



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
FULLERTON
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SPRING 2017

COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS

Jhon Herrera

*B.A. in Modern Languages and
Literature*

Joan Kim

B.A. in Japanese

Ted Johnson

B.A. in Liberal Studies

Jennifer Soto

B.A. in Anthropology





JHON HERRERA *B.A. in Modern Languages and Literature*

Good morning class 2017!

Dear graduates, administrators, faculty and family members!

Let me share with you the process of how I got here. First, I came to this country by God's mercy with no English at all, and without any financial support because all my family is still in Colombia. Sadly, my mom passed away last year and she did not see what I have accomplished today. She was part of my academic inspiration to become a better human being. However, all these adversities, difficulties, obstacles, and the pain of losing someone you love did not discourage me, but gave me the strength and motivation to accomplish my academic dream.

Moreover, I still remember when I was not able to pay my rent and a godly and kindhearted person gave me an extension. Few times, she lent me money in order to pay my tuition, and I am so thankful for all her kindness and help. For instance, we have to be grateful to those who stood by our side through hard and difficult times. For instance, let's keep a humble heart and always remember where you came from because it is easy to forget when you have money, power, knowledge and authority. Furthermore, I must say I am not lucky; I am blessed for my real friends, faculty members, and classmates who helped me through this unforgettable academic journey.

Today, we are being empowered with professional ethics, leadership, autonomy, mutual cooperation, integrity, honor and truth. Use these values to excel and let our light shine in the darkness. Colleagues, let's make this world a better place to live in, and give back to the community what we have received by grace.

Today, we are making history by breaking the chains of poverty and misery in our families. Keep in mind that education is our defense against ignorance, knowledge is our seed to cultivate and produce a new ethical, moral and righteous generation, and by the power of love we will make America a great nation.

Lastly, make sure you know what our mission is as professional alumni graduates representing California State University values. We have the responsibility to inculcate the principles we have earned for future generations. There is no doubt that knowledge gives us power. Nevertheless, we should use this power not to destroy or diminishes others, but to build functional families, create interpersonal and healthy relationships, and construct well-designed and loving global communities.

“Use your power to love and not hate or destroy.”

Titans! Reach, Teach, and Impact!

Congratulations and let's start a new chapter!

¡A Dios, a Jesús y a su espíritu sea la gloria!



JOAN KIM *B. A. in Japanese*

Good morning, graduating class of 2017! My name is Joan Songyi Kim and my major is Japanese. I am much humbled and honored to be with you this day as you celebrate a significant landmark in your lives. Graduates, you have gained something that is really unique, and I believe that this is just but the beginning of your journey. I would like to thank all of the people who I love and supported me through this time. Especially, to my professors, family, and friends. It would have been difficult for me to reach to this point without them.

My time at Cal State Fullerton enriched my life in many diverse ways. Being in college created a platform for me to meet and interact with many different people. My college experience immensely helped me to gain valuable knowledge about our diverse world, culture, and people. I believe the various experiences I had are irreplaceable and I wouldn't trade them for anything. 5 years of my experiences in the Japanese program was special and I am thankful. By learning a different language and culture, I also truly understood about my own culture. It was a wonderful 5 years with our amazing professors who I thank for guiding us through their instructions. They encouraged and supported us with their true heart. Thank you for the great experience at Cal State Fullerton.

Today is a special day to all of us. We should celebrate the next step of our new beginning, but the path might not be as easy as we hope. It could be tough and challenging. However, believe in yourself and do not set your goal only for one major success. Enjoy all the little things in life and all small successes that come your way. There is a lot of beauty in life if only we face it with positivity. I wish you happiness, the courage to face the many challenges life will offer, and the joy of great success. I am really proud of you and keep up the good work.

みなさんご卒業おめでとうございます。Congratulations graduates. Thank you!



TED JOHNSON *B. A. in Liberal Studies*

Theodore Johnson is graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies. He is an active member of the Teacher Pathway Partnership, Student California Teachers Association, Liberal Studies Student Association, and Liberal Studies Honors Society.

Good morning, graduating class of 2017. I am deeply honored to be here today speaking in front of all of you. I know this entire graduating class in front of me has been so hard working and goal-oriented, and I only hope to accurately represent all of you in these next few minutes.

To begin, our time here at Cal State Fullerton has passed by in an instant – all of our trouble finding parking or having to arrive to class early to get a good seat in an overly packed classroom – feels worth it now that we are here.

As Liberal Studies majors, many of us began our path confused, unsure if we are taking the right path for our future, where many of us were even unsure on what our major exactly entitled. Within our first days in this major, we learned about Plato and the Parthenon, struggling to understand what we just got ourselves into.

Now, here on our final day of undergrad, we will forever be answering the question, “What is a Liberal Studies major anyways?”

