

I think we probably all took it a little for granted: the walk through the atrium to the pit, the dreadful three flights of stairs to the math department, countless cafe trips for Mel's unreal cookies, the night games on the turf, the play you spent hours rehearsing, the concert you had practiced all year for. And suddenly, without warning, those were taken away from us. It seems we are helpless, living by orders from the government, waiting for our world to be safe again. But even in these unforeseen times, throughout all the crazy and the unknown, there is still something that we have control over. And that is our individual selves.

Most people want to change the world with some big whopping invention - a solution for climate change, the hunger crisis, or a covid-19 vaccine. And don't get me wrong - these are all much needed and incredibly amazing efforts to put your focus towards, and we need more people working together in these fields. However, I believe you can change the world just by being you.

It's easy to underestimate the impact you can have on someone's life by simply saying hi, or doing them a favor. This is the power of love and kindness. It can be hard, especially when life throws you challenges, or unexpected adventures, but at the end of the day, all you have is yourself and the people around you. Look at how connected we are - this virus has shown the world that even if we're living oceans apart, speaking different languages, we are still one. We are all going through this together. Something so invisible, so powerful has taken over our planet, so abruptly, without welcome. What if I told you that waking up every morning and being the best version of yourself has just as much power? Imagine how productive and how much change we could make if we all shifted our attitudes to be more loving and accepting. Imagine a world with no war, no hate, no spite, no violence. It's a huge task, just like developing a covid-19 vaccine. Except we have the power to change the world, one baby step at a time. And it starts with YOU. Little things, like checking in on someone you're not close with; complimenting a stranger; getting your neighbor groceries; celebrating differences instead of judging them. If you work on yourself, amplifying your strengths and recognizing what you need to work on, it will spread, just like this unwelcomed virus has. Only, you are welcome here. You are welcome in our community, you are wanted, you are needed by so many, loved, respected. If you believe in yourself, and the positive energy you can spread each day by just simply coming from love, I guarantee it will be contagious. And since we are all connected, overseas and elsewhere, this infectious way of being, that came from YOU, will spread around our planet. And that will make a change, whether it be small or large.

The world needs us, the class of 2020. And if it can't be in college classrooms, working towards your degree, it will be here, in the community we call home, where the invisible, yet tangible power of kindness can move the world forward. It starts with you.

Today we celebrate 190 seniors, our lives leading up to this moment where we graduate into “the real world” - a place that is not defined by SAT scores or how many honors classes you took. We celebrate past achievements, past growth, and we celebrate our futures. I know our class has so much potential to make this world a more beautiful place. Remember we are all in this together.

Although I wish we could experience one last laugh in the pit, being yelled at because the music is too loud, I guess that will have to wait for our 10 year reunion. Maybe I'll be engaged! Thank you for an unforgettable four plus years. It has been a true honor giving this speech. I can't wait to see what incredible things you all do, and how much the world will change from us!