

Before I begin, I'd like to thank everyone for taking time away from their busy schedules to attend. I'd like to specifically thank those students and faculty on a UC schedule because week 10 is never kind to any of us. I'd also like to give a special thanks to my graceful mother for flying up here from Los Angeles to see her little boy. Finally, I'd like to congratulate the UCSC history class of 2019.

I had some trouble organizing my thoughts for this short speech. I wanted to speak about something I cared about, and not just repeat the same graduation talk you hear at these events. So, I did what I usually do. I sat at my computer and watched YouTube videos until the idea finally came to me. Since I am a student of history, why not give a short historiography of my experience in Santa Cruz.

My life in Santa Cruz actually begins well before my acceptance. I lived in family student housing as a little baby with my mom and dad while my dad attended graduate school here at UCSC. Santa Cruz, in a way, had been my first home.

We then moved back to LA where I lived for the remainder of my childhood and teenage years. I grew up in a very tight Armenian community in Los Angeles. All of my schooling was done at Armenian schools, and most of my friends growing up were Armenian. Many of us decided we would just stay together in LA.

I remember the day I got accepted into UC Santa Cruz. We found out right as classes were about to start in the Spring Semester of my senior year of high school. The first thing I did was laugh and tell my parents how I got into the school that my dad went to, the one with the banana slug mascot. I didn't actually think I would go, but the decision to come to Santa Cruz changed my life.

I have always been a history nerd. I loved listening to my grandpa's exaggerated histories of our family and the Armenian people. My first-year roommates always joked that 90% of my brain capacity was just Armenian history trivia. Many professors who have taught me also know, that I attempted to slip in the question of Armenian history in every class I took.

Would we talk about Armenians in Early Modern European History? What about in post-Colonial Algeria? I later learned about independent study courses and was ecstatic. My first independent study course was with Professor Muriam Davis about Western philosophical thought in French Algeria and the Middle East. This quarter I'm taking my second one with professor Maya Peterson about Russian Imperialism in the Caucasus, so I was finally able to include Armenia in my college curriculum. I tell these stories to make a broader point about the efficacy and vitality of history as a study and specifically about the history major at Santa Cruz. I would have never been able to learn and challenge myself if I hadn't taken courses about parts of the world, I knew nothing about. Even within those histories, I still felt like I was able to connect my own history and my personal story to get a better understanding of the complexities, contradictions, and narratives of history. In my senior seminar I was able to talk to students with completely different backgrounds and areas of interest to discuss problems in the future and past. UC Santa Cruz, again, became my home, and allowed me to explore and learn with other curious professors and students.

To conclude I'd like to give thanks and gratitude to some very special people. I'd like to thank Stephanie Sawyer for her dedication to me as a human and as a student and to the history department as a whole. I'd like to thank Professor Davis and Professor Peterson for allowing me to personalize my study of history, and for imparting some of their passion and knowledge of history on to me. I'd also like to thank

my best friend Brittany for 3 years of listening to me talk about history, and for my friends Gabe and Mini Levon for putting up with my historical debates. I'd like to thank my little brother for following me to UC Santa Cruz and for spending some of his freshman year hanging out with me and my baby brother who couldn't make it here today. Finally, I'd like to thank my mama again for everything she sacrificed for me. I hope one day I can prove to be worth it.

History, in its most basic form, is our attempt to understand the past. Very often, it is our attempt to discover what makes us who we are. In the future, we will all look at our lives as the past, and attempt to pass our understanding of those events to those who come after us. In the future, as historians of our own lives, we will remember the things that make us, us. And now, with all its complexities and joy, for us, the class of 2019, our time at the University of California Santa Cruz is now history.