



# N E W S

---

Compton College | Public Relations & Marketing Department  
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506  
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations  
Telephone: 310-660-3406 | Email: [agarten@elcamino.edu](mailto:agarten@elcamino.edu)

**For Immediate Release**

**June 27, 2017**

## **2017 Commencement Student Speaker Audrey Casas Overcomes Setbacks to Earn College Degree**

As an adult learner who returned to college after several attempts at completion of an associate degree, Lynwood resident Audrey Casas waited nearly 18 years to walk in a commencement procession. The associate degree for transfer graduate was honored to be selected as the student speaker at El Camino College Compton Center's 2017 Commencement Ceremony on June 8 – the same day it was announced that initial accreditation was granted to Compton College by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

In May, Casas authored a first-place spoken word poem entitled “Nueva Evolución” for the college's annual “Voices of Compton” journal and competition hosted by the Humanities Department that led her to apply, audition for, and ultimately be selected as the 2017 commencement student speaker. Her proud legacy includes the fact that her mother was the first female Hispanic Associated Student Body president at the former Compton College in 1995-96.

Casas received a standing ovation after delivering her commencement speech, which was written as a poem and encouraged all listening to never give up on their dreams. She began, “we all have reasons to quit or not start at all and forever wonder what might have been. In contrast, we can push ourselves to the limit and realize a potential that we have never seen.”

Her resilience has paid dividends. Casas was accepted to seven universities and will transfer to the University of California, Irvine this fall where she plans to major in English. Passionate about supporting at-risk youth, her goal is to become a secondary teacher in alternative education, then to obtain a master's degree and move into educational administration.

Casas has overcome many barriers to complete her higher education, including being a high school dropout who eventually earned a certificate of proficiency, financial hardship, substance abuse, and dropping out of college three times. Now 14 years sober, she never gave up on her dream and is grateful her children motivated her to stretch

- more -

## Compton Commencement Student Speaker 2-2-2-2

beyond what she thought was possible. Her favorite words to live by come from British author George Eliot: “It is never too late to be what you might have been.”

She is a hard-working mother of two sons (Bruno, 12 and Zuess, 2) whose husband Saul provides a supportive presence. She works full time as a secretary at the Lynwood Unified School District. As a certified drug and alcohol counselor, she uses her experiences with substance abuse to help students in the district who find they are facing similar challenges. She says her extremely full schedule the last few years has been “beyond challenging, but not impossible” as she worked toward obtaining her associate degree.

Regular visits to the counseling office to stay on track for transfer, Supplemental Instruction/peer-assisted study sessions, tutoring services and the Library-Student Success Center were all instrumental in Casas success.

“I appreciated the college’s small campus because it provides a sense of family,” says Casas. “The professors are approachable, supportive and personally invested in students.”

She concluded her memorable commencement speech with this call to action for her fellow graduates: “Go share this gift of education and help others who struggle in the hood. Let us not run away and never look back to the place where we once stood...Rise from the ashes like the Phoenix and soar above the fiery haze! Compton Tartars mount up and spread out, everyone grab a corner of this world and set it ablaze!”

### **Photo available online:**

<http://www.compton.edu/adminandoperations/publicrelations/images/2017/AudreyCasas2017.jpg>

### **About Compton College**

Compton College is the community’s education solution offering a full complement of transfer and degree courses, as well as career and technical education. Students may earn an associate degree or certificate, transfer to a four-year university or train for a career. Compton College is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.

###