

Commencement Speakers

Spring 2015



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON™

Albert Ferranco

B.A. in Asian American Studies and History



Albert Ferranco is a graduate of California State University, Fullerton with a B.A. in Asian American Studies and History. He is currently pursuing a single-subject teaching credential in social studies through his alma mater with intentions of expanding ethnic studies into secondary school curriculum. He is also completing his student teaching at Fullerton Union High School and currently teaches two 11th grade U.S. History classes and one 12th grade U.S. Government class. Albert currently works as a High Impact

Practice project assistant where he serves as a tutor for Asian American Studies. Albert's areas of study include the history of the American presidency, constitutional law, and post-racialism politics.

Good morning everyone and thank you for this great honor and privilege. I'll confess, when I was asked to do this speech I was at first horrified, but after I said yes, the next question I asked myself was: "how do you do a commencement speech?" The common thread of advice I got was "just speak from the heart." With that in mind and from the bottom of my heart I'd like to thank my parents, family, and friends who supported me through the years. I especially want to thank the faculty and staff for their commitment and hard work. I say that not only as a student but as an aspiring teacher that is currently a student History teacher at a local high school. I had no idea how much preparation, energy, and hard work it would take to get in front of students day after day. I have never been so stressed in my life. And the signs are there, the Baggy eyes, the white hairs, I've even caught myself talking to myself a few times...and I only have to prepare 53 minutes of material a day. Sure I'm scared, stressed, and exhausted but I have never been so determined, motivated, and so happy to be doing what I am doing, and I would not be where I am today without Asian American Studies.

I remember when I did my interview for the teaching program here at Fullerton months ago. They gave us a set of interview questions to prepare for; no big deal. Questions like What strengths will you bring to the classroom and the profession?

How adept are you with the use of current technology tools for teaching and learning?

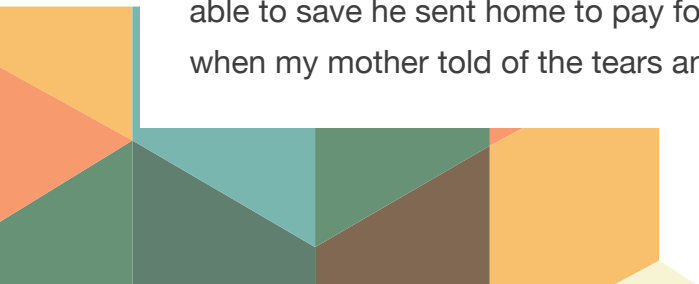
What led you to consider a career in teaching?

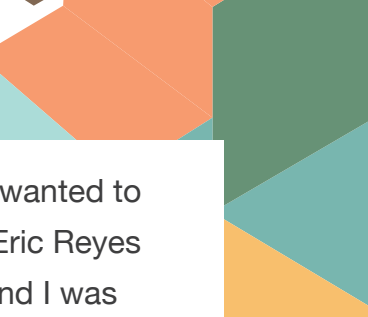
So like any hopeful candidate, I over prepared, writing every answer and preparing every statement. So when the day came, I was ready, shirt, tie; I felt like a million bucks. The group interview started and I was with 3 other candidates, 1 political science and two history students like myself. So the questions came and I was ready. There was this question about the diverse populations in California I was really excited to get. I knew I was going to nail it, and two of my peers got this question. But when it was my turn, my interviewer opened up a manila folder with my name on it, glanced at my application and with her piercing gaze asked, "So why Asian American Studies?" I felt all the eyes in the room lock on me as I had to justify my second major. I was flabbergasted, stunned, shocked and I panicked. I had no prepared answer but when I responded, what came out appeared to be a knee jerk truth I never considered. I said,

After all the years and classes I took in history, I never bothered in asking about my own. I'll repeat that again...

After all the years of History classes I took, I never asked about my own history.

