

Valedictorian Speech

By Sahill Yadav



Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, especially faculty, family, friends, and my fellow graduates. My name is Sahill Yadav, and I'm

honored to send us off as the class of 2018 and to reiterate the significance of this moment in our lives.

First, I'd like to thank all the people instrumental in my standing here today. This includes the guidance department and teachers, to whom I say thank you; your dedication to your students is absolutely immeasurable. And to Mr. Pontillo, you were my teacher and mentor for three years. From your not-so-clever nicknames in APUSH to your animated lectures in Mock Trial, you made junior year less hectic than it would have been, and I'll always appreciate that. Now, I can't forget everyone's favorite librarian, Mr. Weber. As my sarcastic coach and

understanding friend, you were always there to support me, so thank you. To my parents, I have so much to say to you. So just know that I love you. And on that note, a word of advice to my peers: be appreciative of your parents. Because, with student loans and everything, you'll want to move back in with them pretty soon.

You know, when I realized I would be graduating today, I couldn't believe it. It seemed like it was just yesterday when we were little ninth graders. Thrust into the second-floor hallways with the towering upperclassmen, we were overwhelmed with change. But we were also excited; excited to wear backpacks to class, excited to choose what electives we wanted to take. And most importantly, excited to finally be a part of spirit week, which by the way, we dominated every single year. From our pep rally cheers to our lip sync performances, we showed that we weren't like many traditional high schoolers, because we didn't fear freshman year at all; we embraced it.

Flash-forward to 2018... and we have learned so much. We learned about semicolons, the Civil War, how often to use Google Translate, how to reword essays so that it didn't look like we used Google Translate, and **how the magnitude of the electrostatic force between one point charge $Q_{\text{sub-one}}$ and another point charge $Q_{\text{sub-two}}$ is directly proportional to the algebraic product of the magnitude of their respective charges $Q_{\text{sub-one-two}}$ as well as proportional to the inverse square root of the distance between them R .** And as simple as these lessons may seem, they led to us becoming the seniors of Oyster Bay High School.

And obviously, after all of our hard work, we made sure to take advantage of everything seniority had to offer. Cutting the lunch line? Of course. Not studying for the next test? Duh, we already sent in our transcripts. School starting at 7:50? Well, unless Mr. Elsesser was waiting in the gym lobby, then that's a different story.

With off-periods and cut days, with college acceptances and tacky meme outfits, senior year was the best year we spent in Oyster Bay. And I only told you a small part of what high school was like. Words cannot describe each and every memory we had here because they are all so unique, hilarious, and meaningful. Parents, just check out our finstas and you'll know what I'm talking about. Actually, on second thought, don't do that; it would be a long, cringey road ahead of you.

Joking aside, it's hard to let go the memories that were created in this very building. It's hard to accept the fact that a lot of what we're used to is now gone. But life is going to change, and with that change will come mistakes, and setbacks, and failures... especially for some of the students here—I'm not going to name names.

Sometimes, the thought of failure frightens me, and maybe it does for many of you as well. But then I think about how we're really here.

About how we stand on the cusp of adulthood, ready to grasp all the world has to offer. About how we have so many experiences yet to

know, and then I realize—how envied we must be. Because right outside our fears for the future, we have something that a vast majority of the world wishes for: the limitless potential and freedom to live the lives that we create for ourselves.

Now, I could say that today marks the beginning of a new chapter in our lives and that's true, but tomorrow marks the next chapter, and the day after that marks the next, and so forth. Because our perceptions of time, although useful, can be a construct that limits our perceptions of growth.

Why is it that we have to wait until New Years to make resolutions to become better people? Why is it that we say, "I won't procrastinate tomorrow," when today, we continue to waste our time? My dad always told me, "If there's something I wanted to do tomorrow, I'd do it today, and if there's something I wanted to do today, I'd do it now."

For you Class of 2018, what I'm trying to say is that the decisions we make each day steer the courses of our lives. Most people are so comfortable with where they are, they end up being miserable. What

many people don't realize is that discomfort is the catalyst for progression. The very thing you've been avoiding, can be the very same thing that will help you find happiness. The very thing that seems to break you down, can be the same thing that will humble your spirit. Everything we've ever wanted is one step outside our comfort zone, and right now, we have the chance to define their boundaries.

It's understandable to be afraid when accepting these new responsibilities. Even the most successful people are fearful of what tomorrow may bring for them. Contemporary street poet and philosopher Kanye Omari West once said, "Just imagine it. Just imagine if I woke up one day and I was whack. What would I do then?" Like Kanye, some days, we may think that we're just whack, but that's the real world for you. One thing about the real world, though, is that it won't judge us based off of what we did or didn't do in high school. Instead, life judges us on how we react to obstacles. Regardless of what these are, it's the obstacles that make us who we are today, and they will determine who we will be. So, whenever we're nagged with self-doubt,

whenever we fall and feel like not getting back up again, we have to look at our obstacles as tests of character rather than symptoms of defeat.

Classmates, I tell you from the bottom of my heart that the years we spent walking the halls of Oyster Bay High School were formative ones. The bumps and bruises from adolescence prepared us for what is yet to come, and I wish I could tell you exactly what that is. But as one of the best graduating classes Oyster Bay has ever seen (and I have no doubt that we are), we will decide for ourselves what lies ahead.

I know I covered a lot, probably because it's not easy for me to say goodbye. But to my fellow graduates, we did it, and we should look eagerly to the future. And if my amazing speech hasn't inspired you yet, then I don't know what will. But seriously, just remember this: we are the Baymen. And as we all know, the Baymen get it right! For the past six years here, we got it right, and I'm confident we will get it right for the years ahead! Thank you and congratulations Class of 2018!