**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**SAWSAN MORRAR**

**HS EDIT 5/9/18 8 pm FINAL**

Friends, family, faculty, staff, distinguished guests, and j-school classmates—soon to be **professional** colleagues.. It is an honor to be standing here representing our class.

Some of you may wonder why your son, daughter, or friend is entering a field so **tenuous**, with mass layoffs, buyouts, and other trends impacting the way we channel current events.

Yes, we are living through unprecedented times.. tectonic shifts in the way we perceive and present the news that shakes and impacts us every day. The class of 2018 started “young and naïve” in the fall of 2016 and excitedly broke up in to reporting groups on the cusp of a presidential election. We tackled pertinent stories: Brian Krans covered California’s new soda tax, and gentrification reporters including Spencer Silva and Lauren Hepler covered marijuana legalization. With all of those late nights, each one of us VOLUNTARILY conducted independent research on munchies and midnight snacking... (**Wait for the laugh**). We made an election newsroom right here on campus: Reis Teebow brought champagne in great anticipation of HER win.

And then... SHE LOST. ... **and we had to WAKE UP (and GROW UP?)**

Some of us dragged our feet to class the next morning. We met with Dean Wasserman. What now? Some were speechless. Some cried. But it was at this moment that I realized that I cannot imagine a more momentous year to join the conversation, and the ranks…to what our president calls “The enemy of the American people.” And what better place to be for that ... at what’s arguably the highest acclaimed graduate school of journalism in the world.

As a journalist, I have been trained to keep my eyes and ears open to identify and chronicle the issues and facts that need to be heard. An integral part of our focus is to give voice to those previously unheard and to shine a light through the cracks of neglect, inequality, and marginalization. I look at this graduating class and I am inspired by the diversity that we represent. “Why?” you ask....Because minorities make up 14 percent of today’s newsrooms. **Just 14 percent**. 50 percent of our class identifies as a minority. 2 of us are children of refugees. A handful of us have family members affected by this government’s crackdown on undocumented residents. Out of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ students, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of us are women, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ identify as LGBT.... And…**WE** will be joining the news force.

In addition.... **20 percent** of us are the first in our families to earn bachelors degrees.

And now….**40 percent** of us sitting on this stage are the first in our immediate families to earn a post baccalaureate degree.

... As well as we are daughters and sons born of diversity, some of us are also mothers....Here at the j-school, there are 5 Berkeley cubs among this class. 5 sounds like a lot, but 3 of them are mine..... represent!!! In my family, journalism is a team sport!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ☺ Grace’s son Shey spent VERY late nights in the documentary lab as his mother edited her film on women who escaped Boko Haram, Julia’s toddler doesn’t yet understand the importance of her mother’s work covering the alarming statistics of pre-term birth rates in Fresno County... And my three girls spent some time with me in Fresno, as I reported on the affects that pesticide use has wreaked on children their age. They’re watching us as we chronicle the changes in the world around us. **They’re watching... and they’re listening**... My oldest daughter, an “honorary graduate,” has even demonstrated her reporting skills. The other day, she asked investigative reporter John Temple where he lived. San Francisco, he said. “Was your home built on top of a native American graveyard?” she asked. John may have been a bit taken aback by the question—but Jehan has spent enough days with John Temple to pick up some great skills.... and let’s face it, at **nine** years old, she’s a **VETERAN**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

It is a great privilege to be able to share this podium with the esteemed Jodi Kantor, who as you all know, broke the Harvey Weinstein story that catapulted the Me Too movement. One thing that Jodi and I share is that we are both mothers, and after receiving her Pulitzer prize, she talked about what her daughters will take away from this. I’ll leave that narrative to Jodi, but rest assured, our children... our legacies... are growing up very fast... they’re connected, they’re informed, and in their own innocent ways, they “download” and absorb the “zeitgeist.” It is our duty and responsibility to give them the foundation to thirst for and demand truth.

As graduates about to make an impact on what people hear and what and how they learn, I can’t help but think that “narrow mindedness is the scourge of progress.” I may be overstating the obvious, but it’s our mandate to work together, to provide varied, accurate, enriching reportage to the landscape. We are all partners in that mission, and it is up to us to support one another in seeking and reporting the truth.... and by that, I mean the **TRUTH** for **ALL OF US**... and as well as a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, information is only as powerful and effective as its authenticity and diverseness.

The author, Danielle Doby, said it best....

“be around the light bringers,

the magic makers, the world shifters,

they change you, break you open, uplift + expand you.

they don’t let you play small with your life.

these heartbeats are your people.

these people are your tribe.”

We are all part of a tribe... whether it’s our families or friends, our colleagues or our kindred spirits, we have partners. We have the capacity to “roll deep” as we stand up and do our part for the Fourth Estate. As well as Alfred Lord Tennyson declared, “I am part of all that I have met,” I’m grateful to the tribes that accept and support me for who I am... to my parents, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my husband and incredible partner, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my children, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who not only keep me on my toes but **REALLY** keep me legit, Thank you…for being **MY** tribe. And to all of my fellow graduates, mentors, critics, and conscience... thank you **TOO** for being my tribe!!! Congratulations and thank you all!!