

David Cruz III
Commencement Speech
Spring 2015 Commencement, May 24, 2015

Thank you so much to the university for inviting me to speak today. This is truly an honor to be here and to be speaking to the graduating class as you all prepare for your next great adventure.

It has been almost 20 years since I left Guam and started off on my own great adventure. And, although I have kept in close contact with many of my friends and family, this is a very emotional experience to return to the place I call home.

Like every rebellious child though, I spent a good part of my teenage years planning my great escape. I couldn't wait to graduate from high school, head to college and start my own life.

I used to think "I can't wait to leave!"

Just three days after I graduated, I was on the first plane to California and for a while I did NOT look back"

But a funny thing happens when you move away, you start to miss your home and all the little things about it. I missed the fiestas, the weather (even the typhoons), the little grocery stores that sold pickled papaya and empanadas, but most especially, I missed my people.

Guamanian people have the most open and warm hearts of anyone that I have encountered. Their welcoming nature embodies the spirit of Guam everywhere they go.

Every chance I got, I would tell anyone around me about the tiny island in the pacific where I grew up.

Eventually, the identity that I tried so desperately to leave behind became something that I could not forget.

Telling people that I was from Guam made me unique and different and it made me stand out.

People would say "This is my friend David, HES FROM GUAM" Then of course Id go into a lengthy conversation about where Guam is, when I left and what it's like to grow up there" I was an unofficial diplomat of the island.

Sometimes, if there was another Guam person in the room, someone who knew me would grab me and pull me to them like "I FOUND YOUR PEOPLE!"

That was always so awkward.

But it was always so nice to see someone from Guam and to share the fond memories that we each had of the island.

The time that you and your fellow classmate spent here at UOG will be something that bonds together you forever, just as much as the soul of Guam will be bound to you forever.

But I am not here to give you a speech about how amazing being a Guamanian and a UOG Triton is. I think you know that already.

I am here to remind you of the incredible voice that this great institution has given to you.

When you leave today you not only walk away with a diploma, but a voice that is eager to heard by the world.

Now it won't be easy, you will have people that challenge you every step of the way.

When I first created my website Finding Cupid, people used to ask me why I bothered creating something about love? They said people are getting divorced at higher rates and technology is taking over dating.

They would constantly tell me that I should pick another topic like entertainment gossip or food or news.

I remember specifically one night at an event I was being introduced to a large group of people and someone asked me what I did

I told them ...

" I write a column called Finding Cupid, it's about reminding people how to love in modern times"

One guy looked straight at me and laughed. He said **"That's the stupidest thing I ever heard. Nobody cares about love anymore."**

People were horrified by the comment made by this guy, but I wasn't. I just shrugged it all off and I never let it phase me.

All that mattered was that I believed in the work that I was doing and the voice that I had.

Well, I kept pushing and working and believing

and that hard work eventually paid off when I was asked by an LA Magazine to publish my column.

Soon after, a Hollywood radio station turned that column into a weekly show and I was on my way to talking full time about love and relationships.

In the fall of 2013, I made my debut as a new cast member of The Millionaire Matchmaker, one of the longest running shows on the Bravo Network. I was not only the first openly gay cast

member, but more importantly one of the few Guamanians in Hollywood representing our island on a major network television show.

I often think of the guy who tried to tell me that my work was ridiculous

and all I think about

are the over 2 million people that watch Millionaire Matchmaker, listen to my radio show and visit my website.

You see, people do care about what I have to say... and most importantly, people do care about love.

There is nothing ridiculous about any of that.

Never let anyone tell you that your voice is not important or that your voice is ridiculous or too small. Each of your voices were carefully crafted and polished in these halls for you to take out into the world.

Those voices will be used to change lives by educating, creating and exploring new frontiers in each of your perspective fields

Never apologize for using that voice either. Being able to challenge the status quo is the cornerstone of change in history.

My voice is a voice that helps people navigate dating and relationships in our modern world. My voice helps all people straight and gay find love because there is NO DIFFERENCE between the two.

My voice stands up in support of marriage equality, because everyone deserves equal rights and the equal opportunity to happiness. The sooner we can all have equal access marriage the sooner we can move onto to debating more important things in life.

I have faith that the warm hearts of the people of Guam will show the world that they can love all people unconditionally.

Class of 2015,

Each one of your voices must go out into the world and be a part of greater conversations that will change people's lives in big and small ways.

Just because you come from a tiny island, don't ever think for a moment that your voice cannot contribute to something bigger.

As you begin to write the next chapter in your lives, take full confidence in knowing that what you learned here and the person you have become today will influence many people and change many things....

you just need to use that amazing voice inside of all of you to do it.

Congratulations Class of 2015 and God bless all of you as you begin the next great adventure of your lives.