



## THE CASE FOR INCLUSION

News and Legal Analysis on Issues Related to Diversity and Inclusion

### AiVi Nguyen's Message to Community College Grads: Own Your Story

BY SAMANTHA P. MCDONALD • JUNE 6, 2019

"We each have our own unique story. There are so many things that happen to us in our lives that we cannot control. But the one thing we can always control is how we tell our story." That was the message delivered by Bowditch Partner [AiVi Nguyen](#) to the graduates of Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) in Worcester on May 23, 2019, who she referred to as "our future."

In his introduction of Nguyen, QCC President Dr. Luis Pedraja said that the graduates asked for a commencement speaker who was "like them" and someone who "could and would inspire them."

Unlike the typical commencement speech, where the keynote is full of general platitudes about life, Nguyen spoke directly to QCC's Class of 2019 — looking them in the eye and never relying on her notes, as the good trial lawyer she is. Debunking the stigma associated with community colleges, she reminded the graduates that their lives were likely full of challenges that the typical college student never has to face — like those for immigrants, single parents and veterans. While sharing her personal story of struggle, she reflected that "we are not defined by our challenges or the circumstances in our lives that we can't control. We are defined by how we respond to those challenges and circumstances." Instead of being embarrassed, she urged the graduates to "be proud of those challenges and own your story."

Nguyen stressed the value in being different, in being unique, and empowered the graduates to feel proud of how far they have come. Her message was well received by the graduates, who gave her a standing ovation, many with tears in their eyes.

You can [watch AiVi's full commencement speech here](#).