

Keynote Address written and delivered by Graciela Tiscareño-Sato

For CVHS LATINO AWARDS CEREMONY

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KEY MESSAGES: *Adopt a high expectations mindset and REBEL against low expectations; scare yourself with challenges – on the other side of fear and terror is the best version of yourself; Bring your FULL authentic, ambicultural self into everything and everywhere. Be grateful and proud of your heritage and cultural mix...ALWAYS. It's what will differentiate you wherever you decide to apply your talent.*

Buenas tardes a todos. Me alegro estar aquí para celebrar el trabajo, los esfuerzos y la excelencia de nuestras hijas e hijos! Empezamos con un aplauso para las mamás y los papás de estos estudiantes excelentes...

Since I started kindergarten speaking Spanish, I figured I would start tonight's address in my 1st language...*español*. I'll translate:

Good evening everyone. I'm happy to be here to celebrate the work, effort and excellence of our daughters and sons. Let's start with a round of applause for the moms and dads of these excellent students....

I'm hear to share highlights of a life lived with high expectations and to leave you with a mindset of high expectations for yourselves.

First, a memory from my freshman year: The day after an awards event like this one, principal Faith Hamre approached me in the hallway and said, "I see you at an elite University one day... perhaps even Harvard."

My response? "Where's Harvard? Is that a city somewhere?" *(stop for laughter)*

See, this took place in an agricultural community in Northeastern Colorado where the largest employer was a slaughterhouse. Post - graduation expectations for teens were low: Work in a grocery store, retail job or wherever in the local community. Some students enrolled at the local community college, some at nearby University of Northern Colorado. One maybe 2 students left the state for College annually from a graduating class of 300.

So no I had no idea what or where Harvard was and she explained it to me. Ms. Hamre was THE only person who EVER said this to me. It was enough. **She planted the seed of HIGH EXPECTATIONS in my mind.**

Part of having a high expectations mindset involves creating a supportive community eager to see you succeed. This means you may also have to rise above any **LOW expectations** you may hear from any source, perhaps even from your *extended* family.

Example: On the day I received the two most important letters of my life: one accepting me to Berkeley and one informing me the Air Force had awarded me a 4-year ROTC scholarship.... my mother cried...not with joy....but because I was really going to leave.

My neighbors and cousins? They said to me, "*deveras vas a dejar a tu mama?*" (you really going to leave your mom?) placing the barrier of guilt in my way, guilt for wanting to pursue higher education at an elite university far from home. So I overcame that too.

They called me REBELDE

They called me REBELDE.... rebel for wanting to become a scholar. So I went **all... the... way** REBEL, busting through entrenched gender norms for young ladies... I took the Air Force ROTC scholarship, moved 1100 miles away, studied environmental design and architecture while also completing the Aerospace Studies program at Cal.

4.5 years later my parents returned to Berkeley for graduation and to pin 2Lt. bars on my uniform as I became a military officer and was selected for flight training. I completed that rigorous aviation training 11 months later, accepted my fiancé Genro's proposal after he pinned silver wings on my uniform and enjoyed the next 9 years flying on active duty. I deployed to and flew to 24 different nations on 4 continents. **My rebellion against low expectations, was complete.**

So my message to you is this: **One person's rebellion is another person's personal journey of achievement to see how far she can go and what she can become.**

Become a *rebelde* if you need to break away from **LOW EXPECTATIONS**.

Notice....I said rebel against LOW EXPECTATIONS, not against your heritage. This is an important distinction. I kicked low expectations in the teeth while also lovingly embracing my parents, my first language, our lovely rituals and traditions. **Both... are... possible.**

In fact, my current career as a social entrepreneurs and educational publisher is all about fully embracing, uplifting and showcasing my beloved Latino community. I publish inspirational stories of highly-educated Latino entrepreneurs who innovate, invent and lead in the U.S. economy.

Like my friend Humberto Rincon, whose 8 older siblings went to work after high school and he was encouraged to go to college and become a mechanical engineer and material scientist in Silicon Valley. When I interviewed him for my first book Latinnovating, he was most eager to tell me his daughter is now a medical doctor. The educational attainment and economic trajectory for this family is forever altered because Humberto decided to follow the high expectations advice of his counselor and become a scholar.

The way Humberto and I see it, because we chose the path of higher education, **HIGH EXPECTATIONS** have now become part of our family's cultural heritage as Latino Americans. In my family, three of five of Tiscareno kids attained bachelors degrees; I completed my master degree in global management and marketing while on active duty.

So for you: **LET THE ADVERSITY YOU FACE IN YOUR LIFE BECOME THE FUEL THAT POWERS YOU EVER HIGHER.**

Do what we did: : **understand the power of having university - educated mentors and entrepreneurial mentors. Build a supportive ecosystem, with your family in the center and add others to that solid foundation.**

Seek mentors for yourselves beginning now...people who will guide you and advise you on the next steps to take toward YOUR goals. We professionals in your community can connect you with professionals whose careers interest you... Just get used to asking us to **MAKE CONNECTIONS AND INTRODUCTIONS FOR YOU.** Yep, you'll have to leave your comfort zone to do that, so might as well start today.

