



Queridos graduados y sus familias: a todos les doy la más cordial bienvenida esta mañana.

Representa un verdadero honor para mí dar el discurso de graduación en nombre de los compañeros y amigos graduados hoy aquí. No cabe duda que la educación universitaria fue un desafío que exigió dedicación, talento y resiliencia. El esfuerzo pareció a veces mayor al que podía enfrentar. En ocasiones tenía circunstancias personales, como la sensación de pensar en mi familia, que me agobiaban. Los resultados no siempre fueron los que esperaba pero terminaron conformando lo que ha sido la experiencia más transformadora de mi vida. A la universidad ingresa una persona pero sale otra. Ingresa un estudiante ingenuo y sale un estudiante equipado para luchar por las comunidades más oprimidas, sale un profesional listo para enfrentar las adversidades de nuestra sociedad. Todos ustedes que están aquí hoy han cumplido, pueden estar orgullosos.

Hace solo cuatro años que entrábamos a la universidad, algunos sin saber realmente si esta era la carrera apropiada para nosotros, y más cuando mucha gente te preguntaba “¿qué vas a estudiar?” y tu decías a la gente, “voy a estudiar los movimientos sociales” y te contestaban “ah pero eso es una carrera???” y te quedabas con una cara de si!?! Ahora, nos encontramos aquí, debajo de esta enorme carpa, orgullosos por nuestros padres, nuestras familias y comunidades. El diploma que recibiremos hoy no solo llevará bordado nuestros nombres, sino también los esfuerzos de nuestros padres. Le pertenece a mi madre, cuyas lágrimas me inspiraron a seguir adelante. Gracias a mi madre que constantemente me insistió en no olvidar mis raíces y mi cultura, ya que es eso lo que nos hace ver y sentir más grandes que los demás, especialmente aquí donde somos una minoría. Hoy cumplimos una meta que para muchos había sido solo un sueño hace pocos años.

Y por supuesto no me quiero olvidar en este acto, de aquellas personas que han contribuido a que esta etapa haya sido mucho más fácil y que nos han apoyado en aquellos momentos difíciles cuando lo veíamos todo negro y que nos dieron un empujón cuando más lo necesitábamos... con estas personas me refiero a nuestros amigos universitarios. Tanto a los que teníamos antes de llegar aquí, como los que acabábamos de conocer, que eran los que nos ayudaban y apoyaban cuando teníamos tantos ensayos que no sabíamos ni por cuál empezar, los que nos aconsejaban y pedían consejo en aquel momento de crisis, o bueno también decirlo, con los que nos íbamos de fiesta un fin de semana (por supuesto solo después de haber terminado nuestras tareas). Por las Adrianas, Melissas, Lailas y Elijahs, amigos que fue difícil encontrar, pero será más difícil todavía dejar e imposible olvidar.

Dear graduates and families: I give everyone a warm welcome this morning.

It represents a real honor for me to give the graduation speech on behalf of my classmates and friends graduating here today. There is no doubt that our college education was a challenge that demanded dedication, talent and resilience. The effort sometimes seemed greater than what I could cope with. Often times there were personal circumstances like feeling homesick that felt overwhelming for me. Even when the results were not what I expected, my time at Pitzer College culminated into one of the most transformative experiences of my life. I guess we can say that when a person enters college, a different version of them comes out. In comes a gullible first-year student and out goes a senior equipped with the tools necessary to advocate for the most vulnerable communities; out goes a professional who is ready to face the adversities of our society. All of you sitting before me have made it and should feel extremely proud.

It was only four years ago when we arrived at this college, some of us not really knowing what academic track to pursue, especially when people would ask, “What are you going to study,” and you would say, “I am going to study social movements,” and they would respond: “Wait, that’s a major?” and you would stare at them, confused, thinking to yourself, “Yesss...” Today, here we are under this tent, proud for our parents, our families and communities. The diploma we are going to receive today is not only ours but also our parents’. It belongs to my mother, whose tears inspired me to persevere. Thanks to my mother who constantly insisted that I not forget my roots and my culture, especially because it’s precisely that which makes us feel bigger than everyone else, particularly here where we are a minority. Today we have accomplished a goal that for many had only been a dream years ago.

