



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SPRING 2016

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

Ruth Platt

*B.A. in Women and Gender
Studies*

Carlos Ibarra

B.A. in Sociology

Amanda Arroyo

*B.A. in History and
Anthropology*

Katlin Katsuki

B.A. in Liberal Studies

Raul Gomez

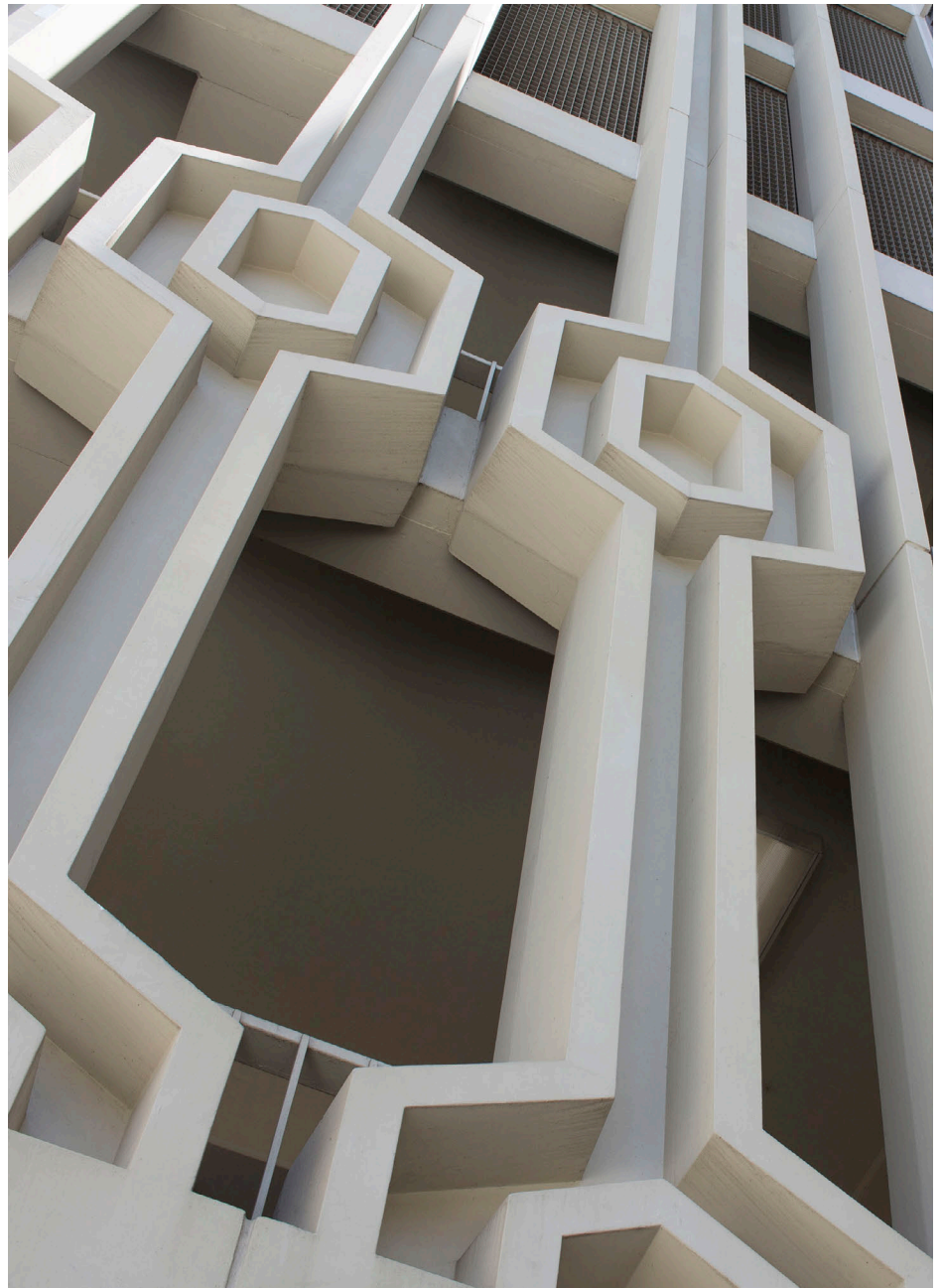
M.A. in Spanish

Natasha Lynn Bonner

*B.A. in Geography and
Ethnic Studies*

Yamillet Brizuela

*B.A. in Communicative
Disorders and American Studies*





RUTH PLATT *B.A. in Women and Gender Studies*

Ruth Mitchell-Platt earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Women and Gender Studies with a concentration on transgender identities. Ruth is an adult re-entry student and a mother of three children, who influenced her to return to school after 13 years as a stay-at-home mom. She is a member of Alpha Sigma Lambda and the Women and Gender Studies Student Association. Ruth volunteers with several organizations in the LGBTQ community, including The Center OC, Rock n Roll Camp for Girls OC, and the PFLAG Speaker's Bureau of Long Beach and Orange County. She plans on returning to school when her children are a bit older for a graduate degree in law or social work. In the meantime, Ruth looks forward to finding the perfect job saving the world, of course!

Good Morning!

I am so proud to be a part of the Women and Gender Studies program. Many of you know that I'm not only a transfer student, but also an adult re-entry student and a stay-home-mom to three kids who, by the way, are pretty amazing! These aspects of my identity greatly affected my experience at Fullerton.

Before I transferred here, I attended Orange Coast College which is only a mile from my home. I felt I was part of a close community, a family even. Then I came to Fullerton. This campus is huge! I couldn't find anything. The crowd in the Humanities quad looks like Disneyland's Main Street at closing. Everyone was young and self-assured, thin and beautiful! Sorority girls tabling on the Titan Walk looked right past me, like I didn't exist. Between classes I ate lunch alone in a corner of the TSU and tried to disappear. It was hot, my bus stop was all the way across campus, and I was completely and totally miserable. My social anxiety skyrocketed. I couldn't do this. I wanted to just go home.

Then I had my first advising appointment with Dr. Bredin and I found the Women and Gender studies lounge. I remember walking in and having students greet me with a smile and look of curiosity. After meeting with Dr. Bredin, she introduced me to other professors in excitement as a unicorn-a student who came in as a major. I felt welcome and excited for the first time at this school, and I would spend the next two years doing my best to make the lounge my home. In fact, I'm sure my butt print will live on forever on the couches. Well, one of them, at least. Paige's butt print is on the other.

