



Spring 4-24-2018

MALANA Graduating Seniors Honored at Multicultural Graduation

Kalen Gray
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

Recommended Citation

Gray, Kalen, "MALANA Graduating Seniors Honored at Multicultural Graduation" (2018).
News and Events. 3605.
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/3605>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at The Ames Library at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

MALANA Graduating Seniors Honored at Multicultural Graduation

Contributed by Kalen Gray '20, Office of Diversity and Inclusion

▷ [Photo Gallery](#)

April 24, 2018

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – It is graduation season at Illinois Wesleyan University. From [Lavender Graduation](#) to official [Commencement](#), there are plenty of opportunities to celebrate academic successes. One of those ceremonies, [Multicultural Graduation](#), participates in a culture of embracing scholastic achievements for Illinois Wesleyan students of color.

Multicultural Graduation is usually held a few weeks before Commencement and gives students of color the chance to reflect upon their journey here at IWU. For so many MALANA (Multiracial, African-American, Latino-Hispanic, Asian-American and Native American) students, racial identity is something that is truly important in how students perceive their experiences and navigate the climate of a predominantly white institution (PWI).

A lot of these same students have participated in the [MALANA Pre-Orientation](#) program, where

they were given the opportunity to come to campus three days earlier than [Turning Titan](#) first-year students. MALANA Pre-O students are offered the chance to get acquainted with the area and to build relationships with students who look like them. Many of us will tell you it is an invaluable experience and probably one of our fondest memories throughout our time at IWU.

On Sunday, April 15, the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#) (ODI) hosted the class of 2018's Multicultural Graduation in the Young Main Lounge. With 43 students participating, the event was one that allowed for the expression of many different feelings: Warmth, joy, anxiety, passion, and so many other feelings were evoked as baby pictures, current pictures, and student's thoughts were shared regarding their outlooks on the future.

The [Spanish And Latino Student Association](#) (SALSA) also gave a wonderful performance to the tune of "Remember Me," from the motion picture Coco's soundtrack. It was touching to see students tell each other that they'd always be there for each other. It was also refreshing to see faculty, staff, families and friends come out and to support students up to their last days on campus. As a sophomore, I wait in fear and anticipation for these moments of support and love from faculty, staff, and younger students.

At the core of this ceremony is a sense of community building. For these students, having a new home here makes a tremendous difference. It is the difference between surviving a hostile climate and thriving in a wholesome community. Having first-hand experience in this feeling, I have soon realized that the college experience is what you make of it. In the sense of these soon graduating seniors, the foundation of community has been developed, and it is up to us younger students to continue to erect the buildings of diversity.

Although this is a time of celebration, I am sad to see some of my favorite people leave school and enter the workforce or continue on to graduate studies. As a first-year student last year, many of these people embraced me and my peers like younger siblings, guiding us through the ins and outs of Illinois Wesleyan and abroad, all while cultivating us into better versions of ourselves.

Ultimately, the presence and impact of these students will remain here on campus through the younger people they influenced. That is something I hope to leave with the students who come here after me, as our experiences here as students of color extend beyond our personal observations and branch out to connect our work with students of the past's work. This is a collective effort.

Final Thought from the Writer

Once again, I would like to thank the class of 2018 for their support of my peers and me, as well as their many instances of creating a welcoming environment for us. Lastly, I would like to thank ODI and the other faculty and staff who participated and helped to make this graduation happen. If you haven't been to a Multicultural Graduation here, I strongly advise you to attend next year's.



Illinois Wesleyan Multicultural Graduation Class of 2018