

**By: Artun Ereren  
B.A. in History**



Artun Ereren completed his Undergraduate degree in History with an emphasis on the Caucasus and Central Asia. He hopes to continue his academic career by the way of law school. However, even though Mr. Ereren is pursuing a J.D., he will be very much engaged with the current events in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Mr. Ereren hopes to fuse together the skills of a Historian and an Attorney to one day become Ambassador for the United States.

Good morning graduates, faculty and loved ones! Thank you for joining us this morning. I understand this thing called “graduation” doesn’t happen all too often! So how did I get here? No really, how did I get here??

Not too long ago I ran into Dr. Burgtorf after he had randomly emailed me. I was initially alarmed because the only conversation I’d had with the guy was about the doner kabob sandwiches I had catered for an event. He just never stops raving about how popular they are in Germany! Which now that I think of it, is definitely the reason why I’m standing before you all today. So here we are, from kebabs to commencement, I am incredibly honored to be representing the undergraduate class of 2014!

Before I started my History degree, I wasn’t exactly sure what to expect. If anything, the only thing I knew about History is what we were all taught in grade school, that History “repeats itself” and all Historians are BORING, you know the same stories told over and over again. All of that changed when I took my first History class; it was 20<sup>th</sup> century Africa taught by Dr. Nyaggah, may he rest in peace. I learned that history is not one dimensional and that for every piece of history written by the “victors,” there is a whole side to the story that just isn’t taught in your average high school history class.

It all starts with the one class that opens so many avenues in the semesters that follow. Next thing you know, a little sweet lady by the name of Dr. Gunther is assigning stacks of books taller than herself. And then you got Dr. Janssen, who is also a stand-up comedy legend in Germany (look at Janssen-“Are we going to hear any stand-up? No? Your just speaking? It’s German humour, I can’t tell the difference anyway”)

If you were to ask me, “**what was the most important thing you took away from your University experience,**” I would say it is finally getting some clarification to some of the misconceptions I used to have of History.

One that I want to clarify right away, is the popular notion that “History repeats itself.” I learned that the only thing that is “repeated” is the phrase itself. History is rather, one long story. Just like in nature, there are patterns in History that make it seem like events are repeated. When in

fact, the time, place, and people involved are unique in their own right. As time goes on, places change and people come and go. Just look around at where you are all standing today (but don't look up! There is a sweltering sun in our presence). In Fullerton, there were once, the Gabrielino Indians, then the Spanish Conquistadors, and then the Germans (who by the looks of this department, never left!). Whether you like it or not, each and every one of us are a part of Human History. The Historians, are the ones crazy enough to record our day-to-day stories, immortalizing each word and subject.

Which brings me to my second misconception, that all Historians are the same. There are those who make it their life's work to preserve the classics, and there are those who actively question the same old stories. What I learned is that History is about Allegiance and Resistance. The faith you place in centuries-old works, should not hinder you from engaging with those who want to update a narrative. However, without these two polarizing perspectives, there would be no dialogue, no motivation to learn more- which is the true essence of being a Historian. There was once a Dr. Jobbitt, who taught me, as a Historian you can be a revolutionary, activist, citizen of planet Earth, priest or pagan, anything you want to be- as long you preserve your passion. Cal State Fullerton is far from perfect (you all experienced that first hand with parking). But despite its' flaws, I am forever grateful for what this institution has provided. I've made life-long friends while learning life-long lessons. I've learned that through cooperation rather than competition, we can continue to build bridges in the past, present, and future. **To my fellow graduates**; Just because we are graduating today, doesn't mean our work as Historians ends here. No matter what line of work you pursue, always keep in mind there are stories that are yet to be told. Remember, the real stories are outside of these buildings. There are untold accounts within your community, family album, all around the world for that matter. We, as historians, have a moral obligation, to capture these stories and bring what he have, back to the very institution that gave us these sacred tools.

Before I conclude this speech, I want to thank my amazing family for all their support (Sizi cok seviyorum). **Dr. Granata** for her unyielding enthusiasm and guidance. My inspiring colleagues who've turned into friends and the campus maintenance staff, even though they might not be present, we owe them a great deal for providing us adequate learning conditions.