It was a simple answer but had a profound meaning to me as a person, student, and future teacher. I was so caught up in higher ED that I forgot why I wanted to study history and ethnic studies and teach. To put it simply I wanted to tell my grandfather's story. Now this isn't the first time I've talked to a room full of people about my grandfather. Eight years ago, I had the honor of delivering his eulogy. And one of the things I remember saying was that I wanted his Filipino American story to be known. I wanted to talk about the battle of Bataan, the Bataan death march, his daring escape from the Japanese, his gun shot wounds, and his heroism. Even after the war his struggle would continue, as he secured a visa to the United States. Life was not easy as the promise of America being the land of opportunity bore little fruit for him. He would have to sweat and toil in this new foreign land. He spent his early years in the Delano grape fields and any money he was able to save he sent home to pay for my mother's college. It was years after he passed when my mother told of the tears and hardship he endured working from dawn to dusk





waiting for the day when he could reunite with his family in a foreign land. I wanted to tell this story, I didn't want it to go away. I remember years back taking Dr. Eric Reyes Intro to Asian-American Studies and Filipino American experience course and I was simply amazed seeing my grandfather's and my own life experiences on printed-paper. It was something I hadn't really seen before or considered important as a stand-alone history major. Ethnic studies had the framework I needed to teach my grandfather's story, so I felt compelled to know more. First it became a minor and after a few weeks of more Asian American studies classes, I fell in love with the content and became a major.

Mary (who I am graduating with) (gesture back to Mary) and I had a conversation a few days ago that's kind of relevant and she asked me, "did you ever think sitting in our 490 ethnic studies senior seminar that you would be up on this podium doing the commencement speech." I immediately thought, "I don't think anyone really knows what they're in for when they declare an ethnic studies major. And what caught me off guard was simply how amazing the people I met were.

Let me give you an example. I remember one day after a long day of student teaching, tutoring, and my education methods course, I decided to visit Dr. Reyes' Ethnic Studies senior seminar. The students were a combination of all three majors, African American, Asian American, and Chicano studies and they were doing this activity, one I did myself the year before but completely forgot about. The students got a section of the white board where they could describe where they saw themselves in 5 years. I saw someone that wanted to coach at their high school, another student wanted to promote health in their community, a future social worker and a soon to be lawyer. I was half awake but it didn't take me long to realize the common thread. At the peak of their undergrad, they, like myself wanted to take the knowledge and skills they had acquired in ethnic studies and give back to the community that had nurtured them. It's was kind of magical. And for many of us on this stage, we found our voices and purpose through our major. And I know I found mine. I feel the weight of an ethnic studies degree every day I walk into a high school classroom. It informs my lectures, my lesson plans, my pedagogy, and my ability to teach. So why Asian American studies? Quite simply I wanted to teach. I wanted to teach in my community. Not only to tell my story, my history, but for my future students to seek their own, to be empowered and inspired by histories not found in their textbook, but the one found at home. Congratulations to the class of 2015.

Sociology

Christian Coloso

B.A. Sociology, Concentration: Health and Social Welfare

Christian Coloso, graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, and a concentration in Health and Social Welfare. Partnering with Dr. Berna Torr, Christian has served as a Teacher's Assistant for social statistics, and an Instructional Student Assistant for the University Learning Center and Sociology Department. He is a member of various honor societies including Phi Kappa Phi and Delta Epsilon Iota. Outside campus, Christian volunteers for homeless agencies throughout the Inland Empire. Christian continues to pursue his Master's Degree in Sociology at CSUF, exploring pedagogy and student retention. One of Christian's goals is to incorporate music and cinematography with sociological concepts as a teaching tool and to buy his parents a house.



“Real”ationships

Hello Class of 2015! First I would like to thank the Sociology department for granting me this opportunity to speak here on such a glorious day. So I usually like to start these things with something familiar so how bout I start off with a quote.

Well Forrest Gump's mama said, “Life is like a box of chocolate.”

Kanye West's mama said, “go to school, and get your doctorate”

My mama says, “the impossible is possible, whenever you think positive.”

Well look mama we made it, just like how I promised it!

