

# The Graduates

Despite coming of age in a time of uncertainty, secondary school and college students from the class of 2020, also known as the class of Covid-19, tell us their hopes and dreams for the future

By Kristy Or



## Hong Kong



### JADEN YUEN

Age: 17

School: Harrow International School Hong Kong

Looking through my graduation yearbook, the class photos taken over Zoom are only one of the many reminders of the bizarre year thus far, but most of all they are a reminder that I will be graduating into a world that has changed in ways previously unimaginable.

As the world clamps into lockdown to combat Covid-19, nations have closed their borders one after the other, in turn raising concerns about the future of globalisation and perhaps signalling a general shift towards increasingly individualistic lifestyles.

Despite this, with the nature of Covid-19 as a global crisis, the communal solidarity it calls into action has presented an opportunity for improvement by bringing attention to



**Clockwise from top left:** School photo of Jaden Yuen; Yuen in Jeju Island; Yuen with his violin. **Opposite page, clockwise from top right:** Graduation photo of Thanyakumari Lournard Chandran; Thanyakumari Lournard Chandran in her home; Sara Jumabhoy

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some of our most neglected issues. For instance, as more and more schools and workplaces migrate to online platforms, I have really come to realise the potential of digitisation and the online world; whether it be implementing online healthcare systems, accessible ‘home learning’, or even applying artificial intelligence in transportation,

research, manufacturing ... the potential of digitisation is virtually endless. So, in a year that has seen such an increased dependence on virtual platforms for our daily lives, I believe that this could be just the first step towards further embracing technology as a possible means of tackling many of our social issues.

Nations have had to put

aside their differences to cooperate in the global fight against Covid-19, while calls for more comprehensive healthcare systems are only part of a general movement for greater governmental transparency. In the end, it is up to us to decide how to make the most out of our situation and to demonstrate resilience in the face of adversity.

Image: Michael Omescu/EyeEm/Getty Images (opening spread)

## Singapore

### SARA JUMABHOY

Age: 23

School: Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences at Cornell University

Entering the workforce at any point in time is daunting but in this economic climate it is even more challenging. My hope is that companies will see that newly minted knowledge may be more beneficial to combating immediate issues. The 2020 graduates are flexible—we can adapt to new styles of virtual learning overnight—and



energised to tackle any new obstacle ahead.

I graduate with a strong grasp in healthcare policy and health economics. My college classes this past semester have adapted their syllabi overnight to incorporate topics such as Covid-19 vaccine clinical trials. As countries start to reopen, graduates like my-

self are coming to market with tools and skills that are relevant, topical and definitely can add value.

As a society, we need to leverage learning and technology to manage global issues. Integration within the healthcare system across public health, health policy and medicine is essential. I see the need for research to explore technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning so as to improve efficiency in diagnosis and treatment, as well as the expansion in telehealth services to increase access to treatment.

My hope is for increased integration between not just the multiple facets of healthcare but also across industries, such as business and finance, with healthcare. A fusion of social impact with ethical business practice has the power to remodel how companies and business leaders respond to a changed world.

## Malaysia

### THANYAKUMARI LOURNARD CHANDRAN

Age: 18

School: The Storm King School in New York

In the near future I will be proceeding to further my studies in the service industry. I am interested in the hospitality field because I grew up in a family that highly values hospitality. I have seen my parents master the art of entertainment by hosting



guests and making sure all their needs are met. My parents have always instilled in us that if anyone enters our house we must make sure they are treated very well. As they said, “Even if your enemy enters your door, they have to be hosted just like family.”

This value has stuck with me. No matter where I am, I like to make sure everyone is having a good time. As a kid, I always enjoyed the experience of staying in hotels, from running up and down the long halls to the excitement of room service. Therefore, entering this industry would not just be a job to me but also a passion, as it is something that I believe I was born with.

There are many things I am hopeful for in the future of this industry, even though the pandemic has affected it tremendously this year. Although to me this seems like a new beginning, many might run from this industry in fear of instability. I am more interested in seeing what is next.



## China

### ISABELLA ZHAI

Age: 21

School: University of California, Berkeley

I graduated from University of California, Berkeley with a double major undergraduate degree in philosophy and political economy this year. In my last year of university, I had two strings to my bow. I applied for a graduate programme and at the same time a full-time job in China. Both were in the field of marketing.

I have been asked many times what kind of job I could get by studying philosophy. I believe philosophy works for any field because the most important thing about college is cultivating the ability to think. Political economy empowers me to analyse a lot of



social issues from a macro perspective. Philosophy teaches me the way of thinking, and also my attitude towards life. It makes me look at everything critically from a philosophical perspective and consider problems from a speculative perspective.

In these trying times of the Covid-19 pandemic,

my goal after graduation is to live life with a calm demeanour, which sounds simple but can be difficult to achieve. Since the beginning of the Sino-United States trade war, many people have worried about the impact of studying in the US; the Covid-19 pandemic brought up similar issues.

It has disrupted everyone's original plans, like graduation ceremonies and trips with parents in the US. Some of my classmates' full-time job offers were even withdrawn due to the pandemic. I hope that when the world changes, my friends and I can face it rationally and peacefully.