Something I could always rely on while spending time in the lounge was that I never got any work done in there. Not a damn thing. There is always an inter-

esting conversation going on in the lounge. Whether it was complaining about the 70 pages of Judith Butler that was assigned the day before, or discussing the next political action we were going to take on campus, or debating over body image, reproductive rights, or any number of other subjects we covered in class, there is never a chance of actually getting any homework done in there, is there? But we've all made friends in the lounge and in our classes, and many of them will be lifelong relationships.

Students in Women and Gender Studies want to learn about people, understand different people, find out who we are and how we fit into the world around us. In our classes, we get to delve deeper into personal issues and apply them to the world around us. Every first day of the semester I would tell myself, "This time I'm not going to talk about my kids. This time I'm not going to talk about historical events I remember that happened before my classmates were born. This time I'm not going to talk about my personal experiences with gender and sexuality." But of course, at some point in every class all of these things came out. Pun totally intended!

Life experience matters in Women and Gender Studies classes. Actually, a lot of times life experiences shape Women and Gender Studies classes. Life experiences, how we learn from them, make them better, and change the world through our understanding of them, are what makes up the study of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, and all the other intersections of our being. I think this is why I loved this major so much, because I got to blab about myself and people would say, "Hmm, interesting! Tell me more!"

These personal lived experiences were just the beginning. From there, we learned something unique. We learned something that most other departments don't learn. We learn skills and knowledge that can be taken and applied to any field, any job, any career, as well as our own lives, past, present, and future. We learn about people, all kinds of people. We learn how to make change, within and without ourselves. We learn that the F word isn't something to be ashamed of. I am a feminist and proud to be one. This program didn't make me into a feminist, it just taught me that it's ok to be a feminist. It is something I already was, but not something I openly identified with. I am betting that most every student here today is leaving with at least one identity they didn't claim when they started here. Feminist. Activist. Queer. Advocate. Scholar.

