

Kylie Carpenter – Graduation Speech

Good morning and thank you all for joining us in today's celebration. My name is Kylie Carpenter and I am graduating with a major in history with a concentration in Africa and the Americas.

I knew I wanted to be a history major when I first applied to college. I liked my history classes, read a lot of thick books about World War II, and wanted to spend my days reading old books and looking at old documents like in *National Treasure*. Four years later, a part of me still genuinely and un-ironically wants to end up like Nic Cage in *National Treasure*.

During orientation weekend, I made sure to go to the open major session for History. When I walked in to the room, Stephanie Sawyer, undergraduate advisor extraordinaire, was the only person there. "It's not always the most popular. Let me guess, you're Kylie right?" I had been the only person registered for the whole orientation weekend as a History major. Stephanie didn't treat it like it was unpopular – she spoke about the major like it was the best thing on campus. Tour Guide Fact, it's actually very popular and is one of the top ten most popular majors on campus. Subjective-Opinion slash Fact: it really is the best thing on campus.

I genuinely love everything about the history major. Stephanie and our professors care so much about helping their students succeed and grow that it's impossible not to flourish. As students, we are encouraged to think above and beyond, create, and question. No project is too big for an independent study. No question too dumb for office hours. There is no potential squandered in this department. The question is never "Can I?" but "How can I?" There is nothing too strange or impossible for this department. During my time here I have handled documents from the 18th century, reconstructed ancient temples, mapped turn-of-the-century New York, and called both the FBI and the ACLU in the attempts of getting clarifying information on some not-so-positive documents from the 1950s. This has all been with the encouragement and mentorship of the advisors, professors, and fellow students of this division.

I am so grateful that *National Treasure* led me to the history department at UC Santa Cruz. I came out of this department with so much more knowledge and capabilities than being able to read old books or study artifacts. We all have. We leave this department with all sorts of critical and marketable skills: research, writing, data analysis, and the ability to read almost any handwritten document you put before us. For those of us in the room, we understand that history is more than old books and thinking about the past. It's patterns and consequences and memory. And in our current social and political climate, we need people who love to think as much as we do more than ever.

I want to briefly thank a few folks for their support and strength during my time here in undergrad. First, thank you to my parents, grandparents, and brother for not once asking me why I wanted to be a history major and for pretending like my rants on the House Un-American Activities Committee were interesting.

Thank you to Stephanie Sawyer, undergraduate advisor and actual living angel. Thank you for helping me navigate the major and my undergraduate career alike. I want to especially thank you for helping me find the Stats GE with the least amount of math. I think all of us here can say that

we would not thrive and excel as we do without the help of Stephanie. You have been absolutely critical to my time here at UC Santa Cruz.

Thank you to all of my history professors I've had here at UC Santa Cruz. You have given not only myself, but the other students here today the opportunity to learn, think, and thrive. I want to especially thank Professors Matthew Lasar, David Brundage, Elaine Sullivan, and Catherine Jones for being such incredible mentors to me. I owe my own success to your teachings.

Lastly, I want to thank my fellow history undergrads. You are some of the most talented, brilliant, and creative people I know. It has been an absolute joy learning from and working with all of you. I wish you all success and happiness in your futures.

Writer and activist Margaret Atwood said "A word after a word after a word is power." I believe that nobody quite understands the power of a word like a History major. To everyone here, I think it's crucial for us to remember to use our heads, use our words, and use our power.

Thank you and congratulations to the class of 2017!