Adam Sealfon

Good afternoon. Parents, family, friends, teachers, classmates:

I've been thinking about everything we have done together, and it's pretty staggering. In the past four years, we have taken 200,000 exams. Collectively, the amount of time we have spent in the Stuyvesant building is more than four times the duration of the Hundred-Years War. On its stairs and escalators, we have climbed 114 million feet, 4000 times the height of Mount Everest and one eleventh of the distance from here to the moon.

Your academic and extracurricular achievements are, as Darth Vader would say, most impressive. Being among you has been inspiring and humbling. To paraphrase General George Patton, you have overcome by your indomitable fortitude every obstacle. I could not be more proud to be a member of the great Stuyvesant Class of 2009.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank a few of the people who enabled us to reach this day. Our teachers, for their dedication and guidance. Our parents, grandparents, siblings, and family, for always sticking by us even when the going was rough. And thank you, the Class of 2009, for giving me the most memorable and enjoyable high school experience I could have dreamed of. The last four years have been the most incredible time in my life. I've greatly enjoyed hanging out with you and learning from you in our frequently quite nerdy conversations.

Our years at Stuyvesant have also been bittersweet. Tragically, we've lost two of our classmates, one in our freshman year and the other just a few months ago. April and Ava, we miss you, and we're thinking about you today.

In the 2008 Presidential Election, we watched a young, scholarly, urban candidate defeat his more experienced rivals and become President of the United States. His message was one of hope for the future and belief in the ability to make a difference. Notably, two

Stuyvesant graduates are among President Obama's closest advisors, Attorney General Eric Holder '69 and Senior Advisor David Axelrod '72.

In 1961, President Kennedy set the goal of landing a man on the moon within ten years. His vision was realized eight years later with the successful Apollo 11 mission. At the time of President Kennedy's speech, the average age of the future members of the flight control team that would answer his call was only 18, just as many of us are now.

Many of the challenges we face today are far more daunting and urgent than putting a man on the moon. Addressing climate change and global warming; searching for better sources of energy; stabilizing Darfur and Somalia; curing malaria, AIDS, and cancer; stopping terrorism and blocking rogue nations from acquiring nuclear weapons—these are the next moon landings, and we don't have much time to get there. The success of the Apollo 11 landing came from an emphasis on education and innovation motivated by competition with the Soviet Union and the success of the Sputnik launch. The synergy of passion and learning fueled not only "one small step for a man," but contributed to the computer revolution, the biomedical revolution, and our modern technological world.

We've been privileged to attend Stuyvesant. But this economic crisis is making things difficult. As we watch, the education budget is being squeezed. The number of students at Stuyvesant has continued to increase while its budget continues to erode. We can't afford to let our own educational system slide at such a critical time. Stuyvesant cannot become complacent. We must always strive to improve.

In the past couple of weeks, we have seen social networking sites such as Twitter become instruments for democratic reform. The challenges of tomorrow will call for new tools and new ideas. And I feel incredibly proud to be part of a Stuyvesant class that is up for tackling these challenges. Everywhere you look, Stuy graduates are fixing the world, from curing disease to physics, from teaching to engineering, from politics to music and the arts. It's an inspiring legacy.

The highest peaks are yet to be climbed.

The future—the only test that really matters—is ours. We have 32 million minutes. Begin.