Whatever identity you leave here with, you can use it to make changes in whatever you do next. Big or small, the changes you make will gradually seep

into the lives of others and push the world in the direction of tolerance. Not just tolerance, but acceptance, support, and love for each other in all our differences. In all of our different identities.

And so this brings us to The Question. You know the question. We've all heard it. Women and Gender Studies? You can major in that? This is a joke, right? What can you even do with that degree? What kind of job can you get? What good can you do?

I ask you, what can't we do? We can change the world. We can apply a feminist lens, a queer lens, an intersectional lens to any job in the world. Sure, we can go on to be social workers, teachers, lawyers, activists, these are a given and all are important work. But we can also go on to excel in business, become doctors, scientists, engineers. Even, dare I say it? Politicians. Our unique perspective on gender, sexuality, globalization, and politics is invaluable to these positions.

With this degree, we can queer the world, right? We can change the way things are done, break away from the status quo and push for inclusive and effective change in policy and public opinion. Or we can change how a single person or group of people are treated in a specific setting. Big or small, no matter what we plan on doing with this degree, all of us have the knowledge and the ability to queer whatever space we end up in and make that space more accepting, more aware, and more productive with our unique perspective on how people move and exist in the world around us and how the existing legal and social systems affect those people and ourselves.

Now, I'm not gonna lecture you on activism...well, maybe just a little bit. Activism doesn't just mean protests, demonstrations, or holding a sign on a street corner. Activism can be done quietly in the home as much as it can be done loudly in public. Some of us here have the ability and drive to push activism further. We all know enough to push for social change, even if it doesn't look like traditional activism. The shame would be if we left here and did nothing with all we've learned.

So I am asking you today to leave here with pride in your identity, pride in your education, your viewpoints, and your drive to better the world around you. I mean, that's why we all chose this major, right?

In closing, I'd like to channel Dr. Bredin when I say, "The world is on fire! Go fix it!"



CARLOS IBARRA *B. A. in Sociology*

Carlos Ibarra graduated with a Bachelor's of Arts in Sociology with a concentration in Deviance and Crime as well as a Bachelor's of Arts in Criminal Justice. He was nominated to deliver a speech at the commencement processions by Dr. Eileen Walsh after engaging in critical racial discussions in a few of her courses. Carlos is an interdisciplinary scholar who seeks to bring together law, politics, education, and sociology to better inform the furtherance of social justice and equity in American society. In his time at CSUF, Carlos competed at the American Moot Court Association national competition. He placed in the top 32 competitors of the hundreds that competed nationwide, received 6th place as top orator, and 7th place in the legal brief writing competition. Additionally, Carlos has served as a researcher and lead program elevator at the Center for Research on Educational Access and Leadership (C-REAL) which is under the College of Education. His

Good morning, graduating class of 2016!

So far this year, 40% of the bee population has died in California and Donald Trump is the legitimate presumptive presidential candidate. Apparently, anything is possible in 2016 which also means that everything is possible. That is why this is such an exciting time to graduate.

I am honored to speak to you all today of my experiences and my growth as a student of Sociology at CSUF. I came to Cal State Fullerton fresh out of high school. I am a first-generation college student, a student of color, and a queer student. Needless to say, every voice that could have said no to me has said no to me. And yet, here I am graduating the first in my family, sticking it to The Man because my degree is a testimony to the spirit of resistance we often discuss in our discipline. I am also the son of a hard working immigrant family. Never could I have hoped for a better experience than what I've been granted at our institution.

Throughout my time here, I have witnessed the impact of our transformative faculty on not only my identity but on all of yours as well. My favorite memories are of the intense and inspiring conversations we engaged in. Whether it was identity development in Dr. Thacker Thomas's Deviant Behavior, or the critical racial discussions in Dr. Walsh's Whiteness course, and of course very personal for me, learning about the institutional inequalities in education for People of Color that Dr. Malagon outlined in her Sociology Of Education course. In these classes, I saw the brightest minds of my generation find their voices and speak. And in the process, I found my voice and I will never be silenced.

work at C-REAL was accepted for presentation at the NASPA 2016 national conference in Indianapolis, IN. He presented at the conference in March and educated student affairs professionals of the impact and challenges of peer mentoring programs at institutions of higher education. Upon graduating from Cal State Fullerton, Carlos intends to pursue a doctorate in Sociology after enjoying a year off from school. He would like his future work to reflect the principles of equality and justice he was fortunate to obtain while at CSUF.

