

I'd like to start my speech with a tribute to the security guard at Tesco's. Each day, three times a day he braves the tidal swell of hungry Camden girls, bags flying, voices shouting, and somehow, he remains intact, ready for the next day.

In groups of more than three, we Camden girls can be overwhelming. But in spite of this reputation, our riots are usually based around activism, creativity and fundraising, something that makes our school so amazing. While I've been here, I've seen marches, dance-offs, talent shows, speeches, band battles, plays, musicals, debates, quiz nights, jumble sales, political societies, book fairs, fun runs, hustings and concerts. Not only have these experiences taught us to think outwards and to help those who need it outside our tiny Camden catchment area, we have also learnt that it's important to focus on supporting ourselves too. When we can't afford a play, we fundraise. When we can't afford a trip, we fundraise. When we can't afford science labs, we fundraise. When the cuts are big, our fundraising is bigger.

Camden inspires us to aim high.

But secondary school is no doubt an incredibly intense experience, and Camden is no exception to this rule. As a teenager, it feels almost easier to be lonely, self-conscious and insignificant than it does to feel confident. What's more, social media acts as a magnifying glass to our insecurities. It makes the problems that we are facing today feel like they will last forever. It follows us home. What we see every day is overwhelming, and unachievable ideals continuously make us feel like we are not good enough.

Being here, I have learnt the importance of communication, the benefits of understanding that we are all going through similar problems and the advantages of discussion across the years, in an effort to avoid the same issues occurring again and again. As soon as we start talking about mental wellbeing, the fear starts to fade. There will always be difficulty in school, but I have seen positive attempts to address it in this school that I hope will increase. I believe change comes from acceptance and conversation. We must appreciate what is going on around us, and we must work together to create systems that support students. We must go further.

We live in a world where the words of our role models are often drowned out by unacceptable leaders with a devastating amount of power. We live in a world of racism, sexism, homophobia, islamophobia and prejudice. We live in a world where it feels like we are somehow going backwards in human rights, instead of forwards. It feels more crucial than ever before to be strong and powerful, to be active and engaged. I can proudly say this is a strength of Camden girls. I have no doubt that the girls in my classes will be successful, not submissive. I am so inspired by the girls I've shared my time with at Camden, and I am sure that they will continue to inspire others. I know that we are all among those of this generation

hungry for change, and I am sure we will be among those of this generation that bring about that change.

Chimamanda ngozi Adichie once said “We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful. Otherwise, you would threaten the man.” I am lucky enough to go to a school surrounded by students who will not shrink themselves, who will have ambition and who will be successful. I am lucky enough to go to a school that encourages us to recognise and address everyday discrimination, so we are not undermined and we are not oppressed. What better environment to grow up in, in a world so overwhelmed by inequality?

Frances Mary Buss understood the sexism of her society. But she did not just understand it, she addressed it. By bringing the possibility of education to girls through the establishment of a chain of schools, she allowed those girls to learn, and therefore to have power and to have strength.

She taught us not to accept difficulty or injustice in our society, but to be bold, to take risks and to make changes.

As we all leave this school it's exciting to think of all the different paths we will follow, about all the different lives we will live, even though we all come from the same place. And no matter where we go, there will probably always be a Tesco Metro at the corner of the road, to remind us where we come from, and where we spent our teenage years. Camden has made us the people we are today. It has not only prepared us to face the world, but to change it.

Thank you.