I also hope to see more female leaders in the industry. The company structure is like a pyramid; fewer people hold the positions in the upper echelons, and at the same time, even fewer women are present at those tiers. When I participated in a round of job interviews last year, all five interviewers were the company's Asia-Pacific-level leaders, but all of them were men. As an outsider looking in, it was interesting. Societal and industrial inclusion, as well as women's self-awareness and self-positioning, still have a long way to go.

## Taiwan

### EMILY HSU

Age: 18

School: Taipei American School

As a recent high school graduate, the next chapter in my life is clouded with uncertainty. At times, I wish I could just be a normal college freshman who can move onto campus in the fall and takes classes in person. Yet, I'm also grateful to be living through these transformative moments as I prepare to shape the world for future generations.

In the midst of unprecedented change, I chose to major in science, technology and society (STS) at Stanford University. STS is an interdisciplinary major

that places a dual emphasis on technical engineering skills and abstract social concepts, exploring scientific breakthroughs in the broader context of society. I chose this major because the problems of today are not problems purely of either humanities or science, but rather, they are a combination of both. Covid-19 is not solely a public health crisis; it's an economic and political calamity as well. Black Lives Matter is not just a social movement; it requires an understanding of employment, education, criminal justice and healthcare.

Therefore, I think we can no longer view academic disciplines within vacuums;

engineers, scientists, doctors, educators, lawmakers and politicians must learn to work in tandem. Although my college degree is one small piece of the big picture, my long-term aspiration is to connect with people from all walks of life and find solutions that can only be realised when we bridge the gap between the different branches of knowledge. Though I find myself nostalgic for the past, I'm also excited for what the world can become and what contribution I can make together with others. I believe we are at a crossroads in history and instead of turning back in fear of the unknown, we need to surge forth with courage and compassion.

## Indonesia



### JAYDEN JOACHIM LEMBONG

Age: 18

School: British School Jakarta

"Difficult roads usually lead to beautiful destinations" is the way to describe our life these days. New priorities have appeared that trouble us with a lot of worry. Many individuals and families are suffering from the sudden cuts in their income, or even losing the ability to support themselves altogether because of unemployment. Developed countries have applied new policies to help these workers sustain their living and implementations of government-supported salaries are aiding the lives of these unemployed workers.

With the realisation that a lot of the less privileged are suffering under greater poverty, people in Jakarta have been gathering aid. More attention is brought to the issue by social media, and aid is delivered to these

people, from dropping care packages to giving donations. The weight of this situation has brought awareness in all of us to be more thoughtful of each other, and to work together to create a more equal society. Although there are negative effects from Covid-19, it has also led to a number of good acts and also the recovery of our environment.

With everyone staying at home, the world is benefiting from our absence. Although Asia is known to be one of the most polluted regions, the current situation has led to skies being clearer, oceans being cleaner and trees being greener. There was a 25 per cent decrease in carbon emissions in China when the country was under lockdown during the crisis. It is thought that this reduction in carbon emissions saved 77,000 lives. The hope that the future may hold great things for our world is yet to be realised, but with optimism and with our ability to formulate new policies to help the current status, I believe that the world will continue to benefit and advance in technology and societal norms as well as environmentally.

## Philippines

### LIAM RAMOS

Age: 19

School: International School Manila

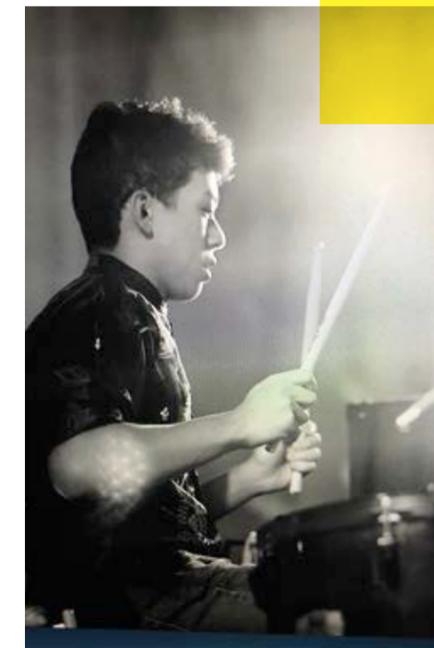
My class graduated at the start of a new decade, at a time when the world is testing our grit and resilience. There are hundreds of problems worthy of our attention—from large-scale racial tensions and the Covid-19 pandemic, to depression and economic inequality. I dream of helping to create a constantly improving and unified society, strong enough to endure any challenge.

Technology has pervaded every aspect of our lives and can be a means of addressing many of the problems plaguing us. Some things easily come to mind such as more efficient renewable energy sources to battle climate change, but I also hope to see technology help alleviate more complex problems such as social conflicts. As we continue to push the boundaries of what is possible, we should also consider how new developments in technology can be made accessible to everyone.

University is the perfect

place for me to experience first-hand what individuals are doing to effect change in their own way. At this point, I have accumulated some experience in the field of materials science as many hours of my high school were spent in the laboratory.

My team successfully published a paper in the American Chemical Society that showed the benefits of combining graphene oxide with methacrylate to create durable 3D prints. Whether I pursue this area



further or investigate a new topic, my end-goal will always be to discover novel ways of helping others.

Many of our world's issues are deeply rooted in our society's core and thus not easily solved. My high school has always focused on collaboration as an essential skill in all aspects of life, making me believe that if we stand together, we can confidently push forward into any unknown.

"I dream of helping to create a constantly improving and unified society, strong enough to endure any challenge"

