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Four years ago, we started our high school experience when our mentors welcomed us with bright posters outside the arts building. As a wide-eyed freshman, it seemed like there could be nothing wrong with a school that had “Opportunity, Diversity, and Respect,” as its motto, but over the past four years, it has become clear to me that our motto is a collection of words without a real call to action. This has meant that too often we have failed to speak out when we fail to live up to it.

It is an incomplete narrative to focus on Cambridge’s reputation as a hub of excellence without also acknowledging that racial, gender, sexual, or religious inequalities persist. For the past four years the students in the class of 2018 have tried both to expose the injustices that slip through the cracks and to correct the practices in place that are inequitable. This year, more than any other in the past four years, we have heard stories from each other about experiences of microaggressions, sexual assault, religious intolerance, and gender

discrimination. We can no longer turn a blind eye to comments that may make us uncomfortable, because those comments are what lead to necessary growth.

We are a class that has accomplished much across all disciplines: in the fall of this year, Bilien Teklu, Naia Aubourg, and Lorra Marseille revived the Black Student Union and gained support from many other black students and students of color. The group has fostered powerful conversations about race and equity within CPSD, including documenting their experiences at Rindge over the course of this year with a series called the “minority reports.” Aidan Keefer and Jonathan Cenescar helped lead the basketball team to win back-to-back state championships; under the leadership of co-captains Lorra Marseille and Katie Melendez, the girls volleyball team competed in the semi-finals, which hasn’t happened in 30 years; fourteen seniors wrote and starred in a play and brought it to the state finals for the festival competition; Julian Baxandall started the Frisbee club with some friends, creating one

of the first recreational sports at CRLS; Mimi Fufu, Jessica Tran, and Miki Chiyoda were some of the first members of KPop club, bringing new life and excitement to the club; and finally, my friend, Grace Ramsdell, the Editor in Chief of the Register Forum, put our school newspaper online, making student journalism more accessible and more reliable. We are the class that demanded free menstrual products in school bathrooms, and we are the class that got \$4,000 to subsidize 100 senior prom tickets this year.

Growing up has made me realize that there is an air of complacency in Cambridge, but members of the class of 2018 have spent the past four years challenging it. Adults in Cambridge, whether they are elected officials in City Hall or administrators in our public schools, are rightly proud of student accomplishments when we succeed, but there isn't always a corresponding level of support during the working stages of student activism. When students have ideas that will bring us closer to the aspirations in our motto, we are sometimes greeted

with hostility or, in other cases, not even a response. This is a call to action for adults in Cambridge: please listen and support us. Invite us to your offices to talk to us about our experiences, not the supposed-experience of a CRLS student fabricated for public consumption; ensure that every student can learn from teachers who look like them; come to our classes; respond to our emails.

A couple of weeks ago I was at the Harvard Commencement Ceremony listening to U.S. Congressman John Lewis speak, and one of the lines that I would like to leave with you all, is this: “You’re never too young or too old to lead, to speak up, to speak out, and get in good trouble. Necessary trouble.”

We have been brought up to believe that our school district is without flaws; the danger in Cambridge is not that we are a school district that has flaws, but that we pretend that we don’t. So CRLS Class of 2018, wherever you end up after high school, I challenge all of you to

resist passivity, even when it means putting yourself in an uncomfortable position. Never stop standing up for what is right and just.

Thank you.