We have made it! Conquered the college journey. From the trenches of community college all the way to the finish line at Cal State Fullerton. And over this studious journey, do you know what

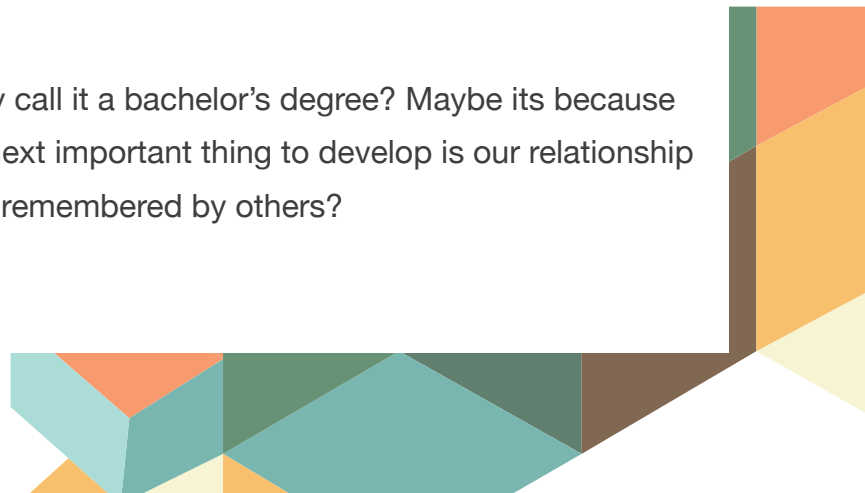
was the most important thing I learned? Well here is the SPARKNOTES version of my answer. Relationships. Yes, through these years of college, I have discovered that relationships are what matter the most. Of course, we've all studied relationships between gender and class, or race and poverty. Or as broke college graduates looking for a job, we've obsessed over the relationship between money and education.

But of course, what is it that made college really worthwhile, what kept me on campus a few minutes longer, the thing that made long commutes to school seem like seconds. Ultimately, what makes college a "life experience" is the relationships and bonds we developed with our peers and our loved ones. In college I developed unexpected relationships with the most unexpected people. I established friendships with mentors, who have the power to change your whole world with a few words. Through distance and time, I forged stronger bonds with my parents and brother.

Unfortunately, we've all had to let some of our dearest friendships sink. No pun intended. And for me, it was during the darkest times of my life. Yet through those times, I created stronger ties with friends I now call family, and discovered the definition of love - well at least my own version of it. I learned that there will be relationships that I will have to be part of despite choice, whether that be at work or with in-laws. Just kidding. But of course, the beauty in life is that we can also choose who we want to connect with, grow with, fail with, succeed with, laugh with, cry with, hug, love, care for and ultimately live with.

Now, I cannot forget to mention that one of the most important relationships to develop is the relationship with ourselves. And even though college may be the end of schooling, we must always remember that in order for us to grow we must continue to learn through our mistakes and epiphanies, losses and successes. Remember, life doesn't get easier, we just get stronger.

Finally, have you ever wondered why they call it a bachelor's degree? Maybe its because after all our development in college, the next important thing to develop is our relationship with the world. How would you like to be remembered by others?



“There are many issues that are underreported, unsolved, and ignored,” says the conflict theorist.

“But everyone has a function and purpose in this world,” says the functionalist.

Lastly, changing the world does not take dramatic leaps. Remember Michael Jackson said, “If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself, then make a change.” Sounds like Michael Jackson studied a little bit of Cooley’s looking glass self.



Liberal Studies

Maria Grando

B.A. in Liberal Studies

My name is Maria Grando and I am part of Cal State Fullerton's Liberal Studies Class of 2015! I was born in Kiev, Ukraine just before the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. My family immigrated to the United States when I was two years old. I spent most of my childhood in Northern California, playing with friends in the warm summer sun. My family and I moved to Southern California when I graduated high school. I have been lucky to grow up in such a diverse and free-minded state such as California. I have always loved the outdoors and have fond memories of running through wide fields filled with many interesting bugs and plants, just waiting to be explored. I have always loved poetry and literature. I can recall specific books that I read throughout my childhood and teenage years, such as Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle In Time*, which were influential to my development as a person. Though I struggled academically throughout high school and community college, CSUF opened its doors to my not-so-great GPA in 2013. Now, two years later, I have completely changed my outlook on my education and have academically improved far beyond anything I would have ever imagined. I have been honored to be part of the Dean's List for all four of my semesters at Cal State Fullerton and to be included in the Liberal Studies Honor Society. However, being one of the Commencement Speakers for the 2015 Liberal Studies Graduation Ceremony has been one of my proudest moments, one of the highest honors I have ever received. My experience at CSUF has been absolutely incredible. I now plan on entering a Master's program in Counseling to become a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. I am very excited to begin the next chapter of my life! Thank you Cal State Fullerton!



