

## **SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER**

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### **Class of '05 has something to say**

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#### **SEATTLE POST-INTELLIGENCER STAFF**

If any of you think today's teens don't give a hoot about anything or anybody except themselves, think again. With the last of Seattle Public Schools' high school seniors collecting their diplomas this week, it's time to touch base with the class of 2005. Below are excerpts from commencement speeches given by valedictorians and other special students across the city:

The past four years have been nothing short of an adventurous learning experience. From day one, we knew it was going to be hard, yet look at us now. We persevered, we had a goal in mind, and we knew how important it would be to get through this hoop in order to pursue greater things for the future.

As we prepare to compose a new page of our lives, let me ask you this: Where do you see yourself 10 years from now? Whatever you see yourself doing, hold on to that image, because it is possible. The last four years we spent were to prepare us to fulfill our future goals. ...

Over the past four years, we became adults. We learned how to deal with the some of the hardest situations that life would ever throw our way. Recount all the times you thought you'd give up, then remember all the times you persevered. You may think that we are just now about to enter into the real world, but guess what? We have just spent the last four years in the real world. Now we are only expanding our horizons. ...

Allow me to leave you with one last thought. As many of you know, people will come and go all throughout our lives, but the most profound people leave a permanent footprint in our hearts. So, let us, in that same way, go out into the world as profound, learned people, and leave not only a footprint, but a whole new path towards success in the very heart and soul of our society.

I challenge you to live a life of service, for true success is measured not by your own accomplishments, but by the accomplishments of those whose lives you have positively touched. And if times ever get tough, just remember the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and use that as inspiration to continue on the journey, for he said: "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

*-- Sandra Li, valedictorian, Cleveland High School*

When I reflect back on my four years at Rainier Beach, the first word that comes to mind is "drama." Not the kind you're thinking of, like the arguments, confrontations, or gossip

that circle every high school hallway, but the laughter, jokes and smiles that fill every high school student's life.

"Admiration" is another word that comes to mind when I think about my senior class. I admire each one of my classmates for the strength that they possess and the character that they have.

Being at a school that is constantly criticized by the media, we have managed to use what we do have to get what others don't. The uniqueness that the Rainier Beach senior class has is like no other. We are a diverse group of students who are never afraid to speak our minds, voice our opinions, or share our ideas. Through all our differences we always manage to stick together and are always there for each other. ...

I would like to say thank you to all the teachers that I have had throughout my high school career. Thanks to all of you for staying on my back and helping me see the potential that was inside me. Also thanks to the administrators and staff for always being there for all of us through the years. Thanks to all my family and friends. I love all of you and thank you for supporting me and making sure that I did my best.

I would also like to say that my success and accomplishments are dedicated to my mother because she has given up so much for my sister and me. She is the most loving woman I know and will always be my best friend.

Lastly, to the senior class of Rainier Beach High School: Don't ever let anybody hold you back. There will always be somebody trying to stop you from succeeding, but as long as you believe in yourself, that is all that matters. I love all of you, and I wish everyone the best in the future.

-- *Chartina Martindale, valedictorian, Rainier Beach High School*

To my fellow graduates of the class of 2005, I must discuss a matter of much importance -- but first, how flippin' sweet is it that we made it! ...

I know it sounds cliché, but it's going to be a big new world out there, and we must approach all the new information rushing in to greet us with the same enthusiasm and eagerness as when we learned to use the big potty or count to 10. Although we will have to sort through this information, cipherring out the bad. ...

We must not be afraid to take the opportunities presented to us -- no matter how small -- yet we simply can't wait for those opportunities to be dropped in our laps. We should reach out and grab them, making our own when need be, but possibly most important of all, we must make ourselves aware of what is going on in the world around us.

You don't need to go to Harvard, let alone any form of college, to be aware of what is going on in the world, or your own community. It doesn't take a doctorate to make a difference, and you could be learning life and people skills by advancing your career,

reading the paper, or watching the news. Regardless of where you plant yourself, I beg all of you to maintain your cranial garden and let your intellect continue to grow.

