



## Lynna Landry Undergraduate, History

*Lynna Landry is graduating Cum Laude with a B.A. in History and American Studies. President of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society and Vice-President of History Students' Association, the History Department selected Lynna to deliver the student address at its graduation ceremony. A member of the University Honors Program, Lynna, mentored by Dr. Nelson Woodard, completed her Senior Project on global leadership and peace in the Cold War's final decade. Lynna attends St. Linus Catholic Church in Norwalk, volunteering for six years in youth ministry and Life Teen programs. She will spend July in Australia for World Youth Day 2008 events hosted by Pope Benedict and attended by young people from around the world. In January 2009 she will begin working towards a teaching credential for 11th grade U.S. History.*

Good morning, faculty, students, family and friends!

I when I learned I would be up here today, frankly, I was shocked.

I was in Dr. Woodard's class, waiting with the other students for him to arrive. When he entered the room, he came over to me, pounded on my desk, and wagging his finger said, "Dr. Haddad would like to see you in his office after class!"

I was taken aback, and the only thing I could say was, "Is it bad?"

Dr. Woodard said, again, shaking his finger, "I can't tell you!"

Just then my classmates around me responded with, "Oooooohhhh, you're in troooooouble!"

Yes, at that very instant, I experienced what every historian dreams of: time travel... albeit directly back to the fourth grade.

But in all seriousness, I am glad that Dr. Haddad called me into his office. It is an honor that the he and the faculty have chosen me to speak at such a momentous occasion.

Before I could give a speech, I had to write a speech. And thanks to our excellent training in 300B Historical Writing, I knew before I could write anything I first needed a primary source document. I scoured speeches and letters from presidents and revolutionaries, but nothing seemed to inspire me. Then I realized what I was reading... wasn't me... it wasn't us—because I'm here today to talk about what it means to be a student of history at Cal State Fullerton, and here is my primary source.

This is a vibrant program with eager students and faculty alike. Looking back at my time here, I recalled moments that I believe capture our student experience.

The first thing that stood out: our professors. Did you know they make us work hard? I mean, really, really hard! Whether we have to write papers or take an exam we are expected to know our stuff, inside and out. Recalling names and dates is not sufficient because we're not collecting trivia; we're learning about yesterday to help us understand today and plan for tomorrow. It's rigorous, but we are better scholars for it because our professors' goals are for us to have a deeper understanding of history.

Even if faculty members are not your professors, they still encourage students to flex their academic muscles. Dr. Burgtorf asked me multiple times when I would present my work on the Cold War at any upcoming conference: this surprised me since I have never taken a class from him so I didn't know what he thought of my scholarship, but he believed in me anyhow. Without support such as his, I don't think I would have had the confidence to present at the Phi Alpha Theta Biennial conference in Albuquerque this past January, or take on the role of panel commentator at the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference last month at Chapman University. We are very lucky to have professors such as these who want us to strive continually for excellence.

Don't worry, I didn't forget about you, the student body! As president of Phi Alpha Theta this year, I've had the absolute pleasure of seeing how excited you are about history! At Phi Alpha Theta and History Student Association socials, our \$1 book sales, even when I would come to visit some of the classes, I always encountered enthusiastic students—especially when we would throw a Welcome Back Semester Pizza Party... but now I'm kind of starting to think that had something to do with the free pizza. Regardless of the food, the Welcome Back parties were a sight to see, this room to my left buzzed with welcoming faces, friends happy to see one another again, and fervent chatter flying between professors and students. The camaraderie of it all was a pure delight, and it is something I will miss very much.

But I think one of the moments that best represents the sentiment of our time studying history here occurred in one of Dr. Rietveld's classes, Democracy on Trial, a course on the Civil War. On the final day of the instruction and after another stirring lecture from Dr. Rietveld, the classroom burst into applause. We didn't applaud because it was the last day of class; the applause came from genuine gratitude and amazement that we—students and professor together—shared such influential learning experiences, ones that often felt like literal journeys back in time.

My fellow graduates, this is your day. I hope that you recall some of your own favorite moments and professors, and use what you've learned here to look back at your past and see what stands out, ask why it's meaningful, and find the lesson for your promising future. As historians we've all heard the saying that history is written by the victors. Graduation is just one part of your history you are currently writing; and today, class of 2008, remember: you are victorious.