Thank You and once again, congratulations to the Class of 2014!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwoiwN5vyAg>

**Frank A. Ramos**  
**M.A. in Anthropology**



Frank Ramos began his Master of Arts in Anthropology career at Cal State Fullerton beginning in the Fall 2010. He has since enjoyed participating in the various activities and outreach programs on campus including the Student Veterans Association, Anthropology Students Association, and Lambda Alpha Honors Society just to name a few. He has also been involved in working with various aspects of campus life including the Office of Graduate Studies and the Student Health and Counseling Center. This fall Frank will begin attending the University of California, Riverside to earn his Ph.D. in Anthropology, as a Eugene V. Cota-Robles Fellow. He wishes to thank everyone at Cal State Fullerton for making his academic journey a very prosperous and memorable one; “I treasure each and every one of you.”

I would first like to thank everyone for being here and ask you all to take a moment to realize where you are- graduates, take a breath, enjoy it, look around, know that everyone here – friends, family, colleagues, professors, have come to recognize your efforts. Family and friends, take a moment and think about that special person who you are here to support. Enjoy it... for a just a moment. **\*Pause\*** “In my walks, every man I meet is my superior in some way, and in that I learn from him.” Over a century ago author Ralph Waldo Emerson made the basic claim that to this day has been enriched, debated, understood, and taught – anthropology. There are numerous definitions for the field; each has its own merits, truths, and reasoning. In essence it is the study of us, and the fundamental questions – Who are you? Where did you come from?

Where are you going? Please, I want to know. I want to learn.

Today, I have been asked to serve as the voice of the anthropology graduate students receiving their Master of Arts Degrees. Know I cannot justly speak for each of them or their experiences, but understand my goal is to share with you their thanks and appreciation. Graduates, I have been given the task today of briefly expressing our gratitude to those men and women that have helped us achieve our goals. It is only a moment. I beg of you to please continue spreading our thanks for as long as one can remember. For this moment however, permit me the opportunity to voice our deepest thanks.

To the undergraduate students continuing their journey into next year and beyond here at Cal State Fullerton. Be patient. Moreover be honest. Treat time as an ally, not an enemy. Time counts, and keeps counting. So, when your day comes about, it will be that much sweeter. And remember, nothing great ever came about with ease.

There are countless things I could say about the faculty in the Anthropology department and throughout campus. To those present and here in spirit, please accept that as the days go on,

you will hear individual thanks from us all. Know that we truly appreciate everything you have done for us. On behalf of all the students in cap and gown, allow me to say- we are better people because of your guidance and efforts. We treasure each and every one of you.

To the staff that have worked tirelessly, kept us motivated, and been there to offer support- you have our deepest thanks as well. Tannise Collymore, Debra Redsteer, and the rest of the department staff: none of us graduating today in the field of anthropology can ever describe how indebted we are to you, and can only say you have truly earned the designation *Mahatma*. Your care and acknowledgments mean as much, if not more, than any anthropology degree bestowed this morning.

Family and friends here today, especially those graduates in anthropology - You have watched us struggle, succeed, cry, laugh, and dream. You hold a special place in our hearts and minds this morning. Please add this moment to the countless, wonderful thoughts you have of those who invited you here today. We do this to honor you – mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister and so many others. We do this to create another unique, shining memory for us to build our great life story upon. It is something magical and wonderful.

Finally, to our graduates, all of them, a moment ago our family and friends reflected on some of the most intimate and striking memories – our first words, learning to read, heartbreaks, happiness, all-nighters, failures, and most of all successes. They know everything it has taken to get here, and how there is still much more for us to achieve. Know we are someone's inspiration, their subject, their love, their teacher, their student. To them, we are important. Never forget that. Even when the challenges seem too difficult or hopeless, they are there – reminding us that every day is a precious gift. As you move on from this ceremony, take today's memories and achievements as part of a unique adventure, a small step on an even bigger journey. Be brave. Be sincere. And know that if you can leave today with that in your heart and mind, yours is the world and everything that is in it. Peace be with you always and Congratulations.

