

Madeleine Turner

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Dear friends and colleagues,

Congratulations! It took a lot of hard work and passion to get here. I'm glad we're all here today, celebrating our accomplishments, and experiencing together the apprehension and possibility that "tomorrow" brings for the student of history. And not just because of the job market. Today more than ever is the time for scrupulous examination of our past, so that we may serve as little links between that past and our future. I think we all feel the weight of that task.

That's why it's especially important that we go into it together. Research and writing is so often done alone, but history is not really a monastic profession. There's a reason we sometimes call it "the great conversation". The world we study is the outcome of collaboration and dissent. Our work should be the same.

I started a history club on campus with this conviction in mind. I wanted no one to be alone in what we do. This history club was just an unofficial group of a few friends, whose only shared connection was the love of history itself. We'd get together on Fridays and sit outside in the sun. We'd talk about our research, or about ghosts, or the fall of the USSR, or just the ways our days were going. Maybe it sounds a little trivial, but four years of education have shown me that moments like these are rare. It made me happy to foster just a few of them.

Every individual may be smaller in a crowd. But the crowd is stronger than that individual alone.

That's why I wanted to speak here today. Starting the history club was a scary thing for me to do. So I just wanted to say that it's not hard. But it matters. I want more history clubs. Little acts of connection and solidarity are all we have. Let's multiply them.

Kafka says: "in the struggle between yourself and the world, struggle for the world."

So thank you all for being here today. Thank you for listening. Thank you for celebrating together with me on this happy occasion. And thank you, UC Santa Cruz, for teaching me this valuable lesson. I will take it with me wherever I go. Congratulations again to everybody – I'm so happy we're all here.