

Good Evening graduating students, family, faculty and wonderful staff members and friends of Indiana University!

It's such an honor to have a chance to send you all on your way towards great and exciting futures with a few parting good wishes and thoughts this evening!

First I'd like to express a special thanks to the kind people I serve alongside on the Asian Alumni Board who encouraged me to speak with you tonight: \_\_, \_\_, \_\_, \_\_.

Together we're all hoping to stay in touch with you and pass the torch on to future board members---who might some day even include several of you here tonight!

"Be the change you want to see in the world." said Mahatma Gandhi and that is my theme for this evening.

There are very few places in the world where, wherever you came from, you can study your cultural heritage. One of those places is Bloomington, Indiana, home to Indiana University.

Tonight is an evening of reflection about your personal experiences as students. I hope that all of you feel that for the duration of time you've taken to study, live, and make friends here in Bloomington that you've felt you have been able to honor, and stay true to, who you really are. In short, I hope you've been able to "be yourself," while you've grown, matured, gained wisdom, and even taken some risks.

What strikes me about the evolution of Indiana University on that last point is how IU continues to embrace international students and faculty, and to foster a healthy environment for minority students.

This has been important for allowing minority students to feel comfortable as assertive, sometimes risk-taking or daring students who are here to learn and question the world around them. Thank you to IU for funding those programs---such as our new Asian American studies program.

As I said before, there are very few places in the world where you can study your cultural heritage outside of one's own culture. Here at IU, I could do this and even made it my home, a place where now I've set down roots for the past 24 years.

I chose Indiana University for three reasons: I could study Korean Language and Literature...I could participate in continuing studies about my other side of cultural inheritance---the country studies of Finland, where my father's family is from...and "icing on the cake" is that I have flourished as a musician and been privileged to play alongside great musicians associated with a world-class conservatory.

I've even done studio work for Mellencamp...and, my favorite, playing original music with independent artists who put Midwest pop and rock music on the map. I sincerely hope all of you feel as fulfilled as I do when looking back---and while continuing to stay connected to Indiana University!

In 2004, I was elected to local office as a progressive Democrat. I'm proud that at the local level of the ballot, Monroe County was ahead of the tide of change now sweeping the nation. And today and we are anticipating the first Primary Election that has mattered in 40 years in Indiana---a historic occasion where we have choices never before available to us: a woman or a black man.

Some day soon, maybe an Asian-American will run for President!

I consider it an honor that I can myself as an agent of change. Thanks to my relationship with IU, the place that brought me to Indiana, much of my personal success is thanks to knowing myself and trusting that people expect me to be myself as their public servant.

Indiana University taught me to be myself, to be strong about who I am, and provided me with the choices through which I know myself deeply. I've had to test myself as a performer, as a student, and as a champion of critical thinking and research skills—even just as an undergraduate!

The best part about my educational experience is that it would be all for naught were it not for feeling connected to community. And my years at Indiana University predated the support system that we are so blessed and grateful for today. The Asian Cultural Center was established long after I finished my degree and the many cultural and diversity programs that highlight our university's level of sensitivity and awareness are all new and wondrous to me. It makes me proud that our community has brought forth these things.

How I'd love to be a student again!

Asian Americans have much groundbreaking to do. There are not enough of us elected to political office. We still have to fight incidents of casual racism. We still must learn to take pride in our myriad family stories of immigration. We must contribute to enlightening communities about perceptions of the diversity just within Asian cultures. We must tell countless stories ---academic, scientific, humorous, heartbreaking, and just plain fun---about who we are and how we all collectively and individually must "be ourselves."

I encourage all of you to remember your years here happily, allow your memories to evolve as the context of how you look back on Indiana University evolves with the new experiences ahead of you. Stay connected to community while being true to yourself...and know that the Asian Alumni Association, the Asian Cultural Center of Indiana University are always a home away from home as both a safe haven and place for your identity to flourish however we can support you to be yourself.

And, don't forget to vote for people you feel best represent you!