**Gloria Lopez**  
**M.A. in History**



Gloria Lopez earned her Master of Arts degree in History. She completed her M.A. thesis this Spring titled, “(Re)contextualizing the Berlin Wall: Tracing the Historical Memory of the Cold War in Los Angeles.” While at California State University, Fullerton she served as the H&SS Inter-Club Council representative for the Theta-Pi Chapter Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society and worked as a graduate assistant in the Office of Academic Programs. Lopez was awarded the Art Hansen Fellowship in Oral & Public History by the CSUF History Department last spring and named a Sally Casanova California Pre-Doctoral Scholar by the CSU Chancellor’s Office in July of 2013. In addition, she was awarded a Graduate Equity Fellowship and two Graduate Student Research Fund scholarships by the Office of Graduate Studies to present her research findings at the Oral History Association’s Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City, OK and the Southwest Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Tempe/Phoenix, AZ respectively during the 2013/2014 academic year. Lopez came to Cal State Fullerton after graduating summa cum laude from California State University, Dominguez Hills, with a B.A. in history and a minor in Political Science in December 2011.

Good morning, my dear friends, and colleagues! To everyone here today, thank you for joining us on such a special occasion to celebrate the achievements of all who sit before you. It is an honor to be asked to give the graduate student commencement address representing the Master of Arts degree candidates today and I hope to do you all proud.

I’d like to start by addressing the question of: What is graduate school really like? There are three basic differences between the college and graduate school experience. First of all, graduate school is NOT an extension of college. In college we are consumers of knowledge, in graduate school we are expected to produce knowledge...but how can we do that if we are all just confused young grasshoppers? Well, we are trained to do it and entrusted with such responsibility. Second, classes sometimes have as little as six students so there is much more interaction with our faculty. Third, we have much more independence in what we do and when we do it. Given that we all make a personal choice to pursue a graduate degree, this sounds like an ideal situation and easy enough, right? Well, no.

Let me share a story with you that I believe is symbolic of our relationship as graduate students to our faculty and best embodies the graduate student experience at Cal State Fullerton. When Dr. Burgtorf, emailed me, asking me to meet him in his office a couple of months ago, I immediately wondered, “Oh oh, what did I do?” After panicking for a second, I replied and agreed to meet with him later that night. As I nervously found my way up the 8<sup>th</sup> floor of this building, walked into his office, and greeted him, I wondered what he would say. He proceeded to tell me, “You are here because I would like to know if you plan to be at graduation as I would

like to ask you to be one of the commencement speakers.” All I could say was, “I’d be honored sir, thank you.” But why was I so nervous going into his office?

As graduate students, we all need to complete one of three projects to graduate, and in my case, this meant a thesis. I knew going into his office that I had not been working on it as diligently as I should have so I expected him to be upset and point out that he was most displeased with my apparent lack of progress. I was nervous, I knew I had made a mistake and he would know it. And of course, he knew it (he is all knowing in our department after all). But, to my surprise, he was not upset; instead he had plenty of praise to offer based on my recent accomplishments. He had invited me into his office to provide me the incentive that I needed to move forward and get done. He had plenty of motivation to offer as he usually does for his students.

As grad students we are young apprentices in our field and our success, in my opinion, is 50% dependent on us and 50% dependent on our faculty, friends, and family. Graduate school is outright difficult and painful. It is filled with highs and lows. It is an odd and isolating experience at times. Every one of my fellow grad students can attest to the fact that we have all at one time or another sat together, or alone, and considered leaving grad school because we are all at some point overwhelmed by the fear of failing. Grad school is a scary place. There is a ton of uncertainty surrounding our future and we don’t know what to do with it.

In this environment our professors are much more than just the person that stands in front of the classroom and lectures. They are our mentors and as mentors, their impact in our lives extends far outside the classroom. A mentor is someone who guides you, instructs you, encourages you, and corrects you when you make a mistake. A mentor is a noble friend. Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn.” Involving us is what they do best.

Beyond the classroom they see us struggle and remind us that they have been there themselves. They then proceed to teach us the tips and tricks that got them through it. They provide endless support and push us forward. They become our friends and they are just like the friends we have growing up, they are brutally honest when we need them to be, and they remind us to believe in ourselves when we are feeling down. Given everything I’ve told you about the stress, the constant fear of failure, and the sacrifices of being a graduate student you must think we are all crazy for being here and the reality is that we are all a little insane.

