

*Dear Parents and Guardians,*

*Yesterday's events in our nation's capital were disturbing, frightening, and deeply upsetting to many Americans, including members of our student body. A core part of our mission as a school is to help our students understand and think critically about their experiences, and to encourage them to always seek the truth. Students look to their school for comfort and guidance in such times. These remarks were composed in that spirit, and I thought it important you know what I shared with your children today.*



January 7, 2021

Dear Students,

Last spring, when so many in our country rose up in protest after the death of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer, I said that schools that just go about their business regardless of what goes on “in the outside world” risk being completely irrelevant and doing a disservice to their students and communities. We cannot ignore that yesterday, encouraged by the President of the United States, a mob forcefully entered the Capitol building of our country, the home of the U.S. Congress and the very heart of our democracy, and briefly took it over, forcing lawmakers to take cover while their offices and the chamber were occupied and vandalized, only leaving when forced to by law enforcement and the National Guard. Four people died.

I ask you to investigate for yourself what happened yesterday in Washington D.C. Do all agree on what happened? How do you decide whom to believe? Many are calling this an attempt to overthrow our democracy, an insurrection, even treason. Do you agree? Why or why not? Whose words and actions were an attempt to restore order, and whose words and actions inflamed and escalated the situation? Who is responsible for what happened? What does it mean that so many of Mr. Trump's former supporters rejected his claims of election fraud yesterday? What does it mean that eight senators and 139 representatives challenged the electoral college results in one or more states? We had a contentious election. In America, how should citizens who wanted a different outcome have responded?

I have my own answers to these questions, but I am not going to share them here. My job, and the job of your teachers, is to help you use your experiences to become your own unique self, so you can have a good life and contribute to the common good. Our job is not to make you think like us, as in have the same ideas and beliefs, but to teach you how to think, to encourage you to seek truth and reject falsehood, and to act on what you find with integrity and respect.

So my answer to “what can you do?” is what it always is—you can do what is within your control. You should use your experiences to become the person you wish to be. GSA stands for integrity, commitment

to seeking and acting on the truth, respect, and courage, among other things. Those are the lessons and values we hope you will take with you when you leave here each day, and when you graduate. Those are the values that will enable you to have a good and happy life, and to make our country and our world better. Those values and lessons transcend political parties. They are at the heart of our nation's values. Use them to guide your thoughts about yesterday's events.

On this somber day for our country, we should be glad that democracy prevailed. And I hope you all commit yourselves to seeking truth, to accepting what you discover even if it challenges what you had previously thought, and to acting with respect and dignity.

If you do, GSA will have been successful. If you do not, we will have failed you, the communities you live in, and our country.

Mr. S