Often, others may believe that “a Liberal Studies major is the easy out”. But in reality, we all know that it is not.

Throughout our journey as students, we have not had a simple path, as many of us have poured our life into focusing on our work. We have spent countless hours, either reading peer reviewed articles on a philosopher’s thoughts or reading dense books about the creation of scientific principles, and then creating long thesis-driven essays to establish an original argument, Even in some cases, creating a new art piece inspired by modernism. In short, we have become masters of time management and developed key skills to question the

faulty policies of our society.

For all of that hard work, I want to say thank you, to all of you, because as colleagues, we have learned to stick together, using our combined thoughts to hold each other up. Whether we were complaining in the liberal studies commons, cramming before a test or quiz outside of the classroom, or joking around with each other in our own private study groups, we have supported each other undoubtedly and realized that working together is one of the best qualities humans can practice.

We wouldn't be where we are today without the help of each other, but also, we wouldn't be where we are without the guidance of our professors.

For that, I want to give a special thanks to our hard-working professors that have challenged us in question, forced us to open in discussion, and pushed us past our own comfortable boundaries to make sure that they are leading knowledgeable, interactive students. These professors have expanded our minds in ways further than we expected in these past few years, and not only have they become our mentors, but they have also become our friends.

Now, as we are here on our last day of undergrad about to hold our Liberal Studies degree, we are leaving today confidently knowing that we understand the complexities of knowledge, question the suppression of those around us, and set new paths for the education of our future.

For many of us, this is only stepping stone to further study, for others, it is the final stop in their educational path. No matter where you are or what you do with this degree, simply remember, by doing this we have opened new opportunities to our life, and for our hard work we will be greatly rewarded.

Thank you, and remember to "keep moving forward".

JENNIFER SOTO *B. A. in Anthropology*

Good morning and happy graduation day to us.

As excited as I am to have accomplished this life-long goal, I can honestly say I will miss the adventure.

Speaking as a person who, many years ago, could not fathom the idea of studying anthropology, I am grateful that the professor of my first Anth 100 class had such a passion for her subject.

She changed my attitude, and set in motion new life goals that will provide adventures I am just beginning to envision.

Now that I have learned to “synthesize the material in the readings,” it is time to live what I have learned.

The most important lesson is that errors are the precursor to success.

Rarely is a goal attained, or a success enjoyed, without a litany of mistakes littering the path.

We all trip on the road of life. How we get up, is what sets us apart.

When my middle daughter graduated high school, one student taught the entire crowd this valuable lesson.

After the graduates had all crossed the stage and accepted their diplomas, the last girl bounded down the steps and promptly tripped, face-planting on the grass.

She fell so hard, her legs bounced up behind her. All the mothers gasped in

embarrassed horror.

But she didn't miss a beat. She hopped up off the ground, settled her cap, raised her hands like Rocky Balboa, and high-stepped back to her seat.

And the crowd...went...wild!

In less than 10 seconds she demonstrated to the entire audience, young and old alike, that tripping along the path doesn't have to end your walk.

It is evident and true that over the course of all history, every person, in every country, and at all social levels, has made mistakes that caused them to trip and fall.

These mistakes can be simple or they can be big.

Though you may get bruised when you trip, what matters most is how you get up.

We must learn how to celebrate the fall and declare the experience a success.

This is a talent we don't all have. By grasping the potential of this skill, we can change the course of our lives, at any age, and gain the strength, courage and knowledge that come from our errors.

One of the gravest errors we make as humans is in failing to recognize cultural diversity as the backbone of social unity.

Our differences provide endless opportunities to advance our nation and our world.

We cannot do this by judging the actions or beliefs of others when they differ from our own.

We must look beyond conflict to identify the struggle, before we join along.

I have learned that what is not said, not seen, and not obvious, is often most revealing in truth.

Failure is not in the error of understanding, but in the abandonment of the effort.

In closing, I would be amiss if I didn't thank those special to me who celebrate what makes me different and are there when I trip on my walk.

First to Professor Barbra Erickson, for guiding me along the Anthropology trail

with patience, experience and great advice.

To my family and friends (including our 7 grandchildren) – thank you for loving me and nudging me back when I veer off my path.

To my kids, Julia, Victoria, Jacquelyn, Gabriella, Sebastian and Andres – thank you for forgiving my errors and for standing as the evidence that my greatest success in life is seen in you.

To my dear mom who is watching from above for her unconditional love and unwavering belief in me.

To my wonderful husband Guillermo, thank you for seeing in me, all that I can do, and loving me even when I trip and get bruised.

And to my dad; the person I dedicate this accomplishment to, for his enduring love and constant support in all of my endeavors.

I wish he was still with us so he could see me raise my arms like Rocky, and know that I am a champ.

Congratulations to all us champions here today.

Thank you
