

**Greta Johnston**

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Columbine, Virginia Tech, Sandy Hook, Marjory Stoneman Douglas in Parkland. Today there is so much to fear in our surrounding world, and we, the upcoming generations out to inherit **the world** from our predecessors, it is imperative that we recognize and lay claim to a change or policy that will differentiate us from the multitude of generations who have tried to fix the mess of their ancestors. Kindness, **respect**, and understanding should be the defining traits of not only this middle school and the communities that encircle it, but the golden rule of society. Since the terrorist attack that was Sandy Hook in 2012, 142 school shootings have been recorded with one on average per week. Yet something so simple as being kind might have prevented so many of these attacks. In the US one in every three students have said to have been bullied and not surprisingly, most bullying happens in middle school. Middle school is tough, we are transitioning from the fun of lower school to high school where you are judged for the rest of your life based on how well you do as a teenager, no pressure. Not to mention how we grow up believing that our years in middle school are going to be the most miserable three years of our lives, raise your hand if you've read a book like "Diary of a Wimpy Kid", or "Middle School: The worst years of my life". See my point? But, in my experience Middle School was a tad underwhelming compared to the stories I had heard and I've had my absolute favorite school years in middle school, nevertheless that is only me and there are most likely people in this room struggling from bullying, home troubles, or a handful of other problems us tweens to teens are challenged with as Middle Schoolers every day. Us Teenage students are sometimes overlooked as moody, ignorant and "non-developed" which trust me we easily CAN be when we try, but there is so much potential in all of us with so many diverse talents that can go on to change the world, but there is also the flip side. Given the right circumstances, we all have the potential to do bad, it's human nature, but teamwork and compassion are also human nature. Although I know all of you and I'm pretty much certain that none of you are very hostile or bullies on your own, who knows what problems any one of us could be facing right now. Who knows what a kind gesture might do. Who knows what an unkind gesture might do. We're all going through something, and even small gestures can move mountains. At Frederica, we should not let anyone feel below others or worthless because, honestly, we're all fighting the same uphill battle, so let's not be on opposing sides. So today as we remember the tragedies of the past, we the students of America should and can prevent similar attacks in the future, because this isn't a foreign problem and it's our responsibility to correct it as generations of the present and future. Just be nice to people, it's easy, I promise. Thank you.