

Se Puede, Pero No Solo - It Can Be Done, But Not Alone
Carlos Turcios '15, '17 M.A.

Hello and thank you all for joining us today! As Marian said, I am one of three Coordinators within i3b, however, I am also a double UMBC alum, getting my two Bachelor's in Sociology and Psychology and most recently my Master's in Applied Sociology in 2017. For those who know me, I frequently say that UMBC has been my home away from home post-high school and is a community that I have seen grow for a little over a decade. I am grateful to continue to be working in a community that has given me so much. This is because UMBC has not solely been a place that has developed me academically and professionally, but has been a community where I have developed some of my closest friendships and countless meaningful mentorships. Within my current staff role, I have the privilege of being able to not only bring my full self into my work but also have my identities supported, celebrated, and affirmed.

In the years that I have been working at i3b, I have met and worked with so many students including some of the faces I see here. The point of why I am sharing this is not because to talk about myself but to tell you why our Chapter decided to bring back this meaningful program.

You may now be wondering why I am not speaking English. Like many others in the UMBC community, I grew up speaking another language at home. Last year when I started thinking of bringing back this program with my fellow alums and colleagues, I was reminded by others that dozens if not hundreds of parents, friends, and other loved ones come to various graduations and commencement in support of our graduates but do not understand English. Although I wish I could represent everyone here today by speaking all the languages spoken in our beautiful diverse community, I can at least demonstrate my bicultural identity by utilizing the biggest gifts my parents could have given me. (Maybe next year I can try out my rusty French again! lol) Although not perfect, having access to another language gave me access to not only my culture, and my other fellow Hispanophones, including my extended family back in El Salvador.

As a first-generation student, first-generation American, gay Mestizo Latino I know that seeing where I am now is a privilege. Like many other immigrants from my parent's region during the 1980's era, my parents escaped with close to nothing during a time El Salvador was dealing with war. They were undocumented and lost everything in the process. They met here but both had the dream to develop a new life in the States in the hopes that their children would have access to an education. Yes, I am grateful that their decision allowed me to be where I am but I am reminded that I am here today because of their sacrifice and from their care, love, and support throughout my upbringing. I have

heard from countless others similar stories of having to fill FASFA the first time, never having a parent be able to show up for a PTA meeting or having to navigate the college experience alone. It's scary, stressful, nerve-wracking. However, I hope you take some time today and in the upcoming weeks to reflect upon the resilience you have shown to get you here and be mindful of those around you who were there along the way. Yes, celebrate you, but I ask that you send a text, letter, email, or another form of communication to thank those who you consider to be part of your community. Whether you decide to continue your education or jump into your first full-time job, check back in with those who contributed to your story. As a staff member, I will be the first one to admit that I love to hear what our previous students are up to!

As for those parents, guardians, friends, loved ones, and staff and faculty, I want to say thank you, not just for me but for caring and pushing all of the graduates to be our best selves. Regardless of what language you speak or where you come from, we are all lucky that love has no borders or language. Thank you, you have no idea how much you mean to us!

Thank mom, dad, and little sister. You mean so much to me!

With that being said, let's celebrate our graduates!!