Today is a very special day indeed and not just because it is my birthday. Today is a special day because I get to spend it celebrating the success of Cal State Fullerton's Liberal Studies Class of 2015 graduating onto the next chapter in all of our uniquely remarkable and equally important lives. Yes, after countless hours of reading texts with deceitfully dense lan-

guage and figuring out what exactly constitutes a solid thesis, we have made it. Those many tired hours of sitting in front of a computer screen have paid off, and we can gaze upon the various parking structures on campus with a look of heroic victory. I am proud to say that I am part of this congregation of thoughtful, and shall I say, humanistic group of individuals.

This campus stands out as having a staff that is truly dedicated to the academic success of its student body. The various professors whom I have had the immense pleasure of getting to know have inspired me to reach for higher goals than ever before in my life. Without the help of my Liberal Studies colleagues, however, I do not think I would have achieved my goals. The people I have met within all of my Liberal Studies courses have stood out from the rest as individuals who not only desire to make the world a better place but also strive to improve the current state of our society. This gives me hope for the future.

I am honored to be part of this commencement and to have the opportunity to personally thank each and every one of you for your dedication, hard work, and brilliant minds. Whatever is the next step after this, I hope you all are able to reach your full potential in life.

Today, I get to celebrate everyone's success, and that is truly the best birthday present one could ask for. Thank you, and congratulations. You are all invited to my party.



Political Science



Olivia Green

B.A. in Political Science

My name is Olivia Green and I was a commencement speaker for the division of politics, administration, and justice. I am 22 years old and I am from a small city in Northern California named Fairfield. I graduated with a Major in Political Science and a minor in American Studies. I'm taking a year off to work and prepare for my Law School Admissions Test (LSAT). I hope to get into a great law school and have a long career in law and advocacy.

Good morning fellow graduates, families, friends, staff, faculty, and administrators. On behalf of all of the graduates, I'd like to start by thanking all of you for being here to witness one of the most important days in us graduates' lives. Commencement is such an exciting day because it is an opportunity for us to reflect on our college experience. When I reflect on my experience, I realize just how proud I am to be a Titan. Cal State Fullerton has SO much to offer, and each of us has been able to have our own unique Titan experience. That is what I want to talk about today.

I have been provided with so many amazing involvement opportunities since I stepped on to this campus. These involvement opportunities taught me what it really means to help and serve others. My leadership involvement started when I became an Orientation Leader, where I got to play a direct role in transitioning freshman into their first year of college. I was also a Resident Advisor, where I was able to help students with the transition of living away from home for the first time. Additionally, I have spent this last year serving on the Executive staff of ASI as the Chief Administrative Officer. Through this position I have reached out to other students on campus in the hopes of getting them involved in ASI. The best thing about all of these positions was the exposure they gave me to other students. The chance to learn and grow from my fellow students has been by far the most rewarding part of my University involvement. And let us not forget the outstanding opportunities that lie right here in the

Humanities College. I had the pleasure of doing the DC Internship Program last summer with some of the most passionate students I have ever met. Additionally, our college provides involvement opportunities based on academics and academic achievement. I am a proud member of the Pi Sigma Alpha political science honor society along with many other dedicated students.

What I realize when I reflect on these experiences is that they made this campus feel like a home to me and they helped me figure out what I am passionate about. So, to my fellow graduates, I hope that your titan experience has helped you figure out what you are also passionate about. I challenge all of you to commit to doing what you are passionate about for the rest of their lives, and to never forget the impact that being a titan has on whatever path you take in life. College is an experience like no other because it is a journey that allows us to become wiser, stronger, and more intelligent versions of ourselves. So more than anything I am thankful for my family and friends, as well as, my fellow graduates for being a part of this journey, which inspired me to spend my life advocating for and helping others. It has truly been the most amazing 5 years of my life.

Thank you and Congratulations to the Class of 2015!



