

Miss Hall's School Commencement June 5, 2022

Remarks by School President Cailyn Tetteh '22 and School Vice President Truc Hoang '22

Cailyn: Good morning, everyone! We're so honored to stand before you one last time to reflect on our Miss Hall's careers, to say goodbye to this community, and to send our peers forward with well wishes.

Truc: Typically, only Cailyn, our School President, would be standing up here giving this address, but this year has been anything but typical, so we wanted to reflect that by having both of us speak to you all.

I want to share with you a line in my current favorite song, "*Thở*," which translates to "Breathe" in English. The line says, "Every morning, I stand in front of the mirror and ask: 'What do I need in life?'" It resonates with me, because as I transition to a new environment and leave this place that I feel emotionally attached to, I have been feeling overwhelmed and puzzled. I ask myself, "Did I pick the right school? What if I can't fit in and don't have friends? What am I doing?" For a few weeks, I couldn't get these thoughts out of my head. I wanted to have an answer; I don't like when things are in the grey. However, it led me to wonder if I need to wake up knowing the purpose of my life? No, I don't. It is a privilege of youth that allows me to take my time to enjoy a moment and not let it go to waste.

So, to my peers, you might have the same thoughts. You might be sitting here, but your minds are wandering elsewhere, worrying about what will happen next. I hope that you can take a moment to congratulate yourself and others. Congratulations on making it through high school or, for many, making it through junior, sophomore, or freshman year! You are shining stars in your own ways, so I have no doubt you will do great things in the future.

This is one of the biggest lessons I learned at MHS: to feel okay being in the gray area, and I wouldn't be standing here making these remarks without support from friends and adults. You have helped me become who I am today. Truly. Please accept my deepest gratitude. I can't close out without thanking my family. My mom, uncle, and cousins are here, as they always are in all of my ups and downs. Thank you. I love you.

This will be the last time we stand in front of you as Truc and Cailyn, the School Vice President and President. Cailyn, thank you again for being an amazing partner and friend.

If there is something I see when I look in the mirror in the morning, it's definitely the friendship that I have had, the decisions I made, both good and bad, and the legacy I will leave behind at Miss Hall's and in your lives. How about you? I hope when you look

in the mirror and ask, “What do I need in life?” — even if your answer is a gray area — it leaves you with a smile, because there is always a grey area.

Cailyn: In the weeks, months, and years leading up to this moment, I always felt like graduation was this landmark occasion, and everything in between was just a slog. But, a crucial lesson I learned through my MHS career was the importance of the journey.

During my early years at Miss Hall’s, I felt myself becoming more and more obsessed with time — how long I had spent doing one activity, how much time I had left until my next obligation, the works. I had started compulsively checking the clock, constantly calculating time in my head.

It is at this point that I have to give you a little background on the kind of child I was. Younger Cailyn always wanted to feel busy and important, so I would create these scenarios for me to get stressed about. My go-to scenario was missing a flight. Whenever my family had set out to catch a plane, I became the self-appointed timekeeper. I don't mean keeping time in any useful way, I mean shifting from hip to hip, somberly consulting the face of my Paul Frank Monkey Watch, and nervously tapping my foot in the security line. When these tendencies resurfaced during adolescence, they no longer made me feel like a cool young person on the move. I had begun to feel trapped in my own schedule, constantly being pulled from one obligation to the next.

The summer before my senior year represented my chance to start over. As I entered my final high school summer, I was determined to enjoy every moment of it. I quickly learned that maximizing my enjoyment would take more than Googling “fun things to do in summer.” It would take my active participation, so I set out to create my summer of fun: getting up early to watch the sunrise, painting in the backyard, and skateboarding to the neighborhood creek. Beyond that, I committed to journaling and making video diaries to winding meditations on the state of my room or heinously detailed reviews of books I didn’t like.

I learned to love wasting time.

I want to thank you all for the part you played in that. Thank you to my classmates: You taught me how to be young, how to live, and how to be present. To my beautiful friends, for always answering my “What would you do if...?” questions, no matter how absurd the premise. And, sometimes, I must admit, the premise truly is absurd. Thank you to the faculty and staff for supporting us endlessly, coming along on our journeys of discovery, and for proudly modeling what it means to be a lifelong pursuant of knowledge. To our wonderful advisor, Dr. Chris Himes: You have always made us feel as if our feelings, thoughts, and concerns as young people were valued, and I have appreciated that more than you’ll ever know. To Truc: Thank you for being my friend and an integral member of my dream team. To my mom, my older sister Celcie, and my family: You mean the world to me. Thank you for loving me enough to tell me to quit it when my Paul Frank consulting and foot-tapping reached an annoying extreme.

As we sang in our Senior Show, “another chapter in the book, can’t go back but you can look,” and I hope you can look back at this chapter the same way I will: with a fond smile, because you all helped me define my youth.

Time is not this great machine that exists just out of our reach. Time is a friend, time is a weapon we can wield to change our lives for the better, or worse. As we step forward into this big wide world, I want us all to take time with us. Learn to wield it for the better. Stay up to read just one more chapter, talk on the phone for a little too long, and always, *a/ways* take the scenic route.