I entered this institution having internalized the labels of minority and of marginalized oppression. And through my education, today I will leave Cal State Fullerton a fully-realized scholar of color and continue to have the critical conversations I was able to share with all of you in our classes. Thank you for what you contributed to my education.

As sociologists, my hope is that we continue onward to awaken a generation in need of our voices. We have a responsibility to speak to those who are lost and uncertain. We must provide subsequent generations with a reminder of our values, of what we may accomplish when we collaborate, and of the possibilities we can cultivate if we allow ourselves the vision to do so.

I would like to end by asking the graduating class of 2016 a question. This question was first asked by a very beautiful, very Black drag queen. That question is: If you can't love yourself, how in the hell are you going to love somebody else? Can I get an AMEN?

PLEASE VOTE. And thank you for all of your hard work and effort.

Congrats, Titans! Look at what we did!



AMANDA ARROYO *B. A. in History and Anthropology*

Amanda Arroyo was born on March 25, 1994. Throughout high school she was active by participating on the cheer squad, National Honor Society, and by holding positions in the Associated Student Body. Starting her journey at Cal State Fullerton in the fall of 2012, Amanda remained active by joining the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and Order of Omega. She also joined the Sigma Kappa sorority on campus and held two positions: Panhellenic Delegate and her chapter's first Vice President of Programming. Amanda graduated in May of 2016 with two BA's in History and Anthropology.

First I would like say that if you are sitting here today you have either worked hard or supported someone who worked so hard to get to this moment today, so thank you to each and every one of you. I would also like to thank the entire history department for all their dedication to us students, and for allowing me the honor of speaking to you all today.

When I was about 8 years old, I was diagnosed with anxiety. As a happy-go-lucky child, I suddenly found myself in a world that I feared, but I had no idea why. I lost so many opportunities, but the one that is probably the worst was missing out on school because I was too afraid to go. It took me years to master them, but here I am today, standing before you; something I would have ran away from 10 years ago.

From my experiences and missed opportunities, I realized that education was important to me, so much so that I knew I wanted to go to college, and that I wanted to go as far as I could go: earning a Master's and then a PhD. I was so determined and motivated that I never had any real breaks. I would take summer classes and winter classes, sometimes more than one. Even when I was out of the country, visiting my now husband in Mexico, I would still be taking classes. It is because of this that I stand here today with not just one degree, but two.

History is a passion of mine, because it teaches you not only where we came from, but valuable skills that are essential for any job. Critical thinking, reading, writing, communication skills, and the ability to analyze situations are all skills we have to perform in daily life. While here I found my passion for anthropology. My first interaction with an "anthropologist" was watching the show Bones,

when I was still in middle school. I didn't like all the gore, so I thought it wasn't for me. When I took my first anthropology class, I learned that there are various fields of anthropology, each one being different and interesting, so I quickly fell in love with it as well.

It is true for almost all of us graduates, that we did not make this journey alone. I have to thank my mom, without you I would not have the courage to stand here today in front of all these people. You helped me through my anxieties, holding my hand, walking me through getting dressed each day, and challenging me to become a little bit stronger each day. Dad, thank you for allowing me to be your shadow, you have taught me that hard work and dedication do pay off, but you have to keep pushing for it each and every day. To my sister, Jen, thank you for being my first best friend, and being there whenever I need to laugh or cry. To my husband, Omar, thank you for never giving up on me and pushing me to reach for my dreams, even if that meant a long distance relationship for almost four years.

Finally, to my fellow graduates, we have finally made it! We have all had different experiences in our time here, but we have bonded over one thing: the will to see the world in different ways. We are now given the opportunity to share our gifts with the world. So go forth and "ask not what this world can do for you, but what you can do for this world."

