



2012 Broad Prize Scholar Remarks by Katrina Gonzales

Thank you Mr. McGinity.

As the daughter of a teen mom and an incarcerated father who grew up near the poverty line, all the odds were stacked against me. At the age of 13, my mother dropped out of the eighth grade to care for my eldest sister, her first child, and my father went no further than the 12th grade. My unlikely academic success reflects the hard work and encouragement of teachers and a school that refused to let me fail. I attended one of the most academically prestigious public schools in San Antonio, Health Careers High School in the Northside Independent School District, and struggled to succeed as I mowed lawns to help my family make ends meet.

Health Careers High is a magnet school and I was accepted when my name was pulled in the school's admission lottery. The academics were rigorous. My peers were mostly middle and upper class kids whose parents had been to college. In contrast, the local school I would have attended was plagued by gang activity, drug use, teen pregnancy and high dropout rates. By the time I entered high school, I had survived a childhood riddled with domestic violence, poverty, abuse and an alcoholic father. My teachers came early and stayed late to tutor me and taught with more than enough enthusiasm to inspire me to hold on to my love of learning.

In my crowded three-bedroom home where 12 people lived, the kitchen pantry was my study space. I could keep the light on in there without disturbing my sleeping family members, including two of my sisters who I shared a small bedroom with. The obstacles standing between me and a college education disappeared with every class in which I made an "A" instead of a "C." I ultimately increased my high school GPA from a 2.6 to a 3.5 by my senior year.

I'm proud to report that this spring, I graduated from Amherst College with a bachelor's degree in history, and next month I will travel to Ethiopia where I plan to teach elementary school students.

The Broad Prize has played an important role in helping make my education financially tenable, but it has also reminded me that there are people who are concerned with helping more students like me beat the odds. Even when that means believing in young people who perhaps don't get off to a perfect start—but within whom a fiery drive to flourish resides. I could not be more grateful to have The Broad Prize make college possible and the confidence this foundation inspired me to have in myself will be with me always.

Thank you.