Liberal Studies

Priscilla Truong

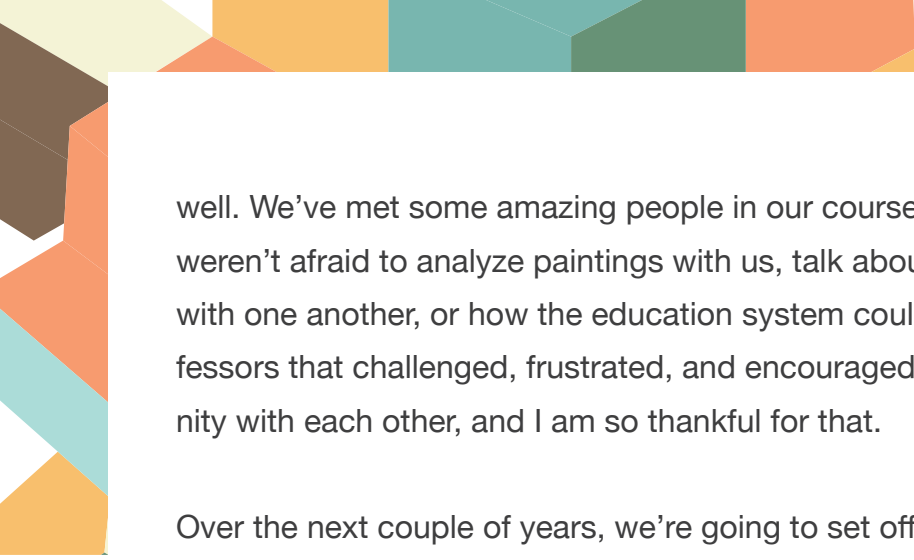
B.A. in Liberal
Studies, minor in
Business
Administration



Priscilla Truong is a California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) graduate with a Bachelor of Art in Liberal Studies and a minor in Business Administration. With a love for knowledge, she is passionate about applying concepts she has learned from her studies and developing membership retention programs for an international service organization (Rotaract/Rotary). Not only has she served on a team to create a two day immersion of volunteer service and culture, which doubled its membership, she also created the first mentorship program for incoming students interested in non-profits and community service. As a recent graduate, Priscilla will be spending two months at the University of Arkansas interning with student services and will beginning a full-time position with Amica Mutual Insurance as an Associate Accounts Manager in Rhode Island. In her spare time, she can be found rocking out to Taylor Swift or catching up on her favorite television show, Once Upon a Time.

The first time I walked into the Commons I remember looking at the books lining the walls and the center table ad thinking, “I just stepped into a Common Room at Hogwarts.” And like the first years at that magical school, I was terrified. I have to say that it still hasn’t hit me that we’re graduating and maybe a few months from now I’ll jolt out of bed and get really sad about the fact that I won’t be coming back to school in the Fall. Or maybe it’ll hit me in the next couple of minutes.

I have no idea where the time went, and I’m sure there were plenty of times where we couldn’t wait to graduate, so we didn’t have to write another paper or study for another essay exam. And I am absolutely sure that there are still going to be plenty of people questioning our decisions and commenting on the things we do. But Fullerton and this major have treated us



well. We've met some amazing people in our courses that struggled with us. People that weren't afraid to analyze paintings with us, talk about how science and history interact with one another, or how the education system could improve. We took courses with professors that challenged, frustrated, and encouraged us; we found and created a community with each other, and I am so thankful for that.

Over the next couple of years, we're going to set off on our different paths and there will be times we fail (like when we didn't do so well on an exam), or we will succeed (like being passing LBST302A & B). The world is going to have plenty of hurdles set up for us. But as long as we remember to have faith, the dots will connect in the future, and show ourselves the love and consideration we'd show others, and rely on those around us to pick us up, I think we're going to be more than okay.

Thank you all so much for sharing a part of your lives with me. I wish us all the best, and more, because I, we, have faith things will work themselves out. Thank you.

Chicano/Chicana Studies

Martha Contreras

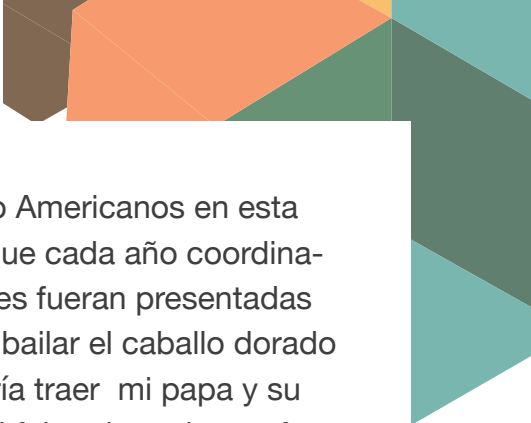
B.A. in Chicana/Chicano Studies and Sociology



