

Diamond Award Speech

July 17, 2026

Thank you for recognizing my commitment to protect and defend the university — the terrain where powerful individual voices are cultivated, where an analytic and intelligent citizenry is formed, where true democracy is composed.

The university emancipated me. I came from a father who did not want me educated. But as I did my homework, read the assignments, and wrote my essays, I became powerful. I want that power for everyone.

You shine light on my work in the arena of leading the voices of the future film and performance makers and scholars to urge me forward. Obstacles will come — they waste time, money, and energy. I am still here standing above and refusing to drown. And from the target and crosshairs of abusive power, I will lead — with my moral compass, my experience, my perspective, and my presence, undeniable.

Thank you to the Not Alone Foundation for this Oscar of community and civic service. I will be stronger and more fabulous for your recognition. I go forth in your beloved company.