There are no People without humanity  
But there is no humanity until we are all truly equal!

Thank you. Muchas Gracias!



**Katrina Lacerna**  
**Undergraduate, Asian American Studies**

*Katrina Lacerna graduated this spring with a Bachelor's degree in Asian American Studies. While at Cal State Fullerton, she served as the Student Coordinator for the Multicultural Leadership Center's "Desserts and Dialogue" program. She will begin graduate school in the fall, and is enrolled at San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. After obtaining her Master's, she hopes to work in a public institution and serve her community as a librarian.*

**Graduation Speech**

We are living in strange, trying times. All around us we are faced with strife, be it economic hardship, ideological divisiveness, or global conflict. It is naïve and irresponsible to ignore these realities. But to think that these obstacles are insurmountable would be just as reckless a notion, for I know the ambition, conviction, and idealism imbued in my peers whom we are recognizing today.

I believe all the disciplines we are honoring at this ceremony share the commonality of a deep concern and compassion for humanity. There is the principal desire to learn about oneself, one's people and culture, but underlying that is the wish to connect with all others in a deep, honest, and meaningful way. It is because of this unwavering dedication to the collective good, that I am convinced my generation can overcome any barrier, no matter how overwhelming.

In such uncertain times we may be tempted to play it safe, to retreat into the familiar. But I believe such circumstances call for innovation and visionary thought. I thank the tireless members of the Asian American Studies department for instilling in their students principles of justice, equity, and respect not just for those in the Asian Pacific Islander community but for *all* people

I would particularly like to thank Dr. Thomas Fujita-Rony who served as an insightful, wise, and caring mentor. His guidance and support was invaluable in making my experience at Cal State Fullerton a success. He not only provided sound counsel and direction, but challenged me to grow as an intellectual.

Like many of the other graduates I would not have reached this juncture without the encouragement and care of family. I would like to thank Mommy, Daddy, Eric, Michael, Lola, and Danny for each teaching me about love, compassion, and sacrifice. Without them none of this would have been possible. They inspire me on a daily basis to do, think, and act better; if not for their unwavering support and unconditional love I would not have made it this far.

Admittedly, I began this speech on a dour note. Yet this occasion is a joyous one, a time of great celebration. I only remind my fellow graduates of the social responsibility we as educated individuals are obligated to take on. And I believe with all my heart that we are more than prepared and well-equipped to remedy these ills.

Thank you.



## Liza Alvarez Valdez

### Undergraduate, Latin American Studies

*Liza Álvarez Valdez graduates this spring from Cal State Fullerton with a B.A. in Anthropology and Latin American Studies. In 2007, through grants and scholarships she spent a year of at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile in Santiago. As an advocate of fieldwork and life experiences in conjunction with classroom work she has traveled extensively throughout the Americas and the Caribbean. Upon graduation she hopes to continue her education with a Masters in Geography at Cal State Fullerton to study the ethnobotany of Cuba and the country's Afro-Cuban syncretism through fieldwork and under the guidance of resident ethnobotanist, Dr. Robert Voeks.*

In my high school yearbook, under plans after graduation it says to obtain a second job or overtime at work. I looked forward to my future as a full-time food-runner and part-time barista with high hopes of one day earning that twenty cent raise as assistant manager trainee. In other words, I never expected to find myself here before you. Ironically I was on the right track. All I needed was to fine-tune things a bit. Once I stopped preparing coffee and started preparing cocktails that was what got me here to this stage, to a BA in Anthropology and Latin American Studies, to a future in a masters program and to over a dozen different countries in the Americas. Life always surprises you.