Martha Lucero Contreras is from Huntington Park, CA and graduated with a Chicano Studies and Sociology degree. Both of her parents migrated from Mexico, and Martha is the first person in her family to receive a degree from a university. She became part of the Chicana/Chicano studies community on campus and discovered a safe, welcoming and loving space on campus for students like herself. With the knowledge and experience gained from her studies she plans to continue on to graduate school to continue making herself, her community, and her family proud.

Good morning y bienvenidos a todas las familias, y amigos y amigas que se encuentran aquí esta mañana apoyando a la clase de graduados del año 2015. I stand before you feeling humbled and honored to be chosen to speak to you all today.

I arrived at Cal State Fullerton in 2010. While Fullerton is only a 35-minute drive from my hometown of Huntington Park, it is a completely different world than the one I was used to. To say that upon arriving here I experienced culture shock is a huge understatement. I often share this story that during my very first day on campus, during orientation, I sat behind two students and overheard their conversation about their summer in their lake house. This was the first of many encounters throughout my time here that made me self-conscious about myself and my identity as a first generation Mexicana in the university. It kept me asking.. where are my gente? Where are the people who look and speak like me? Two years later I found that and more! I found the Chicana@ studies department and the Chicano Studies Alliance also known as “C@SA”. I found them laughing very loudly in the third floor of the Humanities and Social Sciences building bumping banda and corridos from a very tiny office at the end of the hall. Since then I’ve been part of a community Que hico que la



presencia de estudiantes Mexicanos, Chicanos, Latinos, y Centro Americanos en esta universidad será bien conocida. Fui parte de una comunidad que cada año coordinaba un evento en grande para que nuestra cultura y nuestras raíces fueran presentadas aquí en Fullerton. Nunca me hubiera imaginado que era posible bailar el caballo dorado enfrente de el edificio de Humanities antes de ir a clase, que podría traer mi papa y su mariachi a la universidad par tocar su música. I am eternally thankful to the universe for allowing me to become a part of C@SA and for having met people through this department and this organization who have changed my life for the better.

En este departamento conocí y fui guiada por profesores, personal, y amigos que me han enseñado que la universidad es mas que atender clases y recibir buenas calificaciones; es de hacer conexiones y amigos, I met strong women in this department, Sonia, Dra. Malagon.. who have taught me that its okay to be shy and quiet, but that there is power in being loud and fierce. I have met amazing professors Dr. Gradilla, Dra. Pérez who allowed me to see myself reflected in a profession, in an institution that I never would have imagined was available for someone like me. And a department full of accomplished professors who have done admirable work in their fields and who genuinely care about their students.

During my time here I have sat among people with incredible life stories. I have shared spaces with mujeres who are raising children, working, and balancing the pursuit of a degree at the same time. I have learned alongside transfer students who have beat the odds and have made it to this stage. I know students who have served in the armed forces and are now dedicating their lives to fighting different battles. We are all very familiar with the struggles of pursuing higher education. We know la lucha que es intentar de terminar tarea después de horas de trabajo, conocemos que difícil es leer un libro cuando parece que tu cama llama tu nombre, y conocemos lo difícil que es no salir a parrandear por que tenemos mucha tarea que terminar.

But even then our struggle, nuestra lucha no fue la misma de muchos que estan presentes esta mañana. Mi lucha no fue nada comparada a la de mis padres. La de mi madre que se levanta antes del sol todas las mañanas para trabajar y recibir un saldo que no refleja la inmensa fuerza y sabiduría que ella parece. Mi lucha no fue igual que la de mi padre, que por décadas a trabajado día a día en fábricas para poder apoyar y ayudar a su familia salir adelante. Y nuestra lucha no fueron igual a la de nuestras familias y ancestros que han venido a este país desde muy lejos y han luchado sin cesar para que nosotros, y toda nuestra gente en este país tengan la oportunidad de un día estar en un escenario como este. les agradecemos por todo su labor y sacrificio.

