

Oluwaseun – Sixth Form Head Girl 2017

Founder's Day Speech

I am a reluctant yet eternal optimist. I possess a certain idealism that is symptomatic of my youth. I'm desperate for someone, somewhere to activate change for the greater good of the world. And although it sometimes wavers, I have an absolute belief in the good of humanity. How romantic does that sound. A young girl sharing her dreams of a better world. Common dreams of tolerance and a shared humanity. And seemingly achievable dreams. But as I finish school and prepare myself to leave Camden, I have realised something essential. The right to dream doesn't actually belong to me. In fact, it is an insult to many legends of history that I even claim this right to dream. Dismissive, even arrogant of me to think that I am entitled to lie down, to sleep and to dream.

A **dream** is a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations. It is a projected fiction. A vision of an unattainable reality. But it's so comforting that we can return to the same position of inaction that facilitates more dreams, the next night. Too many of us dream of a fabulous, alternative world of equality and free-thinking and then wake up the next day, to tell everyone of last's night's thoughts. Some of us even get into arguments over this fictionalised reality and are willing to call ourselves revolutionaries based on our recurring fantasy of peace and harmony.

The pioneers of women's education didn't have the luxury of sitting and discussing their ideas. They recognised the urgent need for women to be galvanised, educated and inspired. It was imperative that we become active contributors in political forums and without education our voices would remain silent. They had an extraordinary ability to rise to the occasion. With both courage and conviction they fought to provide the resources and tools for those who wanted more from life than just their dreamer status. I believe that there are too many of us content with the idea that our dreams will never amount to anything. Too many of us are happy with the idea that our wildest dreams are not achievable and so all we can do is dream some more.

My issue comes after the fact. After we dream. After the women, the poor, the people of colour, the disenfranchised, and the oppressed bravely fight for their right to be dreamers. When we wake up to a new day. To an older yet newer sun. Carrying with us the memories of yesterday and the knowledge of our imagination. The new day, where the delusions of the past can maybe become the reality of the present. Where the so-called dreamers should be granted activist status and the canvas on which they dream is real and tangible. But sadly in today's world it seems like many of us dreamers are satisfied with dreaming.

Nowadays, all that we want is to say that we stood for something. Whether it be feminism, Black Lives Matter, the eradication of global poverty, climate change or some other social injustice. But don't possess the same persistence that was essential in building this school.

Nevertheless, and despite this symptom of our generation, the honest truth is that inaction and passivity are things that very alien to Camden girls. As I am sure Frances Mary Buss intended, the Camden girl possesses a certain strength of spirit that has stood the test of time. A Camden girl like Rachael Allen who saw that the school wasn't green enough so tirelessly campaigned for solar panels. Camden girls like Haddy Jeng, Yanet Akalu and Amber Agoro, who despite the underrepresentation of black Africans in Russell groups will be undergraduates at Oxford, Manchester and Leeds in October. A Camden girl like Bluebelle Carrol who at the age of 14 founded the Pens with Power charity to improve literacy rates in Zambia and make us global citizens. Or a Camden girl, like Athena Theodotou who was unimpressed by the pertinent stigma of mental illness so orchestrated the first mental health edition of Sixth Sense magazine or former Camden girls like Busayo Twins who became the first black and first female General Secretary of LSE. When I look around this room I see the Camden girls that became to changes they so desperately wanted to see in the world. When I look at Camden girls I see the young Michelle Obamas, Eleanor Roosevelts, Chimamanda Adichie Ngozis, the Nina Simones, the Indira Gandhis, the Emily and Sylvia Pankhursts and the Maya Angelous. I see the young women that will carry on the legacy of these phenomenal women through newer and fresher frontiers.

And what the true Camden girl realises is that we have a responsibility to the dreamers of the past to make their visions a reality. The true Camden girl realises that it must be our actions that are cemented in the history books not just our dreams.

I'd like to think that if I hadn't have come to Camden, I'd still be the outspoken and defiant girl that I so proudly claim to be. But the truth is I would probably be some altered version of the girl standing in front of you now. Although, at times, I admit, I am Camden's most vocal critic, it is the only school in the world that allows me to be. The only place where I could discover this ambitious person and be proud of her, while still keeping to Camden principles of dedication and strong morals. Next year, I will be a Camden girl outside of Camden. But this is ok. I don't need the bricks and mortar to define my spirit. This is because all Camden girls carry with them the spirit of dreamers like our founder but most importantly the actions of revolutionaries.

Thank you.