I serendipitously stumbled upon a treasure chest here at Cal State Fullerton. I only applied to Cal State Fullerton so that I would not have to move and lose my job as bar manager; what was at the time my first priority. Since then my occupation has changed from your local bartender/informal town psychologist to student/world traveler/critical thinker/future

educator/future grad student and ethnobotanist. Without the guidance and influence of those of you here at Cal State Fullerton my occupation would never have changed. Latin American Studies is a small program yet it has the most dedicated and passionate faculty, staff and student-body I have ever come across; from my samba dancing Portuguese professor Dr. Ishikawa, to our resident expert on the ethnobotany of Afro-Latin religions and world cuisine Dr. Voeks, to my very own informal town psychologist Assistant Dean McKenzie, to my partner in crime and fellow hula-hooping, hot comb toting rap artist Sam “Jamon” Serrano, to my fountain of strength and husband Juan Carlos Valdez, and lastly but most certainly not least, my academic fairy godmother and LASSA’s very own oracle Dra. Sandra Pérez-Linggi. Thank you to all of you for contributing to the splendor of Cal State Fullerton’s treasures and helping me tackle the hurdles that once kept me from dreaming. Gracias, o se, obrigada, thank you!





**Sama Wareh**  
**Graduate, Environmental Studies**

*Sama Wareh graduated in 2009 with an M.S. in Environmental Studies. She obtained her B.A. degree in Radio-TV-Film from CSUF as well. As part of her Master's Project, Sama completed a feature length documentary, Dwindling Drops in the Sand, where she investigated Syria's Water Crisis. The documentary has already won two awards in one film festival, and has been submitted into many other film festivals. Sama has worked as a field naturalist for three years where she teaches public schools throughout Orange County about different ecosystems, sustainability, Native American life, and Science. Sama is also an artist ([www.warehart.com](http://www.warehart.com)) and uses her artwork to raise money and awareness for different issues. Her hobbies include hiking, reading, exploring, and drinking coffee with friends and family.*

Graduates, Friends and Family, I am honored to stand before you today.

I didn't foresee it at the time but upon graduating with my Bachelors in Film here at Cal State Fullerton, I worked in a field that was so far away from my degree, yet so close to my final plan. I landed two jobs, one as a Field Naturalist to appease my passion for nature, and one as a Manager at Peets Coffee and Tea. These job experiences had nothing to do with film, yet would both cross paths at exactly the same week this year. Spending time out in the field taught me more about how little I actually knew about our natural world. In the meantime, working in a coffeehouse opened my eyes up to how much waste one single coffee drinker is capable of in one year. Imagine a daily customer using one cup each

day, sometimes asking for it doubled. That amounts to over 365 cups in the landfill each year, and that's just for one person and one habit. Teaching out in the field about the environment while working in retail felt like I was living in two separate worlds, one where I was in touch with the natural world and the other where I was in a pseudo-reality. Finally, as I watched district managers number crunch, keeping our stores under dangling carrots with unattainable materialistic goals, it somehow occurred to me that the world of retail could go on and on forever while concealing the reality of our natural world and thus distancing us from the other side of the spectrum. Here I was selling coffee, the second largest traded commodity, right under oil, without even realizing the effects that sun grown coffee has on our rainforests. As much fun as I was having mingling with regulars, I resigned from the retail world and decided to pursue a Masters degree in something completely new to me, Environmental Studies, and when I did, the shackles of retail that once rattled when I walked, were getting quieter, and then unlatched.

Diving into the world of Environmental Studies was like taking a dive back into the essence of humanity. Annie Dillard in her book, teaching a stone to talk, said it best when she said *It is difficult to undo our own damage, and to recall to our presence that which we have asked to leave.* While contemplating a Masters project to accomplish, I recalled a time in Syria the summer before when my uncle had said that the water was disappearing. Not knowing much about water, I decided it would still be worth it to investigate what was happening in Syria. I traveled across the world to investigate a water crisis that parallels our own troubles right here in Orange County, in Fullerton, and in our homes. Then again, in all good movies and books, the character usually travels a great distance only to find that the answer was in their own backyard. Like nature's ability to be flexible to change with the seasons, this program was flexible enough to allow me the medium which I work best in to investigate a problem, no, not coffee. Film. I set out on a journey to film and document Syria's water crisis. On my journey, I learned a great deal of things, not just about water but about the secret tango with fate we all live in. We take one step and fate takes another. OR. We make one move, and nature takes a step back, or forward. We rush to manufacture carelessly, and water rushes towards contamination. We have the words "me" and "I" tattooed to our backs, and like a tired servant, the earth breathes in its last toxic plume and then collapse. What should be considered gifts have been taken for granted and the fundamental resources that give life to us all are being destroyed at such staggering rates. I think its time we stop and redefine what "success" really is. Is success the diminishing of our resources by adding some bells and whistles to a handful of our population's lives, or, is success characterized by how long we can sustain a healthy life on planet earth? My trip to Syria not only produced a documentary but also produced a wake up call.