While we have to celebrate all of our graduates we must also keep in mind our brothers and sisters who are not sitting up here with us today. Those who since elementary school may have been tracked away from the university', our brothers and sisters whose knowledge about the universe could not be measured with A's and test scores. Those whose life courses led them to choose survival over education. And of course our brothers and sisters whose lives have been cut short by the violent means of our state.

More often than not we get asked, "Chicano Studies... so what kind of job does that get you"? The students before you have huge plans. We have among us future lawyers, mental health professionals, We have people who will shape policy in education, who will govern cities and states, and people who will write and tell the stories of our gente, who will teach and raise a new generation of Americans. We have here a cohort of students who will go forth into this world making decisions with an amazing level of consciousness because we have been guided by one of the finest departments on this campus. A department that has taught us to trust the voices that are often silenced, the voices of the indigenous communities who have been erased from our history, the voices of women, and the voices of people of color who have faced years of oppression and struggles...and most importantly to trust our own voices..... my own voice, a voice that for too long sat quietly in the back of classrooms to shy to speak up, my own voice, as a first-generation college student, as a Mexicana, as a mujer, that i can now stand proudly in front of you all saying that our presence here is important that our stories matter. And that we will revolutionize this country so that the sacrifices de nuestra familia, el apoyo de nuestros professors, and the legacy de nuestra no sea en vano. And if I may Quote Gloria Anzaldua, we will do "work that matters, que vale la pena."

Finalmente, este título se lo dedico a mi mama Martha Adriana, y a mi Papa Jose Alfredo Contreras, que cruzaron fronteras, enfrentaron miles de obstáculos.. Para desde de un apartamento pequeño en Huntington Park enseñaron y criaron a 3 hijos .. A mi y a dos tremendos muchachos Abraham y Jose que se van a graduar de la secundaria el mes que entra. Gracias ama y apá, ustedes han sido mis mas grandes maestros, y su dedicación y lecciones de amor han sido mis mejores lecciones que ningún título de cualquier universidad nunca podrá reemplazar.

Gracias y por favor un aplauso para la clase del 2015! muchas gracias.



Women & Gender Studies



Vi Pham

B.A. in Women & Gender Studies

I am a second-generation, Vietnamese American woman with a passion for empowering underprivileged communities and minorities with the voices they deserve. In Fall 2015, I will attend the Master of Counseling program at CSUF in order to become a therapist for my Vietnamese community in Little Saigon. When I am not in school, I like to watch foreign films and eat a lot of exotic foods around the world.

Dear fellow graduates,

As Women and Gender Studies majors and Queer Studies minors, we are here because we have a passion for social justice. We fight for groups of marginalized people and we focus on the ones that relate to our lives the most. Our friends know that we are the ones who tell others to check their privileges, be an ally for the LGBTQ community, give people of color a voice, and stand up against gender inequalities. We are sad when women around the world do not have the same basic human rights that we enjoy, we get angry when media tries to distort images of protestors who are fed up with mistreatments of institutions that claim to protect them...But! We celebrate when we find others who also share the same values as us, because together, we fight for the same issues- even if we have different approaches to our activism. That's just the life of a feminist: we actively choose to carry on these responsibilities in order to address the systemic inequalities that still affect us today. I like to think of us as stealthy social justice patrollers; we may look like average young adults on the streets BUT the moment we speak up and critically analyze social issues, people know we mean business. I call that empowerment at its' finest.

So, I hope that whatever you do with your journey after graduation, you take this secret

recipe for success...the feminist way! First, you will need a dash of inspiration with a handful of rebelliousness. Every time you challenge authorities, whether it be institutions, our bosses, or the government, it all begins with an inspiration to make change in the present. Second, you bake your challenges with layers of motivation. For every roadblock you encounter, THAT should compel you to work harder because, trust me, there are a lot of ignorant people who will do everything they can to maintain the current social order.

Once that is done you spread your entire accomplishments with empowerment on top because every time you take charge and successfully finish a task, you are one step closer to becoming a leader that the world needs. I'm not saying you should be a world famous leader or a president; as long as you represent the voice of an underprivileged community, you are giving them the power they deserve. Finally, don't forget to share your knowledge and experience with others because we want future generations to understand the history and power of feminist activism.

