

Acknowledgments

An enormous thank you to everyone who has supported me over the last few years. This has been a tough year for my family, with my sister, Charis, passing away in December of 2003 from a six year battle with cancer. I mention this because of the tremendous impact her bright life and struggle has had on me – my entire collegiate academic career, my present research, and where I am heading. While she lived only 26 years on Earth, her life and story have touched thousands. Everything I do is dedicated to my sister; I'm keeping my promise...

To my loving parents, Doug and Sally Phillips, you have been exemplary role models through these tough times. I proudly can say that both of my parents are also two of my best friends. You both have shown me how to act, what real love is between two people, and how to maintain during the most stressful of times. Since Charis passed away, I have often thought about how much quality content you both deposited in Charis and I. While it might not always have been cool to have had a dad that was a fiery Southern Baptist preacher that shook the pew with loud Amen's every Sunday, I can't help but see my father's influence in how I speak to people. My mom is the kindest, most caring person I have ever met. My mother never stops working. If she watches TV, she is grading papers, or reading the newspaper while also making tea (for someone else – probably me). I respect what my parents do; they both provide services to people. I try to be as humble as you both are in all my actions. I love you!

To my girl, Linda Kim: I am so happy that we have adapted and renewed our relationship after turbulent times. Sometimes it is hard to keep focused on the big picture. I feel that we are doing that now! I love you.

To my current network of friends in San Diego, you guys are the best. To the number one soldier, Neil Stuber. Brother, you were the last friend that I thought would have come out here to grad school, but are one of the most talented artists I have ever met. NYC is lucky to get you. Corrie Colbert, thank you for always asking me if I want to go to the beach, even though I was stuck in my work-mode half of the time. Patrick Deegan, you are the ultimate word smith, and a great friend. Thanks for helping me see that I too can write and connect my ambitions with a textual articulation of my ideas – the collaboration is only beginning. In nine quick months I've become great friends with Fox Harrell. You are such a great inspiration to me. It is rare to meet someone that is able to connect diverse cultural interests with superior intellect, and still play some full-court, and then write a paper on multi-sorted algebra. Take care of your soon to be wife, Sneha. I will be seeing you both in Berkeley to play Capoeira.

I also don't want to forget the various people who have come in and out of focus while in San Diego: Joel Swanson, Rachel Egenhoefer, Nathaniel Clark, Matt Hope, and Kevin Wingate. All of you all have shaped my life in enumerable ways. Although we might not be in sync, I know that our ideas and time together has shaped my current course immeasurably.

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Finally, thanks to my entire family. I hope you all understand what I do now.