

VALEDICTORY- RONAK BHAGIA

I'd like to start by thanking everyone who has helped me be here today. My **teachers** and advisors over the past four years, who have shown genuine interest in my development and helped me stay on top of my work even though I was gone so much-- the question of "do you even go to school anymore?" followed everywhere. My **friends**, both new and old, who have helped me through the good times and bad, and who I can always rely on to insist that golf is not a sport. But most importantly, a massive thank you to my family. Especially my sister, **Rhea**, who is everything I could have wished for in a sister and more, and who seems to know me better than I do. While I'll surely miss you next year, it will be nice to be the favorite Bhagia for once. My **mother**. You have provided so much for me and have been a pillar of strength the last two years. *My grandparents, who have always given me their unconditional love.* And finally my **father**. He was my greatest role model, and I will always look up to him. He wished to see me on stage here today, and even though he is not here physically, I know he is watching from up above.

But ultimately, **today** would not have been possible without each of you, the Class of **2018**. We have grown together through our time here at PDS; whether you have been here since **TK**, or for just this year, you have each made our class what it is. As **individuals**, we have become more ready to face the **challenges** we will undoubtedly face in the future, be they in college or long after. As a school, we have witnessed the fall of the **West Wing**, as well as rise of the Academic Center and DeMayo Gateway Center.

It is undeniable that our **growth** as a class has come from our shared experiences. The **NOLA** bus incidents, the Senior GroupMe (sorry will filiault), watching Devon sweep the court, the legacy of Yvng Coop, *saran wrapping Zyad's car, acts of betrayal in assassin*, just to name a few. Our class truly has left its mark.

But now that we have taken a moment to **reflect** on the past, let us get **real** for a moment to consider the future. In a few short months, all of us will be headed to the next phase of our **journeys**. We will each be charting a unique course that will change a world. In reality, none of us, alone, can change the world. But we can each do our best to make our little impact in the giant **mosaic** of progress. And, if we each do our part, the collective **power** will come together to create a beautiful **image**— a tomorrow of **equality** for all. The truth is that we are in an **unprecedented** position to effect such change. Never before in history have we had the ability to stay connected so closely, or to **communicate** ideas to so many people with such ease.

In recent **months**, we have seen the ability of **social** media to do just that. In the face of **injustice**, people are now able to increase the power of their voices. To **speak** up. We have seen this **power**, and may have already taken part in it **ourselves**. The **Women's** March, the March for Science, the #MeToo movement, Pride marches, Black Lives Matter... these are just a few examples of what we can accomplish. And each of these efforts has been paired with **concrete** change.

We, a **generation** that has grown up with this technology, are up next. Now, it is our turn to have our **voices** heard; in fact, we have already started. In the wake of the **Parkland** tragedy, student **activism** has driven national debates over gun **control**. Here on campus we have had **walkouts** in support of them and in support of the Black Lives Matter. We have grown with **Ghandi's** words infused within us; that we can be the change we wish to see in the world.

We have the energy, the voice, the **unapologetic** idealism to have a vision of what could be. And while we will not be the first wave of student **activists**, we are the first to have the tools to make our voices heard this **loudly**. It is now our responsibility to find a **cause** that matters to us, a cause that we can get **charged** about, and do what we can to **change** our world. Our small, individual worlds. Because if we put them together, the impact will truly be **incredible**.

Thank you and congratulations to the class of 2018. It's been real.