So why is it that with all of this we all study history? The answer is simple: because it’s passion deeply rooted in our hearts. None of us can fathom a world where we are doing something different. We love the thrill of understanding the culture, the politics, and the experiences of a society that has come and gone with time. We all have our own distinct geographic interests; some of us study the history of Europe and Latin America, while others study the history of Asia, Africa, or the United States. A couple of my colleagues study the history of the Ancient World and the Medieval World that existed thousands of years ago, something that I cannot always wrap my head around. Others find their niche in the study of the World Wars. But rest assured that we do more than study dates. Most of us can’t remember specific dates to save our lives past an exam, that’s what we all have the Internet for. We read dozens of books a semester and write a couple hundred pages during our academic careers at Cal State Fullerton because they provide us a real grasp of how the world works. I realize that might seem like a rather bold claim but its true. Any of my fellow graduate students can tell you history gives us the tools to be informed citizens, critical thinkers, and downright aware of our surroundings.

As historians we are trained to explain and interpret events and ideas, we can summarize information better than most. We are great at observing and understanding patterns and can provide you with a variety of solutions for just about any problem. Much to our despair, we can also evaluate theories and evidence and because of all of this we are incredibly successful at presenting information both in writing and in person. These are all practical and transferable skills that help us thrive in our chosen careers. Some of us aspire to pursue careers in education and research, while others seek out careers at museums and historical societies, or at the local and federal government level. We are even able to go into careers in business. We can go anywhere! Never underestimate the ability of a historian to take over the world.

We owe all of this to our wonderful professors. As graduate students we don't get the privilege to meet and work closely with the entire faculty but let me tell you a little bit about the ones who have been picking on me the past two years. First, there is Dr. Sargeant. She is just downright awesome! She has thought me everything I need to know to go forward and pursue my Ph.D. in History at Indiana University this fall. She has given me the room to grow and make mistakes. And guess what, she, like all great mentors, has threatened to hit me upside the head with the Chicago Manual of Style when I've needed it (and let me tell you that would not be fun because that's a 1,000 page hardcover book). As her mentee, I know my place in her life and that is, to be a Minion! Yes, a minion! But hey that makes her Gru; All that to say, she has truly become one of my best friends and most valued ally on this campus. Then there was Dr. McLain. He is one of the most compassionate and honest people I've met. He is down to earth, and he reminds us to laugh at ourselves. Best of all, when grad school just sucks and we complain about it, he reminds us that no one ever said it would be easy but reassures us that it will be ok. Alongside these two is Dr. Granata. She has been my advisor for two years and shared with me the thrill of going to my first professional conference. She has entrusted me with confidence and helped me mature as a scholar. She never let me get away with mediocre work, which has been frustrating at times but hey, I am nothing but thankful because she has constantly reminded me to keep working hard! Finally, there is Dr. Burgtorf, the Chair and the Mastermind of our department. Like I told you earlier, he scares me at time, but he has been a wonderful mentor. He never sugar coats the truth about graduate school and he expects us to give 110% all of the time. With all that he has been a friend and my safety net when others were determined to make my life difficult.

The fact that these four people have been most special to me is a reminder that every one of the faculty members is special to at least one of my fellow graduate students. We could not survive this experience without them and they deserve our gratitude. So, to all of my fellow graduates, when you leave here today remember that you have all been trained by some of the best and most compassionate professors there are. They have trained us all to be critical historians, mentors to others, and confident leaders. It is now our time to go out and be the leaders our society needs us to be. Keep working hard and don't settle for anything but the best. Take chances, continue to be passionate, and follow your heart. As my 11<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, still a dear friend and a mentor told me as I graduated high school years ago, "the world is your oyster, go conquer it!" I put before you the same challenge. Go forth and conquer, the world is yours for the taking.

Congratulations!  
Thank you all.

**By: Jaime Munoz Velazquez**  
**B.A. in Psychology**



My name is Jaime A. Muñoz Velázquez and I completed my undergraduate degree in Psychology at California State University, Fullerton in May of 2014. I will be the first in my family to graduate from college. I have been involved in the Minority Access to Research Careers Program for the past two years and conducted research with Professor Segal in the Twin Studies Center in Fullerton. My research interests center on investigating individual differences in our development and behaviors created by the interaction between genetic inheritance and environmental factors such as low socioeconomic status. In the future, I plan to share my passion for learning and psychology research to encourage at-risk youth to pursue a higher education. I will pursue a doctoral degree at the University of Michigan and eventually conduct research and teach at a four year university.

