

Remarks from the Senior Class
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Greetings faculty, staff, family, and most importantly, students of Cheshire Academy! My name is Jonathan Velasquez, a member of the Class of 2021 and this is going to be my fifth year attending Cheshire Academy. I came to Cheshire Academy in the 8th grade. I was young and had no idea how much my life would change over the course of five years. As we come together tonight on our final convocation together as the Class of 2021, I felt compelled to write this speech about some of the current events occurring in the United States, specifically regarding racial injustice and inequality. Before I get started, I just want to say that It feels so good to be back here at Cheshire Academy! It is so crazy how much I have missed this place since we left last March.

As an African American and Puerto Rican young man living in this world and attending this prestigious school, I would like to briefly speak about racial injustice and inequality. It is hard to watch the current events every day and not share my thoughts with you. Please know that this speech is not a pity party, instead it is a call to action. I have been very blessed to attend this school. The faculty and staff here truly want the best for the students.

My hometown is a city with a very diverse population. There are many minorities and people from different socio-economic backgrounds. I could speak heavily on my experiences of racial inequality and the experiences of my family and friends at home. We struggle and fight daily for equality in the schools and many areas of life that most of us take for granted here at CA. However, I wrote this speech because I wanted to share my thoughts with our school community about how we could change and diminish the injustices and inequalities in this world. Hatred is a defining factor in most of the problems that we see on the news every day. Hatred is a sickness that affects every single one of us. I can admit that I've had hatred in my soul at times, but as I grew as a person, I realized that hate has no place in this

world, especially if we are trying to make positive changes. We all have a purpose in our lives, and each of us should want to leave our world a little better than how we found it. Uplifting others is a large part of the purpose we have, and we must figure out how to identify and fulfill our purpose. I am not saying that we must like or agree with what everyone is doing, or even share the same beliefs, but we should be able to respect and wish them the best.

One of the best things about our school is that we are all so different, but we come together to form this CA family and learn to appreciate our differences and use these differences to grow!

As we begin this school year, I charge you to ask yourself “Where do we start?” I have been thinking about this a lot and I am asking myself, “If not now, when?” 2020 has been a crazy year... we are dealing with COVID-19, racial injustice and inequality, and an overwhelming sense of racial tension. This would be the perfect time to bring positivity into this world. And it starts with us. Each one of us has the power to change the world. We are the generation the world is depending on to resolve these problems, and we can change it now. Our actions in this world are a domino effect and if we change and decrease racism in our world now, then the next generation will follow. I don’t want my little brother and cousins to go through racial inequality on a daily basis to the point that they are insensitive to being diminished or looked down upon by another person. If any one of you have younger siblings, you wouldn’t want that for them either.

So, let’s make the change now. Let’s make it start here. Let’s put effort into doing the right thing. We can be the start to a new and better world. This is only the early stages of a lifelong journey; however, this will be worth it.

Thank you everyone!