While I was saddened by the environmental plight, I was also inspired by the works of a few motivated stewards to help change their country and the support they garnered by fellow citizens.

As we move forward into the world and build our lives, let us move forward with an environmental conscious and build our lives with sustainable resources. May our environmental efforts be as contagious as the swine flu, and may we all learn how to take pictures and alas, leave no footprints.



## Sam H. Muhaidly

Undergraduate, History

*Sam H. Muhaidly is graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in History with the plans to pursue graduate work in modern European history. Sam graduated Summa Cum Laude and has been on the Dean's List each of his college semesters. He has been an active member on campus with involvement in The History Student Association, Phi Alpha Theta, Patrons of the Library, Phi Beta Delta, and Phi Kappa Phi. Sam's service also extends to the community including memberships with Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and the ALS Association. He is the recipient of the Warren Beck Outstanding History Student award and the CSUF Alumni Association's Outstanding Senior Award and is currently completing his single-subject teaching credential in social science.*

Good morning fellow graduates, faculty, family, and friends!

First let me say what an honor it is to be standing before you today and how grateful I am to be able to share my experiences at Cal State Fullerton with all of you. However, I must admit that when I first sat down to write this speech, my initial feelings of excitement were stifled when I realized that I was at a loss for an introduction. I knew I wanted to begin with some humor, so I asked my sister her opinion of my starting with a joke. She replied, "Don't do it, history is *NOT* funny." I retorted by asking her if she was aware of how the Roman Empire was divided when it fell? She looked at me quizzically and asked, "How?" I then informed her that "it was cut in half, by a pair, of *Caesars*." Needless to say, she still thinks history is not funny.

All joking, aside I would first and foremost like to offer my congratulations to the class of 2009 for successfully reaching an incredible life-goal. You have all worked extremely hard to attain this degree and through your determination and resolve you have achieved something truly great. In fact, by walking across this stage today, each of you accomplish something that fewer than 30% of the United States' three hundred and fifty million citizens have done, and for this, I offer my sincere congratulations on a job well done.

For me, as a history major at CSUF, when reflecting on my two years here as an undergraduate, what stands out in my mind are memories of my upper division classes and the incredible professors I met there. These individuals have been unwaveringly supportive of my educational needs and seem to truly value cultivating the academic knowledge and skills of us young scholars. Because of them, during my time here, each class I have taken has broadened my perspective, challenged my abilities, and shaped who I am today.

I believe that my fellow history majors will agree with me in saying that, thanks to the efforts of our professors, we have emerged from our undergraduate years more able, confident, and prepared for what lies ahead than ever thought possible.

Personally, I would like take a moment to thank Dr. Rostam for her guidance and support, Dr. Sargeant for pushing me to new limits and having confidence in my ability to succeed, and, on behalf of me and all the 2009 graduates, the entire CSUF history department faculty for refining our abilities, broadening our minds, and challenging us to do our best.

Yet, as each of us know, getting through these past four or more years has not only taken the guidance of our educators, but the support of our friends, family, and class mates. These individuals have been many things to us: A sounding wall for our ideas, an outlet to vent our frustrations, a support system for when we needed encouragement, and even much needed source of revenue. Quickly I would personally like to thank my mother, Suzanne, sister, Nadia, and girlfriend, Lauren, for their constant encouragement, my friends, for reminding me to have fun in life, and you, my classmates, who have made my time here richer and more fulfilling through our shared trials and experiences.

