

STS Ceremony Speech:

STS Salvation

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Good Afternoon Family, Friends, Faculty and Graduates:

I would like to first, thank the STS Department for inviting me to speak today. I'm truly humbled and grateful for the opportunity to do so.

I'll have you know that this speech was NOT completed in quintessential Stanford fashion, instead of being completed an hour before the deadline, it was completed one whole day before it.

It is done in any event.

When I was approached to be one of the student speakers for today's ceremony. I knew exactly what I wanted to say. I wanted to talk about how STS saved me from the vicious, divisive and constraining dichotomy that exists at Stanford. That is the war between techies and fuzzies.

During my freshman year, I remember telling myself that I was going to use college to explore a new academic field that I did not yet know I enjoyed. In high school, I loved all subjects, namely English and Calculus. Those were my subjects. So I wanted to stray myself away from majors like English and Classics, and Math.

I had vague interest in law which has since been solidified. But all around me everyone was talking about technology. Everyone was taking 106A, discussing for loops, recursion, compilers and Karel. I did not know what they were talking about. I had been trapped amongst the so-called techies.

In addition to the techies' general muttering of technology I heard around me, I also felt some direct peer pressure to take Computer Science classes and to be already privy to computer science lingo. here was no one asking me or pressuring me to take a literature class or checking to see if I knew how to analyze a quote of Rousseau. Though, at the time, I was largely unaware of the tech world I was intrigued by the power of technology and how it was able to bring the theoretical math, I so loved, to life

It wasn't until I started hanging out with the so called "fuzzies" that I began to see some of passions born in my high school English class, resurfaced. These were the people I could speak French to and with whom I could discuss deliberative democracy. But when I asked them about Karel and for loops they started to get scared. They didn't even want to talk math or statistics with me. I thought it was rather strange that they cowered away from the technology and numbers that so dominated the techies life.

I saw this same fear in the techies but to essays and readings. That truly puzzled me. It irked me, because like I mentioned before, I am a math and English girl. I love it all. I want to read and code. I wanted to write essays and understand Ordinary Least Squared and logistic regressions. They both stimulated me and I did not want to choose.

By the time I had realized all of this, it was sophomore year and I was ready to settle on a major but I was torn. I loved Psychology, Chemistry, Linguistics and History. How was I going to major in all of those? That's when my Academic Advising Director suggested STS. She said "this is a good place to hone your interdisciplinary interest." That hope of finding a major lead me to set up a meeting with the assistant director of the program, Dr. Sato.

Dr. Sato challenged me in our meetings. She always asked me "why", "how come" and "so what?", every time that I explained to her some aspect of my identity. I really started to investigate into the subjects that I thought I was interested in. It was Dr. Sato that helped me figure out how marry my 'fuzzy' and 'techy' interests. How could I study law and technology? How could I write essays and code?

She showed me that there was an entire Center for Legal Informatics at the Law School. She showed me the work of Shelia Jasanoff and she introduced me to my honors thesis advisor who studied the intersection of law and tech.

I began to see that I wouldn't have to choose.

I then pursued an honors thesis that investigated the use of predictive algorithms in the criminal Justice system. I designed a concentration entitled the Politics of Data which looked at the how the legal system regulation new technology and how new technology was impacting the legal system.

My STS studies allowed me to travel to France, complete another major and write essays and code. I was able to discover new subjects I did not know I loved and obtained practical skills to deal with people and products.

The opposition between techy and fuzzy began to wane. In fact, I learned from STS that they are inextricably linked. I realized I did not have choose.

I didn't have to be techy or fuzzy.

I could be an essayist and product manager

A lawyer and statistician

I could be me.

Thank you STS for not stifling my potential with labels and for not categorizing the world into polarized opposites.

Thank you for letting me be me.

Thank you