



Lisa Ho
Undergraduate, Asian-American Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

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