In conclusion, I would again, like to offer my congratulations to the class of 2009 and thanks, on behalf of all the graduates, to the people who have helped us achieve this incredible goal. For some of you, this is the end of the road, the last step in your formal education. For others, this merely marks the beginning of your journey into higher academics. Yet, no matter what path you find yourself on, I wish all the graduates the best of luck as you adventure out into the world of careers, family, education, and whatever else life has in store. And graduates, I leave you with this challenge, to never forget what you have learned here and to use your education to truly make a difference in the world.

Thank you again, and congratulations class of 2009!



**Teresa Lloro-Bidart**  
Graduate, Environmental Studies

*Teresa Lloro-Bidart graduated in 2009 with an M.S. in Environmental Studies. She obtained her B.S. degree in Biology from the University of Redlands in 1999 graduating with departmental honors and Summa cum laude. She will enter UCR's PhD program in Educational Leadership and Policy in the Fall of 2009 and has been given the Chancellor's Distinguished Fellowship Award to pursue her degree. Upon completion of her PhD, she hopes to teach at the college level or open an environmental charter elementary school in the inland valley. Teresa is an avid animal lover and is the advisor for a very active Roots and Shoots group where she currently teaches high school chemistry and Advanced Placement Environmental Science. Teresa's students attend environmental leadership conferences, participate in organic vegetable gardening, and have installed native plant gardens at their school. Her passions are animals, running, biking, reading, and spending time with her husband, family, and close friends.*

Good morning everyone and congratulations to all of the graduates. I would like to open by thanking two of the most important people in the world to me, my parents. Without you, I would not be here today and I am forever thankful for all of opportunities that you have given me. I would also like to thank Dr. Voek's for his amazing and engaging Cultural Ecology Seminar and Dr. Bock for being patient with me as I learned SPSS.

Almost exactly ten years ago today, I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree in Biology. At that time, I was committed to the idea of being a registered dietician, and had no idea that life would



take me on a path to be an advocate for the environment. I have been a passionate animal lover since I was a small child and was taught by my parents how to respect and appreciate all living things and the environment. As the world's population continues to soar, the importance of caring for the earth is becoming paramount. The role that we have as citizens of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century is to learn how to respect the environment while at the same time not make enormous economic sacrifices that would be harmful to billions of people in the world, especially those in developing nations who already suffer so profoundly. It is our responsibility to ensure that more organisms do not suffer the fate of the Tasmanian tiger and the passenger pigeon, going extinct at the hands of human activities. We have an obligation to minimize our destruction to the planet. We have a responsibility to assist developing countries in achieving economic stability in way that less damaging to the earth than the path we embarked on ourselves.

The job that I do every day, educating youth about the environment and engaging them in outdoor activities is one that I consider to be of extreme importance. Children learn by doing and by interacting with the world around them. If that learning involves being a responsible citizen who cares for the earth, then we have the power to create a citizenry in the future that will be able to enjoy the natural resources of our planet in a more sustainable way. In my years as an environmental educator I have witnessed the power of youth programs in empowering children to not only to care about the environment, but also to have the desire and skills to make positive changes. Our children need to be encouraged to study engineering and sciences so that they will be able to develop renewable technologies that will be affordable for the average citizen and decrease our negative impact on ecosystems. They need to be taught how to consume less and have compassion for the other living things with which we share the environment.

My vision for the future of our planet is a positive one because without a positive outlook we will not be able to accomplish all that needs be done. I believe that people will be more responsible if they know how to be and if being responsible is accessible. Most people I know would drive an alternative fuel vehicle if it were more affordable and most would have solar panels on the roof of their houses if they weren't prohibitively expensive. This is why we need our children to be stewards of the environment; they have the capacity to change the world if we give them the tools that they need to succeed. I leave you with a quote from one of my favorite environmentalists, Dr. Jane Goodall. One of my students who is a California youth leader for Roots and Shoots was lucky enough to meet Dr. Goodall at a youth summit in Washington DC in April...

"Thinking back over my life, it seems to me that there are different ways of looking out and trying to understand the world around us. There's a very clear scientific window. And it does enable us to understand an awful lot about what's out there. There's another window, it's the window through which the wise men, the holy men, the masters of the different and great religions look as they try to understand the meaning in the world. My own preference is the window of the mystic."