

Kimberly Johnson 2021

Congratulations graduates. I'm Kimberly Johnson, The Interim Vice Provost for the Division of Undergraduate Education and Student Success. Family to CMAE and all the programs served by the Division of Equity and Inclusion. I was the Common Reading speaker for my novel, THIS IS MY AMERICA, and I'm a UO Alumni which is why I'm so honored to speak to you at the ceremony and celebration.

You entered as students under unprecedented times and through your resilience you continued by achieving something remarkable. I know like so many of our students that came before you, that without challenges there isn't no success, no discovery, no grit gained that can help you achieve your next accomplishment or relish in the satisfaction to achieve. So much of this year was asked of you. It wasn't hard, and so many of you have experience loss. Pain. Your mental health has suffered, your financial situation altered. But with it all you are here, bold and brave like the beautiful words of Amanda Gorman who spoke at the Inauguration, which is a reminder to me often when I think about you all, she said at the end of her poem:

If we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children's birthright.
So let us leave behind a country
better than the one we were left with.

She Also went on to say,

We will rebuild, reconcile and recover.
And every known nook of our nation and
every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful will emerge,
battered and beautiful.
When day comes we step out of the shade,
aflame and unafraid,
the new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,

if only we're brave enough to see it.

If only we're brave enough to be it.

And so graduates, Be that bold and brave person you were purposed to be. Take time to heal, recover, rejuvenate, and be vulnerable. Prepare yourself to recalculate when necessary, tackle something new, take a different direction. Treat every challenge as the thing you'll look back on as a lesson. Keep moving forward. Focus on your successes and journey, learn from that.

Graduates I want you to continue to push yourself higher. To dream big. To work hard so you can climb to your greatest potential, and I want you to lift others as you do.

So much has been promised of you by reaching this goal of a degree, so I know it might not be easy for a lot of you who are scared about what's next or still feel like you're figuring it. Let me fill you in, we're all still figuring it out, you're on this amazing journey of life and you have something significant to contribute to this world. You might just not know what that is yet.

So whatever is your story, You made it through. You are wiser. You are stronger. You are braver. You are unstoppable.

I know I speak for all of us at CMAE, when I say it has been our honor to get to know you and work with you throughout your time here at the University of Oregon. You have demonstrated you have the capacity and ability to achieve your goals. Never, forget this. As you leave the UO, we look forward to learning how you flourish in your careers and your communities. You have the power. You have gained skills in resilience and adaptability like no other class before. You are the next generation of people who were formed under pressure and made into diamonds. You have dreams, hopes, and aspirations that were shaped in this times and I can't wait to see your radical imagination of possibilities.

Congratulations to the Class of 2021!!! Go Ducks