Before I go, I'd like to leave everyone with one of my favorite quotes because it might be useful while going through tough times in life. When others try to discourage you, or cause you to doubt your ability to change the world, just remember that your happiness is the greatest revenge against those who bring you down. Those who benefit from the status quo can take away your resources but they can't take away your voice! Overall, congrats to all of us who are graduating today and I hope that if we do bump into each other, we will have plenty of stories about our awesome careers. Go feminists!



African American Studies

Moses Morgan

B.A. in African American Studies

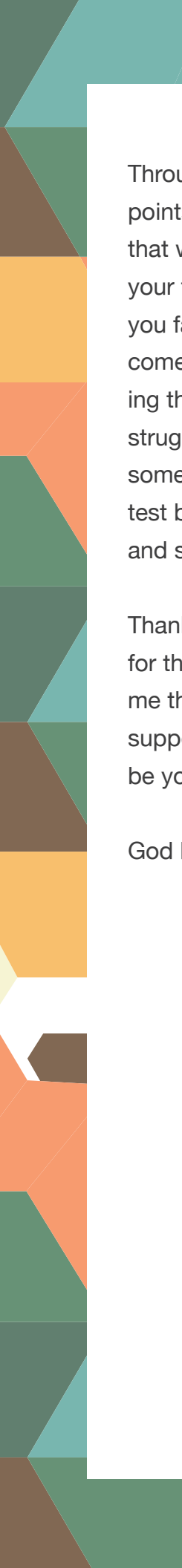
Academically, he has a 3.1 major GPA. Moses spent 3 years at DePaul University before transferring here to Cal State Fullerton. At DePaul Moses was on the Dean's List in 2011 and 2012. He was inducted as a member of the Captain Council for Athletics in 2012 and received the 2012 Athletics Leadership Award. Here at Cal State Fullerton Moses has given back to the community and volunteered for the Hoopstars Basketball Clinic working with kids and people who have disabilities in order to not only practice basketball skills but also to encourage them to believe that dreams can come true. Moses has spent two years

at Cal State Fullerton and has made a huge impact influencing his teammates to be the best versions of themselves and encouraging them to always do the right thing. Moses hopes to play basketball professionally and aspires to be a collegiate or professional basketball coach. Moses is a tremendous human being who will be a great leader and mentor for young people. Moses will definitely be missed here at CSUF.



When I was first asked to speak at an event like this - our college graduation - I wanted to decline. But then I realized how powerful words can be, and thought that I could possibly inspire this specific group through the divine light that is in me. And that is where I want to start - by thanking God for this opportunity, not just today, but specifically for my experiences here at Cal State Fullerton.

A great lesson that I've learned in my years here is to never let your circumstances determine your character, your attitude, or your work ethic. If you do, you are saying that other people or things outside of you have more power than what is inside of you. A great verse in the Bible says, "Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." Basically, no one and no situation can beat you. I had a few battles this past year that challenged my character and perseverance as a student, teammate, and player. School hasn't always been my strong suit - and that's a battle in itself. In addition to that, the one thing that I poured my time, energy, and effort into, basketball, wasn't going exactly how I had planned, and it started to carry over into my personal life. As hard as it was, I started to realize that these obstacles were tests, and I couldn't let these tests which were out of my control to defeat me. Whether or not it were games, playing, not playing, coaches or teammates, I was not defeated and I did not quit; I remained being me. Cause you can stop you.



Throughout this challenging situation I began to realize that wins, losses, and how many points you scored didn't define who I was. I realized that this was just another obstacle that was already planted for me to overcome. Whatever battle that is thrown at you in your future, don't let the current situation dictate what is in store for you. Every test that you face is a test for you to surpass, whatever you're going through, and for you to become stronger spiritually, mentally, and physically. Whatever it is that you might be going through, this is not it, and that is why we are sitting here today. I want you to let your struggles push you forward to the greater things that are in store for you. And in closing something that I want to leave with you, my final message, is that I want you to let your test be your testimony. Don't be afraid to close your eyes and dream and open your eyes and see. Let your struggles be your story.

Thank you for listening and thank you Dr. Ball and the Afro-American Studies Department for this opportunity, I also want to take the time to thank my dad because he has made me the young man that you guys see up here today. All the time, hard work, prayers and support that you put in for me will never be forgotten. Remember to always let your test be your testimony.

God bless.