

“It’s All About Hope”

Mary Vermilyea

Hello classmates, families, faculty, and staff. I bet none of us anticipated that this would be the outcome of our senior year. It’s been really tough. So many devastating events. I don’t know (pause and pretend to choke up) I don’t know how we’re going to recover. I mean first, John O’Rourke cuts off his man bun, and now this!

We’ve been home for over a hundred days. A hundred. You can get a lot done in a hundred days. I saw on instagram, this girl doing like a 60 day juice cleanse... got in sick shape. I whittled this duck. *Hold up duck*. I guess we’re all productive in our own ways.

All kidding aside, though, these past three, or so, months have not been simply a relaxing staycation, though, by any means. My heart goes out so far for the families who have been stricken by, or have been indirectly overwhelmed by this virus. And my heart goes out to the countless black individuals who have been fighting the fight for undeniably deserved justice for far too long. This was, and still pursues to be, an immensely difficult time for people, and for that I am sincerely sorry.

In the midst of this corrosion and chaos, however, there was discernible hope. Hope in the words, in the posts of millions who wanted each other to know that you were not alone in all of this. Hope in millions participating in the *peaceful* protests to terminate the unmerited suppression of blacks. Hope in the prayers asking God to please stand with us, as he always does, as we persist through just another temporary impediment before we are able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Hope is what gets one through a hapless circumstance, such as the one that we have been

presented with this Senior year. I *hope* that these last few months have helped many to cognize that hope is requisite.

I'm a strong advocate for women's rights. I believe that women and men should be treated, paid equally. But, women are the future? Now, I've heard that saying many times and while it is incontrovertible that men and women are of parallel importance, I'm not a firm believer in that statement. Women are the future. Yes, but no. We're all the future. Male, female, nonbinary, poor, rich, black, white, Asian, the list goes on. We're all the future. And I think this notion has become more evident for many these past few, anomalous months.

As a world, as a country, as a High School, we have become what seems to be more unified than ever as a result of this misfortune, which I guess is the silver lining. We have learned the importance of inspiring others, and empowering one another to be the best versions of ourselves. And our class in particular needs it now more than ever to have someone to lean on as we step out into this new, unfamiliar and slightly uncomfortable stage of life where we'll meet unfamiliar people, and have unfamiliar experiences. During this crisis, I bet you've all seen it, there were a few similar popular hashtags that were utilized across social media platforms. You saw them everywhere. We were #togetheralone or #togetherapart. Now, I think it's appropriate for me to say that we are all becoming #togethertogether.

I love you all, and will miss you dearly. While this has been a time of unconventional happenings, we've still got Joe's cookies.