

Good morning Millburn High School and happy graduation day.

Friends, Family, Romans, Countrymen lend me your ears, I'm kidding, don't worry, that was eighth grade but you should've seen the way you all just jumped in your chairs. On a day as glorious as today, I'd like to start with some way-past-due, way-too-few thank yous. Thank you to all the families and friends for joining us today, for supporting us over the last 18 years, and possibly for many more to come! Mom and Dad, sorry again in advance for choosing English. A million thank yous to the dignified faculty and administration for guiding us and enriching us over the years, and for giving our diplomas their significance and true meaning. We wouldn't be a quarter of the people we are today without your tests and lectures, your leads by example and your impactful life lessons, regardless of how much we may or may not have disliked them at the time. Thank you to our advisor Senora Vazquez, to Mrs. Jordan and the rest of Senior Celebration committee for making this week and this year as amazing as it was. Thank you to my other class officers, Kendall, Anshul and Melissa for being the real MVPs. Lastly, a big thank you to my amazing class. Look at us. We made it. So let's get into it.

When I was little kindergartener in Miss Miller's class at Hartshorn elementary, as I'm sure many of you also did in your similar but slightly inferior elementary schools, we'd fill out these little 'Who Are You' questionnaires to practice both handwriting and self-expression. A few weeks ago, I found mine. It said my favorite animal was a jellyfish, my favorite song was "Who Let the Dogs Out" and that I wanted to be a milkman when I grew up. You know, all very standard for a six-year-old. But then at the bottom, under 'my biggest fear I had listed, 'being locked in public places'. Locked in public places? What does that even mean? Well, whenever restaurants, museums, or schools even hinted at darkening and emptying for the night, I'd get all

jittery and need to exit immediately. In an almost constant panic, I'd always feel like I was somewhere I definitely shouldn't be, like I was in a place where I wasn't wanted at that moment--if ever at all.

So when I looked back at this questionnaire from 12 years ago, I was expecting, as I'm sure we all do when we look back at our recess-filled glory days, to see change. I mean, everything else has changed. Look at who we are now compared to who we were 12 years ago. Think about how our stained sweatpants and Soffe shorts became pastel Vineyard Vines and Lulu Lemon leggings, how Saturday afternoons at Gero Park became Friday nights on the town, how we traded Leapsters for Gameboys for flip phones for decidedly non-nutritious Apples, how the Suite Life of Zack and Cody and Zoey 101 and Spongebob became Thirteen Reasons Why, The Office and well, still Spongebob. These same big changes occurred all throughout school too: we once potted and nursed plants and now we understand every single detail of how Photosynthesis does it all by itself. The novels we read matured from Magic and Kindness to Racism and Transcendentalism and occasionally allowed us to say curse words in class, math is now made up almost entirely of letters, American history apparently doesn't end in 1850 as we learned as Juniors, and for Language? Well, "todavía no sé lo que estoy diciendo". Sounds pretty though. Change has taken curious, fidgety 6 year-olds and made them into humble, intellectual, slightly-less-fidgety adults. It has defined the last 12 years of our lives. Just looking at my questionnaire; I no longer bark back when the Baha Men lose their dogs, I've become more of a Hedgehog guy, and, Mom and Dad, at least English is better than being a Milkman, right? But if change is everywhere and is inevitable, why then, do I still get wound up around closing times? Why am I still afraid of being locked into public places?

In 2018 however, in this world we live in today, maybe it's not that out-of-the-ordinary to be afraid all things public. Not to detract from the joyous pride we should all be feeling today, but our senior year, the big two-oh-one-eight, was kind of a toughy. Here at home, we had to watch as our Freshman were gifted fancy new chromebooks that seemed to actually work on BYOD, watch as a Philadelphia team won the super bowl, and watch as our beloved Millburn Deli tested our devotion and raised their prices. Then we had to watch as the rest of the world faced real struggle. Outside of our Millburn bubble, hurricanes crippled already struggling societies, our government leaders became as polarized as ever, and devastating school shootings ended the lives of innocent high schoolers just like ourselves. As we sat in our classes and learned to become better people, the world around us seems only to be getting worse. Where does this group of humble, intellectual people belong in a world full of ego and hurt? There seems no place for Key Clubs or charity concerts. There seems no place for us. After all this studying and learning, growing and enduring, could it be that the world is trying to padlock us out? Could it be that we, the class of 2018, are not wanted?

Let's talk about the class of 2018. If you look at it holistically, the this group stands alone in ways that already scream change. And I'm not talking about the screaming change we demand from our teachers when our final grades end in point 4. Though that happens too. We are the last class to graduate on the old schedule. We are the first class whose football team made the state playoffs with the help of its roaring student section. We are the last class to really do the Action Research project. We are the first class to break gender barriers and wear all blue robes at graduation. We are one of the last classes who made it through elementary without the omnipresence of social medias and group chats. We are one of the first classes whose

record-breaking participation won us Battle of the Classes as juniors, and then again as Seniors. We boast D1 and pro-bound athletes with state titles, future Broadway stars heading to incredible BFA programs, first chair violinists, quiz bowl kings, robotics champs, and some of the best artists, dancers, debaters, writers, bridge-builders, stage-crewers, science olympiaders, comp-sciers, accapellers and 462ers you've ever seen. And you don't even want to see what happens when this groups hits the prom dance floor.

But what really defines our grade is that beyond all the unsurprisingly Millburn accolades and accomplishments, our grade is made up of good people. Good people who are always looking to help others, regardless of whether they've been friends for 12 years or never at all. Good people who never rest on their Yanny's or on their Laurels or yodel away all their sorrows. Good people who want to enjoy life, who want to see each other thrive, who want to build a community that accepts all and shames none, that can persevere through tough years and come together to make better ones. When I look at my classmates, I don't see narcissism or close-mindedness or resignation to a failing system. I see a group poised to take on today's difficult issues with more determination than we had as we mobbed the Muffin Top lines in middle school, more passion than College Board has as they're somehow still sending us constant emails, and more kindness than our idolized principal has as he smiles and says hello every single morning, no matter how late his Seniors might be to their first period classes.

In a mere hour or two, this field will be empty, this crowd will disperse, and the hallways we called home for four long years will ring not with frantic Bio students but with the silence of building dust. As you can probably imagine, it's all making me much more anxious than I'm

proud of. As for these faces in front of me though, sure, they might be unfazed at the thought of being locked in. But I can tell you one thing. These faces refuse to be locked out.

When we leave here today and face the padlocked double doors of reality, there's a good chance the world will try and make us something that we're not. So my final message today is a simple one: don't let it. Don't let the world make us think we can't when we've proven time and time again we can. Don't let the bad actions of today's poor leaders scare us from doing what we want to do and being who we want to be. Don't let a deli price, a stupid new trend, or even a '5 minutes until closing' stop us from being the change this crazy mess-of-a-world needs. But more than anything else, don't let anyone tell you that you are not enough. And I'm not talking about your Battle of the Classes Championship belts, your endless arsenal of rhetorically analyzing devices, or even your ridiculous success in extracurriculars. I'm talking about the good people you've become and the great community you've built. I'm talking of the memories, the friends, of the accomplishments behind and the challenges ahead and the firm belief that wherever you go, we will be with you, watching your back, wishing you Good Mornings and Pleasant afternoons. Millburn 2018, you've already become the change. And as our journey together comes to a close, I wish you all the best of luck and am honored to have been a part of this truly one-of-a-kind class. Thank you.