

Dear Fellow High School Seniors:

Our world is currently in the midst of a crisis. COVID-19 is infecting hundreds of people as you read this. People have lost their jobs, family members, homes, cars, and more. Businesses are struggling to keep their doors open. The busiest cities have become the emptiest cities.

Thousands of people have died, all because of a virus.

Unfortunately, the class of 2020 is among the most affected by the virus. We came into the world during the terrorist attacks of 9/11, a time of tragedy and sadness in our country. We grew up with technology advancing right in front of our eyes. Everything became digital, and we were the ones that operated this technology the most. Some think we are a part of the “snowflake” generation because we have less resilience than our elders, but this global pandemic will give us the opportunity to show the world that we are quite the opposite.

Just a month ago, we were all complaining about the early mornings, the annoying teachers, the busywork, and everything related to high school. Now, we’d give anything to go back. We’d give anything to wake up before the sun rises again and sit in the same classrooms that hold our memories. We’d give anything to walk through the gates of our high school and see our teachers and classmates just one more time. Unfortunately, this isn’t going to happen.

Because of this pandemic, our final months of high school have been cut short. We won’t get to experience moments we’ve been anticipating for years. Our senior prom, senior ditch day, senior prank, some of our senior sports seasons, and our high school graduation are gone. We won’t get to say goodbye to our friends we know through our classes. We won’t get to say goodbye to the teachers that made an impact on our lives. We won’t get to experience those final few moments of our last high school class, counting down the minutes with our best friends by our side, and we won’t get to scream in excitement when we hear the bell ring for the very last time. We won’t get to put on our caps and gowns and experience a high school graduation the way we should. We won’t have our grad parties or go on our senior trips.

Our senior year, OUR year, is ruined.

We are upset. We are angry. And we have every right to be. All of our feelings are completely valid. This pandemic took away major life events, huge milestones that mark the beginning of our adulthood.

Because we’ve lost everything, we are strong.

We are some of the only people who know how it feels to work so hard for hours and days at a time and not get the celebration and recognition we deserve. We are distraught, we are in pain, but we are not alone. We are now unified. We are changed, changed into stronger human beings who will continue on to change the world with our newly-found strength and resilience.

If you're reading this and you happened to be in the class of 2021, tell me what it's really like to be a senior. Tell me what it's like to experience senior night of your final sports season. Tell me what it's like to go to senior prom, ditch on senior ditch day, and come up with a senior prank.

Tell me what it's like to walk across the stage in front of thousands of people and be handed a diploma you worked on earning for four years. Tell me what that all feels like.

It's hard, but we have to remember everything happens for a reason. No matter what religion you practice or what you believe, God has a specific plan for each and every one of you. This time of crisis will soon come to an end, and we will continue on with our daily lives and make a difference in our world.

As we go on, we will never forget the impact COVID-19 had on us. I have learned many lessons, and I know that I have changed the way I value my life and all the people in it.

Cherish every single moment of every single day. Hug your friends and tell them that you love them as much as possible. Appreciate the teachers and staff that work so hard for your benefit; their main goal is to watch you grow. Tell your parents you love them because right now, they are desperately trying to keep your family afloat. Spend time with your pets. Try new hobbies. Go on walks and hikes. Take photographs. Go swimming. Plant a garden. Live in the moment. Make the best of things. Most importantly, stay positive and healthy, and remember that you matter and you are important.

Sometimes, you don't realize how special things are until they're gone. I know I didn't, and I know most members of the class of 2020 didn't either. What's done is done, now it's up to us to show the world who the class of 2020 really is.

Signed,

A Devastated, but Strong High School Senior