And of course, I do not want to forget in this moment those people who have contributed to this experience, which has been much easier because they have supported us during those difficult moments when we could not see the light at the end of the tunnel and those who gave us an extra push when we needed it most ... by these people, I mean our college friends. The ones we knew before coming here, as much as the friends we made while we were here. It was our college friends who supported us when we had too many essays to write and we didn’t know where to even begin, or those we would go out with on the weekend. For the Adrianas, Melissas, Lailas, and Elijahs, friends who were difficult to find and even harder and impossible to forget.

Hoy sí puedo sentirme triunfante — Mirándolos a todos ustedes, rebosantes de alegría por un futuro brillante y a la vez nubloso, y radiantes de orgullo (y de lágrimas, tranquilos, a mí también me pasa), me doy cuenta de que tengo una respuesta. Estoy aquí y he tenido éxito porque soy Latino — porque ser Latino me ha enseñado a ser resistente, humilde, valiente y amable. Tengo que agradecer a la universidad de Pitzer, un lugar que me ha enseñado lo que significaba ser un Latino orgulloso donde menos me querían. Este fue el lugar donde me topé con culturas Latinas diferentes a la mía, donde aprendí a saborear mi primera pupusa sin un tenedor. Aquí es donde he conocido a algunas de las personas más valientes y amables de la comunidad Latina. Clase de 2018, no olviden a quienes les precedieron. Y no olviden a quienes vendrán después que nosotros. Habrán muchos Latinos que pensarán imposible venir a un lugar como Pitzer porque se encuentran en comunidades donde la idea es impensable. Ahora tenemos la responsabilidad de seguir adelante, pero siempre mirando hacia atrás para ver a quiénes podemos ayudar. Mis queridos compañeros y compañeras, tengo plena fe de que ustedes saldrán de Pitzer y transformarán el mundo. Ha sido mi placer y honor pasar cuatro años con ustedes.

Today I can feel triumphant. Looking at all of you, overflowing with joy for a future that is both bright and cloudy and radiant with pride and with tears—it's OK, it also happens to me. With those tears, I realize that I have an answer: I am here and I have been successful because I'm Latino—because being Latino has taught me to be tough, humble, brave and kind. I have to thank Pitzer College, a place that has taught me what it means to be proud of my heritage in a place where they least loved me. This was the place where I came across cultures different from mine, where I learned to taste my first pupusa without a fork. This is where I met some of the most courageous and kind people in the Latino community. Class of 2018, do not forget those who preceded you. And do not forget those who will come after us. There will be many Latinos who will think it impossible to come to a place like Pitzer because they are in communities where the idea is unthinkable. Now we have the responsibility to move forward, but always looking back to see who we can help along the way. My dear classmates, I have full faith that you will leave Pitzer and transform the world. It has been my pleasure and honor to spend four years with you.

In life we do things, some we wish we had never done and some we wish we could replay a million times in our head. I wanted to do something that no one else had done before in their commencement speech, and so I chose to unapologetically give my remarks in Spanish for the Spanish-speaking parents who have given up so much so that we could be here today. We are a community of many languages, and they all deserve to be recognized. The discomfort that some of you may have felt is likely very similar to the isolation that many students of color and first-generation students experienced during their time at Pitzer. This is not to downplay the incredible lessons that all of us have gained from our time here. In fact, it was at Pitzer that I discovered my love for vegan desserts and my commitment to social justice. It was at Pitzer that I traveled the world with professors and played an incredible soccer game with Dean Nigel Boyle in Ecuador. It has been here where we have cultivated life-lasting relationships with people from all backgrounds. As a first-gen student, this graduation ceremony was merely a dream for me. Today, however, I stand here immensely proud to share this moment with all of you. Thank you to our parents, our friends, our faculty and staff. Together we can be mindful of our future.

Mami, lo he logrado.

Egresados y egresadas, lo hemos logrado. ¡Sí se pudo!

¡Felicidades!

Mom, I've made it.

Graduates and graduates, we have achieved it.

Congratulations!