Good morning everyone and thank you for being here.

The typical time to obtain a Bachelor's degree is about 4 years unless you are me, then it takes you 15. You may ask yourself why? The answer is because where I grew up, an education was a luxury and not a priority. For the last 15 years I have challenged my own limiting beliefs that told me that it was a luxury for a select few. Those beliefs stopped me from wanting something different, something better for myself.

When life told me "NO!" I pushed through the hardships. The challenges of being the first in family to acculturate to a new country, the first to learn English, the first to go to high school, the first to graduate from high school. Today, I am the first in my family to graduate from a university. And I am also the first to go into a Ph.D. program this Fall 2014. It was my desire for something more, to change my circumstances that motivated me to persevere. Today, I celebrate this huge milestone in my life with you. It wasn't easy, but what helped me through it was the belief my teachers and professors had in me. They said I had potential, but I didn't know what 'potential' meant. I always enjoyed learning, growing, and challenging myself to be better. When they told me I had potential, I thought, "Potential? OK.

That's great and all, but what does that mean?"

It took me a long time to figure out that potential describes the fuel you use to go from where you are to where you want to be. If we guide this fuel with passion and focus, any destination is possible! The continual reminder of my potential prompted me to stop questioning it and to start believing it. The more I believed it, the more I began to recognize it in myself and in others. So with this continual reminder, I realized that my teachers were simply mirrors of my own reflected potential. However, I also recognized that the potential they spoke of was in them, in me and in everyone here today. We all have the potential to learn, to grow, to change, to become better, and to be the difference we want to see in our world!

Everyone in this audience has a story to tell, for us here today, a chapter comes to a close and a new one begins. A new chapter, a new opportunity for adventure, and possibility, however



let us not forget that the education we have received is a gift we give ourselves. A gift that no one is going to give you unless you want it. And no one can take it away from you once you have it, but it is a gift, not a luxury that we can share. I stand before you with great gratitude for the opportunities my education has given me, and I urge my fellow classmates to join me in expressing this gratitude for the opportunity we have been given.

We all made some type of sacrifice on our journey to today, but let us not forget the unconditional support of our families and the faculty here at California State University, Fullerton who truly care about our success. I, in particular, would like to acknowledge my research program MARC for their financial support, and exceptional research training; my research mentor Dr. Nancy L. Segal for her support and guidance these past two years. I want to thank my family for their support as well. Finally, I invite the class of 2014- fellow classmates to tap into their potential, today and always in order to change the world!  
Thank you!

**Jamal A. Batts**  
**M.A. in American Studies**



Good morning to the members of the faculty, parents, family, and friends. Today I feel like a winner. Can you feel it? Can you feel it? Can you feel it? I hope you can all feel it because we graduates have made it to this occasion due to all of your sacrifices of time, energy, and occasionally money. I think I speak for the American Studies Graduate Class of 2014 when I say if it wasn't for those times we spent together outside of class, sharing jokes and splitting checks, we might not have made it. However, our collective genius and generosity have brought us to this moment and I'm profoundly lucky to know you all. And I'd be remiss, if I didn't give a special shoutout to my crew, "Stingy Ponytail": Courtney, Danielle, and Tatiana, for all of the study sessions, which often turned into venting sessions, we helped each other through. See you here next year. And to my best friend Candyce Bruce, who I met in a classroom in Virginia Beach, VA, 15 years ago, thank you for being here today, for picking me up off the floor in my time of need, for believing in me. Thank you all.

Of course, the victory we've achieved today wouldn't have been possible without our department's remarkable faculty. I personally have to say thank you to Professor Steiner for welcoming me to the department with open arms. To Professor Ball for making me challenge myself. To Professor Steinle for encouraging me to always take risks. To Professor Lane for reminding me to never doubt my abilities. To Professor Zenderland for sharing your deep reserves of knowledge. To Professor Woo for showing me that critique and kindness can exist in the same space. To Professor Snyder for your unyielding support. And to Professor Golub, for making me read each and every single last word of *Godzilla on My Mind: Fifty Years of the King of Monsters*, I'll never forget it. Today, we graduates have reached a triumphant milestone in our lives. We're graduating from a Department that has greatly expanded our capacity for critical analysis. The ability to see the workings of what scholar bell hooks calls "imperialist

