Antioch's 11th Commencement Inspires Graduates, Attendees



FRANCHESCA SMITH

JUN 24, 2025

Share

As 15 Antiochians crossed the commencement stage, the energy and inspiration in the room was palpable.



President Jane Fernandes began the ceremony with inspirational remarks illuminating the light and hope that Antioch College students bring to the world in uncertain times. She also spoke of Shelby Chestnut's '05 pivotal leadership as Chair of the Board of Trustees, thanking him for a decade of service to the institution.

Student Mars Bonilla-Gilgenbach helped center and prepare the audience with the reading of Antioch College's Land Acknowledgement. Chestnut, Coco Gagnet '18, President of the Alumni Board, and Provost Brian Norman also gave remarks. Norman recognized this year's recipients of the SOCHE Awards and the Horace Mann Student Excellence Awards.

Graduate Lee Wade moved many to tears as he shared his deeply personal experience at Antioch College and called on his peers to go out into the world and create a culture of true community wherever they land.

> "Let us be the people who listen, who uplift, who create spaces where others feel seen and valued. Let us be the people who make room at the table. Let us be the ones who ask, 'What are your pronouns?' Let's create spaces where people don't have to explain why they deserve respect," he said.



Wade's words and call to action will undoubtedly stay with many long after the celebratory afternoon.

As this year's keynote speaker, The Rev. Dr. William Barber II began his remarks, he noted that he will not soon forget Wade's p
energy buzzed throughout the Foundry Th
each and every person regardless of age, re
collective movement demanding peace and
going through now is not the worst thing v
said.

The Rev. Dr. Barber wove the teachings of
emphasizing that God is for everyone and
caring for and fighting for marginalized gr

"Extremist politicians of His [Jesus] day tri
of Nazareth and declared that God was cor
the blind and the sick and the imprisoned
they did not matter. This is the work that we are trying to engage in," he said.



Discover more from The Antiochian

Official Alumni Publication of Antioch College and th
Antioch College Alumni Association

Enter your email...

Subscribe

By subscribing, you agree to Substack's Terms of Use, and
acknowledge its Information Collection Notice and Privacy Pol

Already have an account? Sign in



As The Rev. Dr. Barber closed his remarks, he called on “anyone with a heart” to join him at the front of the theater saying “it’s time for us to stand together, it’s time for us to move together, it’s time for us to fight together, it’s time for us to believe together. . . . let’s shock this nation with the power of love.”



Antioch graduates listening to the words of The Rev. Dr. Barber are about to embark on new journeys, ones that will take them to new communities and challenge them to use their bold voices to be the change they want to see in the world.

Help us celebrate the following 2025 Antioch College graduates.

Skunk Birkemeier —

"After graduating, I plan on taking a gap year or two to build up finances before I enter into graduate school to receive a Masters Degree (and, at some point, a PhD), continuing on from my Bachelors degree in Feminist Literary and Cultural Studies. From this, I plan to eventually become a professor in Literature and Culture from a Neuroqueer Feminist framework, specializing in intersectional Critical Disability Studies and Critical Neurodivergence Studies approach. Within this, I prioritize poetry as a mode of raising social consciousness, understanding, and love through its deeply emotive functioning. Currently I am constructing a pedagogy in this regard, and I will continue to expand upon it in graduate school as I continue to learn more."

Shelby Douglas –

"My favorite co-op was my first one. I was in Columbus, OH with an Alumni who had her own private practice law firm. Through her I learned about the educational law field, went to my first pride, tried Ethiopian food for the first time and went to a few networking events for attorneys in the area! It was so cool and helped solidify my plans to go into law."

Dan Dynan

Jen Freeze

Rayy Graham

Makaela Hall –

"My favorite co-op was at Aero Collective in Los Angeles . I enjoyed working at an architecture firm since that is my dream job and exploring a new city. My next plans are I will be attending graduate school in New York for Architecture."

Trinity Harris-Brewer

Saul Martinez Velazquez

Pamela Martinez-Ibarra

Bridget Padilla

Sawyer Perry —

“As of right now, I'd like to continue working for the water department in Dayton, Ohio. I've been working with them as a lab assistant for Water Supply & Treatment since January, starting my last co-op there in Winter 2025, and I've come to enjoy their community. The hope is for me to continue working there, either in the same department or transferring over to Water Reclamation - both of which I'm more than excited to happen. However, if it doesn't, I'd like to look into Public Works and, if possible, volunteer to be a land monitor for Tecumseh Land Trust again if time allows it.”

Chanel Phillips —

“When I graduate, I plan to work at the Yellow Springs Community Children’s Center in the fall as a co-op and hope to work there more in the future. My future plan is to keep educating and working with kids.”

Lee Wade

Luke Waryck —

“I only went to one co-op because I was a transfer student. However, I only needed one as going to Chicago to work for Phillip Brigham was enough to set me down a path I now quite enjoy. Chicago is an intricate and quirky city, while being incredibly easy to navigate. The work boiled down to one word was fun. Genuinely fun. I now know I want to go to law school and become an attorney, and for all that made that happen, I am grateful. I will be studying for my LSAT while working full time in the hopes of going to Law School in 2026.”

Ayden Westmoreland

Subscribe to The Antiochian

Launched 2 years ago

Official Alumni Publication of Antioch College and the Antioch College Alumni Association

Type your email... Subscribe

By subscribing, you agree to Substack's Terms of Use, and acknowledge its Information Collection Notice and Privacy Policy.

← Previous

Next →

© 2026 Antioch College Alumni Association · Privacy · Terms · Collection notice
Substack is the home for writing, podcasting, and media founders.