

College of Arts & Sciences
Suffolk University
Commencement 2025

Undergraduate Speaker
Areta Odiah, BA '25

I am reporting to you live from Suffolk University's College of Arts and Sciences Commencement ceremony. I'm honored to be standing here in front of you today on one of the most memorable days of our lives. Thank you to the wonderful friends and family who continue to support us through thick and thin. Thank you to the hardworking faculty and staff, who diligently provide a wealth of knowledge every semester. Thank you to President Kelly, members of the Board of Trustees, Dean Sparks, and especially to the Class of 2025.
[APPLAUSE]

My fellow graduates, we've made sacrifices to get here, whether that was resisting the urge to use ChatGBT for an assignment, spending your last \$20 for an Oheppay's or McDonald's run. RIP Fajitas and Ritas. If you know, you know! Or sacrificing your eight hours of sleep by going delulu with your friends in a study room. We lived it all.

When I look at all of you, I see what it means to come full circle. I never once said, "Mom, when I grow up, I want to be a journalist." Never once said that. Oh, she knows! I said I wanted to be a racecar driver or something random like that. Yet here I am. The path wasn't planned. But maybe that's the point. Do our lives ever turn out exactly as we imagine? Maybe. Maybe not. Our journeys aren't linear, nor should they be.

You've heard the saying, there's a light at the end of every tunnel. I've never really agreed with that. Light doesn't only exist at the end. It is always around us. Even when we can't see it. It peeks through when we least expect it in all kinds of places, experiences, and situations. To me, that light represents our ability to learn, love, make mistakes, achieve it all, despite everything.

We're about to graduate into a world where so much has happened and is happening, locally and globally. Let's talk about what's not right. I recently accepted a full-time TV news reporting job. [APPLAUSE]

But here in this moment, I will not be censored. I'm appalled about what the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement believes is its protection of our national security. I'm also appalled with the current administration's dismantling of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives which impact us all. We cannot ignore what's wrong in our laws, our systems, our leadership. We have a responsibility not just as graduates, but as global citizens, to keep paying attention, speaking out, and fighting for what's right. [APPLAUSE]

I see you LGBTQI+ community. [APPLAUSE] I see you, Black and brown people. [APPLAUSE] I see you, first-generation students. [APPLAUSE] I see you Indigenous people. [APPLAUSE] I see differently abled and neurodivergent people. [APPLAUSE] I see you immigrants. [APPLAUSE] I see you religious minorities. I see all of you. We celebrate, and we recognize you. We may come from different parts of the world and walks of life. But we all have one thing in common, and that's our humanity.

Class of 2025, the world is not ready for us. [APPLAUSE] No. But it's going to have to be, because you've already proven to yourself, you can persevere. You can rise. You can find your beacon of light, because you are the light. Reporting live from Suffolk University for the very last time, I'm Areta Odiah. [APPLAUSE]