white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" in our lives and wherever we choose to place ourselves. Extending our abilities for incisive, and hopefully useful, critique in our professors' classes may for some of you lead to fame and fortune. But for the rest of us, most of us, I say today we are winning because we have made an investment in bettering our current world, by teaching its residents how we of varying races, classes, regions, and sexual orientations arrived in our current positions, in the seats we fill today. The research that allows for this process is my joy and I hope it brings my fellow graduates happiness as well. Maybe the struggle that is often our bank accounts is not always in vein.

However, my biggest thanks goes to those who did not make it here today. It should be mentioned that many of our triumphs come in the wake of great losses. My mother, Kathryn Faye Johnson-Batts, died of colon cancer at the age of 53 during my sophomore year in college. And I could only enter graduate school after I finished caring for my father, James A. Batts, after his unfortunate death. Today, I also want to recognize those of us who are here in spite of witnessing or experiencing loss. I hope you can find the will to commend yourself for having the resilience to come back to class and look into the faces of those who could not find the time to care. I hope you can find a moment without guilt for thriving in your loved ones' absence. I hope you can remember that you deserve every happiness this moment can afford, even though the photos you take here may never develop those you wish they would.

To those here and not here who have made our journeys possible or worthwhile, thank you. To my fellow graduates, congratulations. To my fellow graduate students, may life bring you every tenure track faculty position or wealthy significant other your heart desires. Congrats guys. We made it.

**Lisa Antonucci**  
**M.A. in Liberal Studies**



I began my college career right out of high school and unfortunately, did not finish. In 2006, I went back to school to continue my college education as a sophomore and was accepted to California State University, Fullerton in 2009. At that time, my two girls were young and I was working as an Instructional Assistant in Special Education (where I am currently employed). I recently graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies and was a member of the Liberal Studies Honor Society. I plan to enter the multi-subject credential program this fall through California State University, Fullerton's CalStateTeach. My ultimate goal is to become as phenomenal a teacher as the professors I've had at CSUF!

Good Morning everyone! I'm honored to be here speaking to you on this very important day in our lives. I had written down some notes about what I was going to say a little over a month ago, but decided to revise it because much to my surprise, I began to experience strong sentimental feelings about graduating. I had been dreaming about this day since I'd gone back to school so long ago and expected to feel nothing but pure elation! However, instead I began to feel melancholy about leaving Cal State Fullerton, our Liberal Studies Professors, and all of the exceptional people I'd met over the years.

During the last month, as I walked to my car after class, I tried to pay special attention to the sights, sounds, and smells on campus, and even had my first **and only** beer in the cantina before class!

I represent the population of students known as the "returners"- Those of us that after being away from school for a number of years, decide to go back and finish our degrees. You know us...we're the ones that are ALWAYS "over- participating" in class discussions because the fear of looking foolish has gone away with our youth.

If you're like me, you have a family, a job, and a LOT of responsibilities! When my fellow co-workers are talking about the fun, relaxing, plans they have for the weekend, all I can think of is how I'm going to be able to finish the mountain of laundry between writing papers, try to figure out how the heck to do my math homework, read assigned novels, study for tests, and go to the store to buy a poster board for my daughter who *just* informed me that she needs it for a project that's due Monday.

I've only been able to take two classes a semester and have had to build my school schedule around work, picking my kids up from school, and trying to make as many of their open houses, back to school nights, and band performances as I could. This became much more challenging as the number of classes I had left to take began to dwindle. Unfortunately, not only have I had to make many sacrifices throughout these busy years; but my family has too.

When well- intentioned people would say, you're STILL in school?? When do you finish? I would explain that I can only take two classes a semester and that my two goals are that

I want to be a Senior **BEFORE** I'm a senior citizen and I would like to be able to go up and receive my diploma **WITHOUT** a walker! Thankfully I've made both of these goals! In addition to the everyday struggles and sacrifices, my mom, who is also my best friend, battled cancer last year, (thank God she's in remission!), and did I mention I have **TWO** teenage girls??!!

