

First allow me to say to everyone, good morning. To the faculty, staff, families, and friends, thank you for being here and for supporting the student you know. And to the students, congratulations on your accomplishment.

I want to express how very privileged I feel to stand before you today and offer not only congratulations but a few pearls of wisdom for you to carry as you explore the world that is waiting for you.

Many of you probably know me as the old lady that talks too much in class. I won't argue with you on that. But, I can say, in my own defense, I'm not THAT old, and that the only advantage age really gives a person is an opportunity to gain more experiences.

I've been blessed in this life. I've seen the sun rise in the birthplace of civilization, caught between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, I've seen the southern lights dance over the frozen tundra of Antarctica standing next to Scott's hut, seen the Northern Lights flash above the wilds of Alaska. I've parlayed with gorillas in the high ranges of the Virunga Mountains and seen the world from atop Mt. Nyirangongo. I've lived abroad and at home while serving in the Army and while working as a chef and I've shaken the hands of my heroes. The point to all of this is not to brag but to offer my first bit of advice.

If you think it will make for a good story, do it. I've lived my life by this motto and it has worked out pretty well for me. That being said, I wish that I would have had the education I received here before I journeyed on all of these amazing adventures. In that way you have a great advantage over not only myself, but also over your friends that have opted out of higher education.

Everyone told me, as I'm sure they told to you, "What are you going to do with a history degree? Learn computers!" Well, here we are at the history graduation so we obviously showed them!

Being a history major here at UCSC has taught me more than I could have ever dared hope. And in case you still question what exactly you learned here, allow me to offer some more wisdom.

We all learned far more than dates, and names, and all the wrong ways to write Chicago citations. We learned to think critically, how to ask important questions. We learned the importance of empathy, how it takes more than one person to create strength among the masses. And how sometimes it only takes one person to stand against oppression. We evaluated the patterns of history and dissected their causes as well as their effects.

Understanding these things will do more for you in the future than you could possibly realize right now.

We've been lucky enough to learn all of this from amazing faculty that has shared their wealth of knowledge and their passions with each of us. Dana Frank taught me about powerful women and their roles in social change, along with the birth of organized labor. A powerful woman teaching about powerful women. Mathew Lasar has shown me the good, the bad, and the ugly about the country I love and served. So many others have taught each of us and been examples for us to rely on and to learn from. And if they were busy we usually had some epic TA's to get us the rest of the way.

The last thing I'm going to push upon you is possibly the most important part of all of this. Never lose your sense of wonder. You wouldn't have chosen to major in history if some small part of you didn't cry out for exploration and adventure. That's what history is. It is understanding where we come from to help guide where we go. A good question is nothing more than imagination and a desire to discover. Hold on to that, keep it in your mind and in your heart. If you embrace your imagination and carry with you empathy along with your ability to think critically than I have no doubt that you will far surpass anyone's expectation of you.

When I first started here I wasn't too sure about how I would fare among such a young group of students. I can say now, with absolute certainty and unwavering pride in each of you, that this has been the greatest adventure of my life. It is the experience I am most proud of. I hope you're your time here is remembered as the starting point for the amazing lives that you're all about to begin.