

Western State College of Colorado
Commencement on Saturday the Eighth of May Two Thousand Ten
at Ten O'Clock

STUDENT ADDRESS

Will your dream live beyond you?

By Brittany "Bistro" Strode, Manga Cum Laude

I heard that recently someone said that college graduation is the end of childhood dreaming; it is the time to step up and be a grown up... and enter the dull grey of the "Real World." (I hear once you're in, you're in for life.) That sounds, honestly, dreary. Like weeks of stormy days on end, when you wake up to the dark sky and know exactly what to expect.

What if, instead of leaving our dreams to be adults, we become the generation that dreams adult-sized and greater dreams, and then, with grown up (or, at least, graduate) ambition, we actually fight to create a reality that welcomes and even demands those dreams?

What if we dreamt the multicolored, wild dreams that we used to: When we knew that it was possible for the rain to be flavored drops falling from bright clouds that splashed new, unimagined colors over the once cement walls of our minds. When we hoped for things bigger than we could achieve on our own, and the hope did not drown us in broken expectations... What if instead, we took up our swords and shields to the battlefield to fight for freedom. Freedom of a lost world where our dreams, and those dreams of our children do not return void, but with a reality stamped, seal of approval?

What if this was the world you were walking your black-robbed, tassel turning selves toward? What if our next step was not into the bleak world of the cubical and laptop commute to eternal repetition?

MLKJ is famous for having a dream. And it far outlasted him until it has become, and is still becoming a reality. When he spoke to others and shared that dream, his dream was at once latched onto by some and condemned to death by others.

Will your dream live beyond you? Can you dream bigger than yourself? Bigger then even a spouse and eventually, a family? Can you dream so big, that generations from now your dream that was so unbelievable today, becomes the foundation of thought in that far distant tomorrow?

That's where we tend to get lost. We have the dream, it's bigger than we can accomplish ourselves, we know it will better the world – but then we give up. What if your dreams look too big? Too impossible, like counting and naming each star in the moonless night?

I dare you to stand at the shore of that uncertainty and to not be overwhelmed. To stand at the edge of this unknown, this vast and great uncertainty and wade in; get your head wet, inundate yourself with uncertainty. Better yet, dive in, cannon ball like a kid, and splash those who are standing in fear at the edge. Let them know with the drops of water that land on their scared faces that the waters are fine, that uncertainty has a cleansing and simplifying nature.

The post-impressionist painter, the one without the ear, whose paintings take over the top 10 most expensive paintings ever sold – Van Gogh – yeah, he lived in uncertainty.

In his life he only sold one painting. One. But he was convinced that his commission, his calling, was to bring beauty into the world. He knew that he was designed to share the beauty in which he saw the world in a brush stroke, like in his painting *Starry Night*.

He died never knowing what a great affect his paintings would have on the art community, on the world. What he did know, and what kept him painting all 900 paintings in the 10 years he painted, was this: he said, “For my part I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes me dream.”

What makes you dream? What beauty draws the passion from your heart and onto the canvas? Are the stars a daunting expanse of uncertainty, or is it that unknown that stirs you to imagine? What if...?

Let's get down to the nitty gritty. I want to be clear on this one thing. Do not. Seriously, do not stop at the dream. Your head can be in the sky, yes, but your feet are planted here. It is **here** that your dream becomes reality.

You know that feeling, in the morning when you wake because your alarm clock is screaming in your ear, and you aren't quite awake? But you dream that you get up and turn off your alarm clock. But, oh what?! it's still beeping just as loud?

Yeah, I hate to let you down, but you can't turn off a real alarm clock with a dream hand. Yeah, it's the same concept with dreaming big. It's still called a “dream” because that's all it is. But that's how it starts.

You may be sitting here thinking, “Girl, you're just a dreamer, get your head back on your shoulders.” And I'm sure Martin Luther King Jr. and Van Gogh were told that their dreams were impossible too. That they were in pursuit of the “grass is greener” side of the fence. And they were. But that pursuit brought light into this world.

So you're right, I am a dreamer. I dream. I dream of freedom for you. For the freedom from the shackles of your mind. That you would believe, and better than that, that you would **know** that you are capable of bringing light into this world. That you would understand the deep and gigantic potential that lives in you.

Back to America's dreamer, MLKJ – In 1994, his dream spread worldwide as the first equal election was held in South Africa. Finally, blacks voices could be heard as equals in the government, and as a result Nelson Mandela was elected as president. Mandela, in his inaugural speech , quoted Marianne Williamson. He quotes:

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us most.

We ask ourselves, 'Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and famous?' Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

With your feet planted on the ground, in reality, but your head in the sky with a commission: I dare you to dream.

Go to a place that is so beautiful and sacred, be it the Delicate Arch at sunset, Gothic Mountain in the moonlight, the Sistine Chapel in Italy or the Great Wall in China, where ever, and when you are in that place, that sacred and beautiful place, believe in something bigger than you. Believe that things greater than you can be accomplished, because they can. And they have, look around you. Destiny is written on the faces of the students next to you. It is students like them, like, you, who created this very learning institution you are graduating from. Graduating into destiny, you could say.

I don't know your destiny, I'm not big enough for that. But I know that with each choice you make you are choosing **your** destiny. So make a choice then, what are you going to do with your dream? Will you return to the cement walls in your mind, the confines in which you live. (And when I use the word "live" I use it loosely, because there are those who are alive, breathing and

eating, and there are those that truly LIVE. My dream is that you would be the latter. But I digress.)

This country is one of those dreams turned into mortar to be the foundation of our thinking. Of course we have rights. Of course our religion should not be determined by a king. Of course we don't have to have the same beliefs as our presidents. We are "Free." And **these**, the very rights we stand on, began as a dream. They began as a wild man's rant until the blueprints began to form and ships set sail for new worlds and pioneers set out to discover and fight for a world that for generations to come, dreams could be made into reality.

This is the world you live in, and there are dreams, like colored rain, available to you who dare stick out your tongue and catch, as it falls from bright clouds, the flavor of your destiny. And then swallow, breath in the scent of hope and step into battle, for a new reality.

Take up your sword then, be it pen, brush, computer, calculator, beaker or what have you, and begin today, to make the dreams of our childhoods the reality of our future.