I would now like to take this opportunity to apologize to pretty much everyone in my life for all of the complaining I've done about my ultimate nemesis, **MATH**. Thank you to my wonderfully, supportive math teacher here on campus for the last two semesters, (who's here right now), and a special thanks to my infinitely patient and supportive "math teacher" at home for the last 8 years, my husband, Damon.

My **sincere** thanks to the Liberal Studies professors for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with all of you on this special occasion. I know my fellow graduates would agree that each one of you has touched our lives in a deeply, profound way. Thank you for always being available to us for support and advice. Thank you for encouraging us to go deeper, push ourselves to achieve what we're truly capable of, and giving us the courage to succeed. Also, I know that those of us who had the **excellent** fortune to have Dr. Gonzalez for 305 will forever be aware of which masks we're wearing and will always strive to look beneath the ones that others have on.

To my fellow graduates, whether it took us 3 years or 30 years to achieve our goal, we did it, and we should **ALL** be extremely proud of ourselves! I will truly miss my Liberal Studies family.

Congratulations to **all** of you class of 2014!!! May God bless you!!!

**Renee Ann Torres**  
**B.A. in American Studies & Minor in Communications**



Renee Ann Torres graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in American Studies with a minor in Communications and an emphasis in Broadcast Journalism. She has been on the Dean's List for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences since freshman year. During her undergraduate career, she served as an Orientation Leader and Student Coordinator for Orientation Programs assisting freshmen and transfer students transition to CSUF. She also served a year on the Student Organizations Accessing Resources Communications Interclub Council (SOAR-CICC). Additionally, Renee worked on campus as an Information Specialist in the New Students and Parent Programs office for two years. For her senior honors project titled, "Bulletproof Betty: Sexism on the Frontlines with Women War Correspondents from the 1960s to Present," she analyzed the various issues female war correspondents faced in a male dominated field between the Vietnam War and the War on Terror. Renee will be attending Washington State University for a Master's degree in American Studies with a tuition waiver and stipend teaching assistantship. She plans on pursuing a doctorate and becoming a professor.

Good Morning everyone! I am honored to be standing in front of you all as the undergraduate representative.

All of us found our way to American Studies. It grabbed our attention and fueled our fascination. For me, it was freshman year in Dr. Erica Ball's "Introduction to American Studies" course. I had finally found something that I was not only good at but was also excited to study. I quickly switched from being a journalism major to American Studies and I haven't looked back since.

For the most part, I believe, we proudly tell people that we are an American Studies major. This announcement is generally followed by a puzzled look and the question, "What is that?" And honestly, I think we can all say that American Studies is a combination of a bunch of different things while looking at American Culture - or as I say similar to American History, but better. American Studies is a field that challenges its scholars to think outside of narrowly defined fields of study. We have studied American popular culture similar to the way film noir illustrates post World War II anxieties, the intersectionality of race, class and gender, cultural radicals like the Bohemians and Beats, and what Americans believe them to be at their core, which, as it turns out is a difficult question to answer.

The follow up question after we've established some sort of definition is "What are you going to do with that?" the dreaded question of every graduating college student. And I'm not

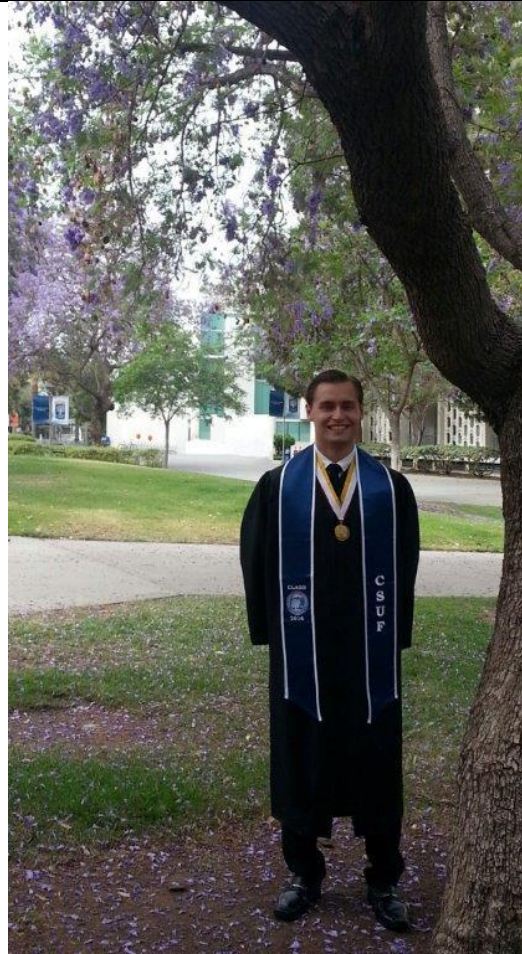
going to lie; it is a great question. I believe the answer is anything. I have learned during my four years as an American Studies major that you will not find a more passionate, enthusiastic, and intellectually curious group of people anywhere else. These traits and the critical thinking, writing, and knowledge of American culture will propel us into endless possibilities.

