I read somewhere that home is a process
It takes time
And lots of patience
It takes patience to accept that this home in the making can never be the homeland you want it to be
Because somewhere along the way
Those roots you rep so hard with the sway of your hips and the ease in your dance
They were torn out of the ground
Left the earth to bleed barren
Cry out for her children
Like la llorona she yelled to us across the barbed wire that cut her voice into fragments of tongue until we could no longer recognize our native language
Those roots were replanted elsewhere
Replanted in a place that doesn’t look like you
It takes time
It takes time to realize that even though this home can never be comfortable
There is comfort in solidarity
Comfort in knowing that home is not just a process for you
Home is a process for most everyone you meet
This process, we wear it on our skin
Taste it in our accents
Feel it in our chests
Home is a process
And as I write this......

I can recognize my process in the people my heart holds close. La gente que me ha ayudado a triunfar. Mi gente that has helped me survive in this hostile place. My community that has helped, understood, and loved me throughout this process of shedding, unlearning, redefining, and ultimately recreating an identity that I am proud to hold true. As a first generation college student, as a daughter of undocumented immigrants, having a community on this campus gave me the ganas I needed to succeed on this campus. As I stand here today, I recognize my process, my struggle, my faith, and my love for each and every one of the raza students graduating with me today. Today, we are here for ourselves, for our familias—both chosen and by blood—for our barrios, our hoods, our vast number of comunidades, but today, we are here for each other too. We are here to uplift each other the same way we have for the past couple of years whether we found ourselves organizing alongside each other, supporting one another at fundraisers, or simply sharing a study space. Today, I am here because of you all and vice versa. That’s the thing about In Lak’ech. We are each other. We might be the seeds our ancestors buried in the soil but we are also the light, the sustenance we needed to help each other flourish and thrive in an institution we know was not made for us to do so. I am overwhelmed with pride at how many of us are sitting here, willfully, defiantly rooted in soil meant to bury us alive. Las ganas de vivir, de triunfar, de amar, y de luchar han alimentado nuestros logros. Son los sacrificios, las raíces de nuestras familias que nos han brindado fuerza suficiente para florecer mas alla de lo que este sistema educativo habia pensado. We are here in spite of the statistics, the adversity, the odds stacked against us. We are here surviving and thriving, ready to continue reaching towards the sun with the strength we inherited from generations of raza before us. Though this piece of paper we are about to receive will open countless doors for opportunities unimaginable without a college degree, to me, this is the reward—knowing that we made it. As a collective, we made it. So, this graduation, this moment is for mi gente porque sin ustedes, nada de esto seria posible. All of y’all up here with me today, cross that stage knowing that our journey has only begun and that this expensive, EXPENSIVE piece of paper gives us the responsibility to plant more seeds, create more access to the privilege of education we have just reaped the benefits of. Now it’s up to us to nurture nuestras raíces and continue to lay it down the way only raza can. Congratulations Raza Grad class of 2016, we did it!