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“Final Copy”

Dr. Stimmel, Dr. Criscione, members of the Board of Education, faculty, staff, families and members of the Class of 2018.

First off, I would like to congratulate the class of 2018 on their hard work and dedication these last four years. We are about to enter our next adventure, but sadly, we must part ways in the proces.

We have spent 18 years of our lives in a town which has offered us shelter from many of the dangers and stressors of the greater world. We have grown up in a sheltered community where we have been given very little exposure to cultures and beliefs different to our own. We have lived cushioned in a bubble which has blocked us from the outside world.

In times when adjusting to the new world around you becomes difficult,

remember that the people sitting around you today are having the same difficulties. Sayville has sent thousands of students into the world before you; I can guarantee that they all had times when adjusting to the diverse, rainbow colored world we live in proved challenging. In times like these remember, although we are not at college together, you are not alone in these feelings. We come from the same place and share the same memories. We have all feared that our

mothers would go on facebook and post something insane on Sayville Moms, embarrassing us until the next accusatory post was made, taking the attention away from us, only to place it on some other unfortunate student. Sayville Moms has had an affect on all of us over the course of our time in this school district. The fear of being seen out past 10:00 and having a post made about us as “suspicious children looking for trouble.” The thought of our

parents seeing a post about us is a terror that only we share.

Although we may not have our childhood best friend by our sides, with whom we share thousands of memories, and we won't have the amazing organizational skills and care shown by our incredible class advisors, Mrs. Sohl and Mrs. Trentowski, we will share more experiences with our new classmates than we think. We have all seen the same memes,

we go to half Apps, and we are increasingly frustrated with the status quo. The world we live in is not yet ours. Our leaders are usually old, white, and male. But that is changing. We see new voices like those of Tomi Lahren and Trevor Noah rising above the old ones of Rupert Murdoch and Bill Maher. This year, there are a record number of women in both major parties running for congress, 309 of them to be exact, including one right here in our our

own district. We have seen Danica Roem become the first openly transgender woman to win a state legislator race down in Virginia. Hoboken elected its first Sikh mayor, Rava Bhalla.

More proof that our generation is taking the lead can be found right here in Sayville.

At 10am on March 14th, we, alongside thousands of students across the nation walked out of our classes to tell lawmakers that **we have had enough**, to ban

semiautomatic weapons and high capacity magazines, as well as create mandatory mental health and background checks for all prospective gun buyers. We made history that day as a generation. No matter which side of the debate you stand on, you will find students on your campus who felt the same way.

Make no mistake: there are many who object to our views as a generation, to the supposed collective agenda which we are

pushing. To that I say this: let's talk. We were once a nation of dialogue, of genuine conversation between competing ideals which produced engaging debate and **sane** legislation. No longer do we debate, it seems. We bicker. We argue. We fight. But to what end? What do we gain when we look at someone who is really no different than ourselves and tell them that we do not care what they have to say? We need to reach out and have these discussions not

just with each other but with society as a whole, old and young alike, for at the end of the day, we are all Americans. The author James Baldwin once said, “I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually.” In order for our nation to grow and make progress, we need to think critically, to question our underlying assumptions about who and what we are. Without this self-reflection, we

would still be wearing twenty silly bandz on each wrist.

These past four years have been difficult. But they will be easy compared to what is right around the corner. We will find that every belief we have held, every position we have defended, every conviction we have fought for, will be placed under scrutiny not only by Sayville Moms, but by the new world around us. But it won't be an angry assault- it will be friendly, it will be

educational, and it will be beneficial. We will learn about millions of other bubbles across the country from our new classmates. Our little bubble in Sayville will be popped. I'd like to end with an excerpt from a poem by Maya Angelou:

Look beyond your tasseled caps

And you will see injustice.

At the end of your fingertips

You will find cruelties,

Irrational hate, bedrock sorrow

And terrifying loneliness.

Injustice, cruelty and loneliness. There is our work. And when we approach these issues with the same energy, enthusiasm and cooperation with which we have approached the last 4 years, injustice, cruelty and loneliness will soon be, like high school, a thing of the past.

Congratulations Class of 2018