That way, you'll never alone when you need to figure out the important big stuff and decisions. Speaking of your comfort zone....

Let's talk about being scared....

For many of you whose parents are not college graduates, leaving your comfort zone might look like this beginning tomorrow: show up frequently in your counselor's office asking, "So, how does a kid like me connect with scholarships to go to college?" ASK and ASK and ASK again. Get guidance from multiple people... make it your goal to collect so much scholarship \$\$ that you'll graduate **DEBT FREE.** It happens! I did it. Including my master degree.

But let's talk about being scared along the way: Do you think it was easy for me culturally to move to Berkeley 1100 miles away from my family, never having been to the University, not knowing a single person there? Do you think that was easy for my family? Do you think I was scared?

Yes, I was indeed freaked out at times. It was EXTREMELY difficult. The whole experience took months of readjustment for all of us. But it needed to happen for me to become the best version of myself and to change the financial trajectory for my parents, my siblings, myself. Staying under the security blanket of my tiny home town and family home would have changed NOTHING for my family. So I left my comfort zone, took the scholarship and ran towards my future.

I want to encourage you to do the same - escape your comfort zone - find out who you can become.

Here in school, scare yourself by taking the most challenging classes here at CVHS.

Is there a leadership position in a school club here that interests you? Does it scare you to think of yourself actually leading the group? GOOD!

Go ahead: decide to terrify yourself! When a choice is presented that scares the heck out of you, decide to attack it and see where that leads you. You know what? The opposite of this is very sad...that's the coulda, shoulda, woulda regrets you'd feel later...The decisions you *might* have made.

Here's YOUR key takeaway: **On the other side of fear, on the other side of that terror, is the best version of yourself.**

That's where life is the most fulfilling and it's how you can live a life filled with miracles...decades later you can say, "Wow, I really did that!"

Earlier I shared the story of my principal who suggested I belong somewhere like Harvard, the moment she set in motion the events that led me eventually to Berkeley.

So...Let's do this: Everyone please stand up.

Please sit down if both of your parents are college graduates. Thank you.

Please sit if at least one of your parents is a college graduate. Thank you.

Okay... now, if you're still standing right now, you're exactly like me at your age. 😊 You right here have the potential to change the trajectory of your family and your descendants, by choosing to become university scholars after high school graduation. Whatever improvements, dreams, wishes you have...YOU are positioned to pursue these successfully!

NOW, all of you stand up please....

I do not underestimate the power of somebody looking at you straight into your eyes and stating the potential they see. I am channeling the woman who sparked that fire of high expectations in me...In the memory of Faith Hamre: "I see YOU and YOU and YOU at an elite university someday, perhaps even Harvard."

ALL OF YOU. You are academically strong, you're here tonight. You're proving to yourself daily that indeed you can study and master anything!!



Please sit down... and promise yourself that from this moment forward, you will have both high confidence to step out of your comfort zone and have high expectations in yourselves. 😊

Cultural gifts

Because my parents insisted we speak Spanish I'm bilingual and fully bicultural....or as I say, AMBICULTURAL (because ambos means BOTH in Spanish) – 100% Mexican and 100% American....Because I'm bilingual I've worked in a U.S. Embassy in Quito, Ecuador, for a German telecom company and an Israeli solar electronics company. Ask me about the many professional opportunities I've enjoyed because I have surrendered NONE of my cultural gifts.

Can you tell I'm proud of my heritage, its innate creativity and its language? I am!

For you: please take this with you: CELEBRATE, HARNESS AND PRACTICE all your CULTURES. They are the mix of attributes that make you YOU. **So be you. Everyone else is already taken. :-)**

Look, the winners are, have been and will continue be those who IGNORE THE NOISE and EMBRACE THEIR precious CULTURAL GIFTS to differentiate themselves.

Please bring your AUTHENTIC complete self, with all your cultural elements, to all your work, your leadership, your writing, your ACTIVISM...and soon to your college application essays. Many, many

scholarship granting organizations are ready to fund your education, through your Ph.D if you want! So start this summer organizing your scholarship tracker. If you don't know what that is or how to create one, ASK ME.

REMEMBER THIS: YOU WILL BE SUCCESSFUL AS ADULTS AND PROFESSIONALS, AS YOU'RE DOING IN HIGH SCHOOL TODAY, WHEN YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO WANT YOU TO BE SUCCESSFUL...I've done this my entire life, especially at major life transitions. It works!

You're already on the path to leadership and excellence, as evidenced by your presence being recognized tonight. Let us mentor you to your next phase of greatness. We're here for you.

STRONG ENDING

Thank you for this honor to share pieces of my life of miracles with you, to help you peek into the brilliant futures I see for each and every one of you.

Remember to rise above any bigotry you see in the world. Rise above the noise. Always appreciate the gifts of your cultural heritage and be grateful for their resilience.

Always rise above anything or anyone who doubts your brilliancelearn to regularly step outside your comfort zone.

Let's find out who that best version of yourself is on the other side of fears you'll overcome as you adopt a mindset of high expectations for the rest of your lives.

Gracias and congratulations to you all, Castro Valley High Latinos!