

All the students in this room have one thing in common, we are members of **Generation Z**. On Urban dictionary, a very prestigious source, Gen Z are by quote “the generation that follows the Millennials and will probably prove to be even more worthless, lazy and entitled”. Rumour has it we are snowflakes, spend hours doing quizzes to find out what type of pizza topping we are on buzzfeed, and spend most of our time watching the Kardashians’ live stream on instagram. Whilst some of the above may be true, I think that the person writing these definitions , Urban Dictionary user AWESOME RON 101 by the way, has never set foot anywhere near Camden School For Girls.

Would a worthless generation really collect hundreds of pads and tampons for a nearby women’s shelter? Would a lazy generation really spend hours protesting on climate change marches, women’s marches or NHS marches? As for being entitled, well, Camden does, teach us to be entitled. Entitled to fight for what we want, to believe in what we say and to achieve more than we thought possible.

As gen Z teenagers we face the same dilemma as all previous generations :the desire to simultaneously stay young forever whilst also being an adult. However, I know we’re not the only ones guilty of this problem; Peter Pan also faced similar teenage angst. Peter Pan is a tale about the adventures of Peter and the Darling Children and was written by J M Barrie in 1902. Peter Pan refused to grow up. So in other words Peter Pan was a moody teenager before the term teenager was even invented.

A lot has happened throughout my time at Camden, both at school and in politics. Just last week the students at this school raised over £1,000 for the charity Solace, globally women and men have risen up in the Me too movement, the restaurant Phoenecia was shut down for twenty four hours, the first African American joined the royal family, we were in the European Union and ,now, well we are still in the European union,the senior prefect team learnt how to write a christmas panto, I’ve been vegetarian, vegan,pescatarian and at one low point flexitarian and like many students here have had nearly every combination of Tesco Meal Deal. And within these two years we have faced the struggles of exams, hard academic choices such as gap yar or no yar and navigating UCAS. This is when I started to understand Peter Pan’s point about not wanting to grow up and wanting to stay behind in Never Never Land.The prospect of responsibility seemed far from appealing.

When I left my old school my grandma from New York did not understand why I was leaving and said “ Why are you moving school? how will you find a nice Jewish boy there?” Sorry to disappoint you grandma but the answer to your question is that I wanted to move school to find a place which would foster diversity and acceptance and Camden provided that space for me. Camden has also shown me what womanhood looks like. Whilst my lessons have been informative and the endless debates with certain teachers have been thought provoking and at times *frustrating* , I have done much of my learning from the bold and passionate students who go to this school: in femsoc, student masterclasses or even just regular chats. Although cuts to state schools are increasing so are our voices, opinions and passions.

Peter Pan does, however, have a point about the power of the youth: in many ways these past two years can be defined as the youth rising up. Whether it was the Parkland shooting across the pond which sparked the youth led hashtag Never Again movement or the national Climate Change March a little closer to home which saw teenagers and kids missing school to chant

“system change not climate change,” it is clear that as young people we no longer sit back and stay “seen but not heard” because now the world is not only hearing us but listening up.

Peter Pan is a fictional boy who can fly whereas Francis Mary Buss was a real life pioneer for women’s education but they were, however, both educators. But whilst Peter Pan taught the lost boys how to stay young and stay paralysed in their youth, Francis Mary Buss defied the gender norms and taught female students not only how to grow up but how to grow up empowered.

In J M Barrie’s original Peter Pan, Never Never Land is a land of dreams, possibility and youth. For me, Never Never Land looks like a 100 year old building on Sandall Road filled with students laughing, screaming and debating. Camden is no doubt a special place and this makes the challenge of growing up and leaving school behind even harder.

The famous scholar, Hannah Montana, once said “I know changing can be scary. But it’s part of growing up. It’s how we found out who we are.” So whilst I’m sad that this chapter of our lives is coming to a close I’m so grateful for the progressive toolkit that Camden has given me for entering the real world. I don’t want to leave this version of Never Never Land but I know that the magic, lessons and activism that Frances Mary Buss once gave to this institution will still be carried by each graduate of this secondary school when entering the real world. Her spirit passes through every girl and boy who enters the gate and every woman and man who leaves it.

Founder’s Day is also about saying thank you for all the opportunities that we have been given. So thank you Urban Dictionary user AWESOME RON 101 for giving us, generation Z, a chance to prove another man wrong as we are certainly not ‘worthless’ or ‘lazy.’

Thanks to the teachers of this school for making sure we are not worthless but instead proud in who we are and not lazy but courageous scholarly activists.

Thanks to my parents for supporting me through all my decisions and believing in me when I don’t believe in myself.

Thanks to the students and my friends for teaching me so much.

Even though my finger print mark to get into this school still doesn’t work, thank you Camden for leaving a mark on me.