Congratulations Class of 2016!

Thank you!



KATLIN KATSUKI *B. A. in Liberal Studies*

Katlin Katsuki is a graduate of California State University, Fullerton as Summa Cum Laude with a B.A. in Liberal Studies. She finished her undergraduate degree as a Dean's Scholar in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and as the President of the Liberal Studies Honor Society. Katlin has recently been accepted into Cal. State University Fullerton's Combined Credential and Masters Program, where she plans to pursue her dream of becoming an Elementary Teacher. During her free time, Katlin works at a local high school as a soccer coach and pole-vaulting coach. Katlin plans on traveling as much as she possibly can to expand her knowledge of the world. She advises that all undergraduate students take advantage of their time at Cal. State University Fullerton, get involved and leave your mark on the campus before you go.

I want to take a moment, and I truly mean just a moment because I'm sure all of you are antsy to finally get up here on stage, but as a heads up - it's absolutely terrifying up here. So, like I was saying, let's take just a moment to absorb what is actually going on.

It is today, May 22nd, 2016, that you are graduating from California State University, Fullerton. It is today, that you will walk upon this stage and receive your diploma after years of hard work. And it is today, that a new chapter in your life begins.

As of right now though, we are still "students," some of which are the same students who at the beginning of this journey suffered through Liberal Studies 302A and 302B. Whether it was timidly singing in class following Professor Sancho-Velázquez's examples, leaving the study sessions even more confused than when you arrived, and therefore never leaving an exam feeling confident, 302A and B challenged us in more ways than one.

We are the same students who took too many trips to Aloha Java, but not as much as Professor Lambert, who fine-tuned our abilities to understand different accents, and who became active members of the LSSA when there was a potluck in the commons – but moments after the food was gone went back to ignoring their emails.

These moments, including panicking when the ink in the printer was out, or attempting to fly a hand built kite, are all part of the Liberal Studies experience, and are all things that we united to overcome or shared many laughs over. I'm sure that the anthropology department also has moments like these embed-

ded into their division, to which they too will reflect upon as they continue on their journey.

Take in this moment, because within a few minutes, the moment you spent the past years working endlessly to get to, will soon flash before your eyes. Remember all the barriers you broke, all the struggles you overcame, and all the laughs along the way as you continue on to your next chapters. With the idea of taking in the moment in mind, I'm sure you wouldn't mind capturing it with a selfie.

Best of luck to you all in your futures, let's take the world by storm.



RAUL GOMEZ *M.A. in Spanish*

Raúl Gómez was born and raised in the Coachella Valley. He attended the University of California, Riverside, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Spanish Literature in 2008 and earned his Spanish teaching credential the following year. He has been teaching Spanish for seven years and is currently working at Chino Hills High School. Upon earning his Masters in Spanish, Raúl will continue teaching at the high school level while planning a career in higher education.

It's truly an honor to speak on behalf of this year's graduates. We have come a long way since we began the program and we will make the best of it in the years to come. I wish you all the best in your future endeavors. This ceremony is a celebration for the new doors of opportunity that has been opened upon us. It feels great to be done, but I believe it's only the beginning!

Advanced degrees in the literatures and cultures of our people help us realize that we have much work to do in our society. Not only do we conserve our language and our culture but it also gives us foresight on how to fight social, economic and political injustice. We must take advantage of the knowledge we have acquired to find solutions to the issues we face today.

Success is not achieved without the support and encouragement of very special people in our lives. First of all, thank you to all the families for your unconditional love, for believing in us in every step of the way, for your hard work and dedication through out these years. Without you we wouldn't be here today. There is no way in the world we could ever repay you. We hope to continue making you proud. Mamá y papá, los quiero mucho.

Secondly, we would like to thank the faculty, our amazing professors for guiding us through their instruction, for finding ways through their pedagogy to keep us engaged and helping develop our intellect with our own voice, for giving us the opportunity to express ourselves through literature and guiding us to find our own interpretations of texts and for pushing us to the limit. Con mucho cariño, muchísimas gracias.

