



Maria D. Quintero
Undergraduate, History and Latin American Studies

María D. Quintero completed a dual-major in History and Latin American Studies with an Art minor; she will be pursuing a graduate degree in History. Her parent made the decision of immigrating to the United States over twenty years ago with the hopes of providing their daughters with equal access to education. At California State University she enjoyed being president of Latin American Studies Student Association (LASSA) as well as an active member of Phi Alpha Theta, History Students Association, and the Humanities & Social Science Inter-Club Council. She approaches her academic studies through an interdisciplinary lens. Specifically she is focused on cultural history with an emphasis on non-traditional sources, such as visual representations and oral histories. She enjoys spending time with her family and close friends relaxing near large bodies of water, traveling, knitting, and volunteering with young people.

Commencement Speech

I began by trying to make note of and comment on the trends and significance that commencements and other such right of passage ceremonies have played in our cultural history. However, since I have been dutifully trained to write papers that average upwards of 20-pages I quickly had to forego that approach. Instead I will start by telling you a simple story:

There was a man, a very religious man. He was pious and full of faith and the one thing he was it was that his God could see him through anything. Well, in this man's hometown there was a flood warning and everybody was told to evacuate. So after a day of constant raining the man prayed to God, simply thanking him because he knew he would come through and save him from the flood. Therefore when his stubborn neighbor asked if he wanted to go to leave for higher ground with him seeing as they were knee deep in water, the man refused simply saying, "You go ahead, my God will save me" The neighbor insisted to no avail and left. The man simply climbed on his roof to wait there. With over half of his house underwater, a rowboat came by and the boatman asked him to come along and evacuate with him. But the man replied, "You go ahead, my God will save me." The rain continued and a helicopter came by, a rope ladder was tossed but he told them, "You go ahead, don't worry about me, my God will save me." Eventually the man drowned but seeing as he was a faithful servant he went to his heaven and he met his God. Once he thanked his God for the welcome and said "I don't mean to seem ungrateful but I only have one question my God: why didn't you save me?" to which God replied "Oh I tried. I sent your neighbor, a boat and a helicopter. What were you expecting, flaming chariots?!"

As our academic journey in the history department of California State University Fullerton come to a close we move forward to the next stages in our personal and professional lives and hope for opportunities.

Let us be warned by this man's tale that opportunities may not always meet our expectations.

The opportunities that may be presented may not be as glamorous and high-paying as we wish they were. However, make the most of each opportunity you are given.

I'd like to take this time to thank some of the people who have presented me with such opportunities: first, to all my past professors and Dr. Haddad for selecting me to address you today "muito obrigada."

Additionally, my undergraduate experience would not have been the same without my golden peers, berry best friends, some low-brow company and all those meaning-well good times!

I extend my deepest gratitude to RR and BC, better known in academic circles as Dr. Raymond Rast and Dr. Benjamin Cawthra. Thank you for taking a chance on an undergrad and opening as many possibilities for growth to me as you have and continue to do. It is due to your dedication, passion and example that the standards have been set so high for my academic career beyond this point.

Above all to my supportive family: since I don't have the words to properly thank you I want to just let you to know that, "los quiero muchisimo! No estuviera aqui sin sus sacrificios y se que siempre puede depender en su apoyo."

As we look around and reflect on how we have, or could have, made the most of our experience here I invite you to look forward. Lastly, I challenge each and every one of us that as we continue in life to let our actions define us, not just our words. Regardless of a person's color, creed, background, paperwork and/or documentation, let us try to create opportunities for the people we encounter. It is then up to each individual to take that opportunity and save oneself.