We are the next generation and will make up a very diverse and crucial part of this country, and the world for that matter -- spanning all demographics. We must not fall victim to the stereotypes or preconceived notions about the young people of today when we should, in fact, be erasing them and setting new standards and expectations for youth of the future. It is our irrefutable responsibility to remain mentally active, in order to carry on the world and society we live in to eventually pass on to generations to come.

I have gargantuan expectations for the Chief Sealath class of 2005, and know we will not fail to meet them, and in fact will exceed them.

-- *Mallory Amsden, valedictorian, Chief Sealath High School*

I have always believed that a little hard work is a necessary part of life, and that the greatest of people are the ones who always tackle challenges instead of taking an easy way out. While I have held this belief for most of my life, I did not have a clear and concise way to say this -- that is, until I reached my senior year at Franklin High School.

(Math teacher Shawn) Mintek shared a gem of wisdom with me, and now I will share it with you. He told me, "Tempered steel is not pampered."

We as students are steel. Obstacles like homework, tests and projects are ways to shape and mold us into strong, reliable beings. Without such rigorous training, we would be flimsy and unable to stand tall in life. As students -- and in a larger sense, as people -- we should all look upon hard work as an opportunity for self-growth.

Therefore, whenever I feel like giving up on a difficult task, I tell myself this quote to help keep me going. I wish that this quote shall do the same for you.

-- *Chris Eng, valedictorian, Franklin High School*

The learning I have done here at Nathan Hale far surpasses the academic realm. Yes, I can say with certainty that I have received a superb education. The quality and depth of material I have absorbed in the past four years has been first-rate. From studying the Sandinistas, to thermodynamics, to "Hamlet," I feel well-prepared for life's next adventure, the big "C" word.

However, this is not the kind of learning that has impacted me the most. Throughout my four years, I have learned a tremendous amount about myself. First and foremost, I have found my voice. ... I have learned to fine-tune my analytical mind and embrace self-expression. I was blessed with a love for writing and my education here has incubated this, pushing me to thrive.

One of my most defining experiences throughout all of high school was our trek through Costa Rica last summer. ... Describing cultural immersion is much like trying to describe a dream; it is near impossible to explain the precise emotion and detail. But I'll try.

Kneeling next to a birthing endangered sea turtle, sand between my toes, I started to get it. Speaking Spanish with the locals each day, despite my being an ever-apparent "Gringo," made me understand. Playing in a villagewide soccer game where all generations flock to simply enjoy each other's company, solidified it.

What I speak of is an intangible hospitality found deeply rooted in this not-so-foreign culture. Costa Rica opened my eyes. I learned to value world perspective. My desire to attain a more well-rounded view has blossomed because of my trip. This life-changing experience would not have been possible without the backing of this unique high school and the people in it. ...

I feel privileged to say that I know each and every one of my teachers cares about me. When I've been confused, they have stayed late after school to explain. When I've needed guidance, they have imparted their wisdom. When I have simply needed someone to talk to, they have listened with open, trusting ears. And excuse my language, but the many times that I have needed a good swift kick in the ass, they have been there for that, too.

Inside and outside of the classroom, selected teachers have truly changed my life. I trust that you know who you are. At some point down the road, I would like to attempt to join this elite class of professionals, dedicating my own work to nurturing the minds of children. ...

I want to leave you with a quote that is a personal favorite of mine that I feel truly captures the essence of Nathan Hale High School. As Mark Twain once wrote, "Throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

-- *Emily Murphy, honors student, Nathan Hale High School*

I want to say congratulations to the class of '05! We've worked hard to get here tonight, but I want to remind you that we have a lot more work to do. There are many changes that need to be made in our world today, and I believe we are the ones that will make them.

My quote comes from Mother Teresa: "People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind, anyway. If you are successful, you will win some false friends and true enemies; succeed, anyway. If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest and frank, anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; build, anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; be happy, anyway. The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good, anyway."

"Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; give the world the best you've got, anyway.

"You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them, anyway."

-- *Christina Guros, valedictorian, Franklin High School*

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