I would like to thank the American Studies faculty. They have shown us how to be true scholars and have fun at the same time. My friends in other majors are astonished when I tell them about my amazing professors who genuinely care about their students and are constantly adding new scholarship to the ever expanding field. I think it's safe to say that each of the students here today have grown academically and personally thanks to their hard work and kindness. I personally would like to thank Dr. John Ibson for helping me realize I could be a scholar and for his encouragement this past year.

And most of all, I would like to thank the friends and family that have supported us throughout our college careers. It is you that we have leaned on during the hard times and it is you that we celebrate our achievements with. I would like to thank my parents for their endless support and for bearing with me as I ranted about feminism in American, media stereotypes, and for not thinking I was crazy when I told them I wanted to go to graduate school and become a professor. And thank you to my boyfriend, Calen, who will shortly astound you with his graduation speech. I knew he was a keeper when he could keep up with my love of talking about school and world events.

In closing, I would like to leave you with a quote from my hero, J. K. Rowling, a quote that I think we should remember as we begin our new journeys, "It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all - in which case, you fail by default." Congratulations graduates, strive for your dreams and take chances. Life is pretty wonderful after all.

**By: Trevor Allred**  
**B.A. in English**



I am returning for my M.A. in English this Fall after a trip to Italy and France this summer. I am considering careers in writing, teaching, and diplomacy. Rachmaninoff is my favorite classical composer.

(“What do you want to tell them?”)

You Made It

My friends,

Today is well deserved. And I hope your hearts are as open as possible to this day, for it signifies much. I am honored to represent you all in speech, and I will try to match your best. I hope this for all present and non-present.

Feel me when I say that we deserve this day. We deserve every celebration, congratulation, every hug and tear, every pat on the back and hand shake, every “good job”, “well done”, and “you made it” this occasion has to offer. Today is a day that prompts celebration and reflection.

My friends, we made it. And I can’t help but stop, on day such as this, when for a moment the rush of normal things is somehow at a standstill, and think on that phrase: “you made it”.

At first glance the phrase contains a simple understanding: a congratulations. That we are here. That our presence here is enough to signify something great. That we have arrived somewhere, a



place where friends and family perhaps have been waiting for us, and no doubt cheering for us. We are welcomed. And once more, we deserve this. But here, also, in between the greetings and wishes, in the quiet, brief stillness between the smiles and footsteps, “you made it” holds something else for us. Let this phrase stand also as a reminder. Respond to its invitation, for the next step then is asking, “What have we made?”

We can also understand “we made it” as a claim of creation, that we have taken part in the act of making something. As we receive this statement, we are also receiving the fullness of a work completed. The stress and pride from works well finished, success and loneliness, fear and rest through the years are brought to us and condensed into these moments, into the experience of having created something good, something worthwhile, and it is for us, now, to remember the centre of it all; we are the ones responsible for all of it.

It has been us the entire time. We are the ones who sought to know, who planned and worked at this, who faced rush and fall, and we are responsible for all of it. The weight of responsibility is ours always, and today, we have a moment to breathe in and embrace what we have made, to be proud of what we have completed. This is each our own celebration, for no one could have carried our responsibility in our place, and it is also a time to celebrate each other, to understand that we each have carried and made something up until this point, to share in the mutual success between us. Today, more obviously than ever, we look at each other and know that we have made it.

And it is beautiful.

And let be beautiful, but continue the practice of creation, that skill we have so grown to know so well, and make this the smallest thing you do.

My friends, congratulations. You made it.

Thank you.