

Good afternoon, everyone.

My name is Jamila Owens, and it is an honor to stand before you today as someone whose life has been shaped by service, sacrifice, and the extraordinary power of community and support.

I am the youngest of seven children of U.S. Army Sergeant Anthony Owens, who passed away in 2021 due to a service-connected illness. My father's military service has always meant the world to me. Growing up, saying "my dad's in the military" wasn't just something I said, it was a badge of honor, and I never missed an opportunity to tell people. I was so proud of my dad. He wasn't just my hero; he was a hero to everyone around him. His courage, his sacrifice, and his commitment to something greater than himself guided me throughout my childhood and shaped my morals and values.

My journey with loss began long before I lost my father. When I was nine years old, my brother passed away just five months before graduating high school. Losing a sibling at such a young age changed the way I understood family, resilience, and the fragility of life. And in that moment of heartbreak, it was my dad who held our family together. He carried us through that loss with strength. He taught us how to grieve, how to keep going, and how to honor my brother's memory without losing ourselves in the pain. That experience shaped me deeply, and it made the loss of my father years later even more profound.

One of the values my father instilled in me from a young age was the importance of education. He believed that learning opens doors, shapes futures, and honors the sacrifices of those who came before us. Being able to pursue my education, and now stand here today, is one of the ways I feel closest to him. I'm grateful that I get to honor that part of his legacy.

When my father passed, I wasn't sure what my future would look like. Even as a full-time student working a job, I knew my father wouldn't have wanted me to quit. He would have wanted me to push through and find a way to keep going. He always told me that my education was the one thing no one could ever take from me. When Children of Fallen Patriots stepped in, it felt like a weight was lifted off my shoulders. Their support didn't just help me pay for college, it gave me the freedom to truly experience it. Because of them, I was able to immerse myself in my academics, my campus community, and my own personal growth without the weight of financial stress. That stability changed my life in ways I will forever cherish.

With their help, I graduated from California State University, Long Beach with degrees in Communication Studies and Public Relations. And today, I've come full circle. I now work for Children of Fallen Patriots, the very organization that once lifted me up. I am incredibly

grateful to be part of a team that uplifts and empowers the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Every day, I honor my father's legacy by helping others like me.

Thank you for believing in this mission and thank you for helping ensure that the children of our fallen heroes are never forgotten. Your support allows me to carry my father's legacy forward with pride and to live out the future he worked so hard to give me.