

David Murray '77

Pomona College Commencement 2012

May 13, 2012

Wow. Okay. Thank you all. Thank you, Bobby.

Good morning graduates, Oxtoby, all of the alumni, my family — I'm so happy they all came. This is an opportunity for us to have a family reunion. I live in Paris with my wife, Valerie, and our two kids, so thanks for the family reunion as well.

I'd like to dedicate this honorary degree to my father, the late Walter Pendleton Murray, and my mother, the late Katherine Hackett Murray. And also to my stepmother, who's here today: Myrna Murray. She came all the way from Middleton, Texas for this. I would also like to thank a gentleman who's no longer with us: Mr. John Payton, for his efforts and guidance as the Claremont Colleges' admissions officer, who initially recruited me to Pomona College from St. Mary's College Prep High School.

Also, Margaret Cohen, who was my piano teacher here, and her husband, who was a great composer, Karl Cohen, for their dedication as well. She helped me to excel through Béla Bartók's creations. And there are some friends here as well — the thing is, about these colleges: I met so many incredible people in the few semesters I was here. One gentleman, Cedric Johnson, from CMC, he's just been honored recently at CMC for his efforts in business. Also, two other friends from CMC: Claris Anthony Bush, who is one of the head economists for the FCC in Washington, and he's here today as well. And also another gentleman from CMC, a friend of mine. Actually, he's more of a brother: attorney Tim Wright — there he is over there. Now this gentleman, he hangs out with people like Bill Clinton. He brought me over to South Africa during the time they were having the clinical trial on a cure for AIDS. He was spearheading it with funds from great African American athletes and he brought me as a music ambassador to entertain his trail. So that was wonderful, and you just never know the kind of people you'

leave Pomona and stay in New York, but I had no chance. After sending them all these records and all these awards, Grammys and this and that, they were like, "Well...okay."

What they really wanted was this Pomona College diploma. Well, as it turned out, it just took a lot longer to receive this, thanks to the support of all these incredibly talented people. I remember once I got on a plane — and I don't travel in first-class all the time but I just happened to be in first-class that day — and I was sitting, writing some music, and a guy started up a conversation with me. He was looking at my music. He finally said his name was Khris Kristopherson and I was like, "Oh, okay." When I mentioned that I went to Pomona, all of a sudden he was my new best friend. These are the kind of people you meet here at Pomona.