Lastly, I would like to thank you, my fellow classmates, for sharing your knowledge, the bouncing of ideas, your constructive criticism, the debates and for

sharing your life experiences and struggles. One of our own professors once said, "A class is as good as students make it." Thank you for the great experience here at Cal State Fullerton. Estoy orgulloso de sus logros. ¡Seguimos adelante!



NATASHA LYNN BONNER *B.A. in Geography and Ethnic Studies*

Natasha Bonner began her educational journey at Golden West Community College where she obtained two separate associate degrees in liberal arts with an emphasis in science, arts, and humanities. After graduating with honors, she continued her journey to California State University Fullerton for three years, where she diligently studied how geography affects our cultural communities. To further her inspirations, Natasha decided to run for the H&SS Board, where she was elected as the Humanities and Social Sciences Inter-Club Council Vice Chair. In working with the H&SS and Associated Students Inc., she was able to communicate with many students, work with all of the H&SS clubs, and learn more about each club representative's perspectives on different situations, such as, cultural, social, and political issues. For her academic work she received two outstanding service crystal awards from the geography department in 2013

Good morning everyone and welcome to the 2016 commencement! I would like to give a special thanks to each and every one of you for being here today to commemorate our graduation. Before I begin, I would like for you to take a good look at our graduating class. Did you take a good look because this is the face of hard work and dedication something that comes from one's strives to prosper in life, to relish a moment, and to make a difference. This graduation ceremony is an exuberating moment that will be an everlasting memory. But, the most important part of the journey is how we got here. Every student has an interesting story. One thing that I have realized while embarking on this educational journey is, how unprepared I was. When I graduated from high school, I had the mindset that I had everything together for college because I was young and overzealous. Boy was I wrong! Entering college was probably one of the scariest moments of my life and that is because I did not take heed to the most important part of my journey...me. Why am I here? What path will I choose that leads me to my future career? It was not an easy decision, let me tell you. The challenges of life are real. There were times I'm afraid, where I had questioned my ability to conform to college. I feared that I wouldn't be able to adhere to the responsibility of being a confident, structured, obedient student. I felt alone...but over time I realized that I wasn't. My Mother has always been there to guide and motivate me, and has always loved me no matter what. Even though she has been faced with her own dilemmas of being ill with cancer and other ongoing health issues, she still tried to help me when I needed it. So, I would like to say thank you mom and I love you. I think in a way that, all of my hardships have encouraged me to stay focused and not give up, but they have also led me to realize that I was on a journey of self-discovery. I was trying to figure out who I am and what about culture influences the way I live. You see, I

and 2014, as well as an outstanding service award from the African American Studies Department in 2016. These awards were earned for her superior work and her passion to work hard within each department. Throughout the years, Natasha was dubbed as an outstanding scholar, was involved with several activities with the Volunteer Services Center, and received numerous scholarships. In her last year at California State University Fullerton, Natasha became treasurer for the Student Scholarship Association of African American Studies. She hopes to continue on to graduate school and venture further into the world of cultural studies with the passion to pursue a master's degree in environmental anthropology.

"College was quite a journey and I am very proud and thankful for the opportunity to obtain my degrees and to pursue a higher education. I would like to thank my mom for encouraging me and for been there when I needed it the most. In addition, I would like to thank my friends and family, and California State University Fullerton."

am multiracial and have always felt like a part of me is missing due to the fact that I was raised one sided, not really knowing my other ethnic backgrounds, which is why I wanted to gain a better perspective off myself and I did this by joining the Ethnic Studies department. As time progressed, I developed an interest in cultural geography, which led me to begin my years of studying in the Humanities and Social Sciences College. In doing this, I was introduced to the African American Studies department where I took many courses that helped me to understand myself and the importance of culture. One project in particular that opened a new door for me was the career portfolio that I worked on throughout the semester in Dr. Natalie Graham's class. This project was a challenge, but it was also an eye opener. It took me time to think about why I chose this field and what I would be doing in the next several years of my life. It never occurred to me how important a simple project like this could be, but it was. Of course, there were many other projects that I completed that had a significant effect on my choices, and I would like to thank the African American Studies department for all of your help and support. Overall, college was an interesting journey that brought me Self-realization, self-reliance and motivation. I will never forget the happy and sad times that I had here, and the conflicts and resolutions. If I could best describe my time here, I would have to say that it was a cross between Animaniacs and a soap opera. Because, of the crazy, comical moments and the drama. But, I am pleased with my journey and I hope to carry these memories with me always. With that said, I am honored to have been able to speak for my graduating class. Good luck to all of the graduates and farewell! Thank you.



