

2018 Convocation Remarks – Isaac Craig

Good afternoon President Cassidy, distinguished faculty, administration and staff, and fellow graduate and undergraduate students. On behalf of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research, I would like to warmly welcome the incoming classes and welcome back all returning students. In my remarks today, I was asked to speak briefly on my experiences at Bryn Mawr as a student, individual, and co-chair of the Graduate Student Association.

I have been asked about my experience before. Here are a few examples I'd like to mention:

In general, it's by an acquaintance, who asks, "What is it like for you at Bryn Mawr."

Or by a Lyft driver, who comments, "Bro, you go to a chick college? That must be dope".

Or by a friend from home who asks, "A women's college? Don't you think those are sexist?"

For a long time, I struggled to respond to these inquiries. You see, before I came here, I was not proactive about seeking any awareness of social issues. So, upon receiving these misguided inquiries, I only knew there was something wrong. I kept quiet because I was uncomfortable with addressing these situations. It was being at Bryn Mawr that put me into an environment in which these situations are discussed – an environment that would help me learn and successfully handle them.

So, what is my Bryn Mawr experience? The Bryn Mawr community helped me find a voice. You have taught me that it is ok to be uncomfortable in these situations, because comfort inspires complacency. By not recognizing the issue, I can pretend it no longer exists. I learned that my privilege makes me responsible to actively speak out against discrimination.

For this, I am thankful and appreciative of the Bryn Mawr community, however, stopping there would only make me a passive recipient of this experience. I joined the Graduate Student Association (or GSA) to give back to this community. If we wish to support future generations of Bryn Mawr students, we must also seek progress at Bryn Mawr. The GSA is a vehicle through which graduate students can achieve this progress. For example, this year, the GSA will be an active participant of the Community Day of Learning, because effectively spreading an understanding of intersectionality requires participation of all members of the community. This year, the GSA and the faculty of the Graduate Council will continue a collaborative effort to pass a parental leave policy that will support a student's life-choice to start a family. And as always, the GSA will continue to address the needs of graduate students and promote their general welfare.

Today I would like to leave you with a quote which I hope will encourage your activities in the Bryn Mawr community; whether this means finding your voice, giving back, or simply surviving student life. Karamo Brown, from Netflix's *Queer Eye*, recently said:

There's one question you need to ask yourself: day one? or one day? That is key.

See what happens is that either today is going to be the day that you start – that you're going to take one step going toward the goal you have for yourself – or you're going to keep procrastinating, and saying, "Well one day I'll get to it."

Just let me let you know, if you keep saying one day, there will always be another day, there will always be another day, there will always be another day.

But when you say, "Today is day one, I'm going to start now," you're putting yourself first. So go ahead and put yourself first, and go after your dreams, and make the things you want happen. Trust me, you can do it. Let today be your day one.

Thank you.

I now turn the podium over to Jennifer Walters, Dean of the Undergraduate College.