YAMILLET BRIZUELA

My name is Yamillet Brizuela, and after 4 years at California State University, Fullerton I received my BA in Communicative Disorders and American Studies. I have planned to attend Syracuse Law this fall. At Syracuse Law I plan to participate in the joint degree program where I will receive a JD/MS in the Foundations of Education with a certificate in Disability Studies. As a low-income, Central American, first-generation female college student, I want to be a voice for marginalized groups as I come from a variety of them. I plan to focus on public interest and I am driven to alleviate poverty by bettering the quality of life of my future clients and bring social justice through the law to our community.

B.A. in Communicative Disorders and American Studies

“What are your plans after graduation?” seems to be the million-dollar question for the graduates at commencement here

But if you were to cut it down and only ask the American Studies graduates what is their Frequently Asked Question the answer would be: (drum-roll) “What is American Studies?”

So for all of our loved ones who have heard us talk about American Studies. I’ll tell you right now, it ruins... I mean consumes your life, American Studies makes you start to question everything you see, hear, and feel. Although it sounds awful... the best decisions of my life are all the ones that led me to being an American Studies major.

Because you see... in American Studies, nothing is off limits. It is a subject that includes all of what we refuse to exclude. So when I was told I’ll be given the honor to give a speech to some of the most brilliant individuals I have been lucky enough to meet... I thought, “What am I going to refuse to exclude at this moment in front of you all?” ... And I decided:

So, I expected that within four years I would be able to tell someone who I am and what I am doing exactly. But if your college experience was anything like mine, you are probably even more confused now than when you first started. It is okay if you are like me and do not know exactly who you are yet, but it is important to find out who you are not.

For example, you are not alone.

You are here because of the people who have loved you and supported you.

I am here, because of all of you in this room today. Thank you to the professors in the American Studies department, both the ones I have had and have not had the honor of taking. Thank you to all of my former classmates that were the reason why all the classes I wanted to miss were never any of my American Studies classes, thank you to my siblings, nephews, friends. It is no surprise, that I, like all of us at commencement did not get here alone.

But, most of all, thank you to my mom and dad.

And so mama, 35 years ago... You crossed the border in a trunk of a car so that one day my brother and sisters and I can cross this stage... And that does not begin to explain the sacrifices you have made throughout my life. I have seen you go through hell and back just to give us a "better life."

Los sacrificios valieron la pena, the sacrifices were worth it.

And Papa, don't think I forgot about you.

The only reason why I am here today, and okay it might seem obvious because we all know where babies come from, but all jokes aside... You were the one who picked up my phone call back in February when my anti-depressants weren't working and I was ready to take my own life. Papa, you taking me to the hospital that day and sitting there across the bed is the reason why I am here. Sometimes all we need is one match to strike a light in the dark, and papa you have been my match.

Remember, just because you receive help does not make you weak. You are not weak.

I know what it feels like to be lost and confused. But I have learned that in moments we define our weakest... as in the feeling after receiving a poor grade on an essay you put a lot of time in, after getting yelled at by a customer at work, or in the moment that led me to the hospital bed ... all of those moments that don't make life enjoyable... All of the moments we feel our weakest... those are our strongest moments. Because our strongest moments are when we feel the weakest, but remind ourselves it is not our time yet, and still keep going. Keep fighting off your demons.

From that hospital bed back in February to this point right now. This moment right now. This is all of the life of what I would've missed.

Life is an endless journey and a collection of experience, and the beauty of life,

I've come to find out, is when you're forced to make life ugly. There are things that are going to happen in the future that you have not stumble across yet and these things are going to be amazing and why, why would you stop now when those things are on the brink.

Faculty, professors, family, friends, and all the other people that loved and supported us throughout these years.

I have 4 words for you,

Class of 2016 Out.
