



Kamiylah Alexander Says Keep Going

Hello, my name is Kamiylah Alexander and I am a graduating student of the Doctor Franklin Perkins School. Four years have passed since I began my stay here at Perkins on June 5, 2012. I was a scared, nervous, and worrisome 15-year-old. I didn't know what journey may lay ahead. Upon my admission to the residence, I was greeted by a group of diverse girls. All who appeared to have unique personalities. My initial internal response to the group of girls was to put on a mask to disguise my difficult emotions. In this new environment, I felt out of place.

But, as time went on, I was encouraged to interact and step out of my comfort zone. At the time my family was my biggest support, and as I grew, so were my staff and new friends. Within my first few months, I really struggled with my identity and trust. I fell into something like a frozen state. Things seemed cold and hard to break through. I was on an emotional rollercoaster.

After my first year, my frozen state began to thaw. But as it was, I still found it hard to express myself. Three years in, I explored myself and learned more of who I was. My hope and strength only grew with time, and there was no giving up. My fourth year at Perkins presented me with a new, resolved sense. I still struggle, but now I am gifted with knowledge. Knowledge I didn't know when I stepped foot onto this campus. Knowledge I gained from my struggles.

To me, my journey at Perkins is symbolic to the nature of a butterfly. One of my favorite creatures is a butterfly, and I have always loved butterflies. As a child, I loved how beautiful they looked and how gentle they were. But little did I know what other magnificent qualities a butterfly possessed. Before a butterfly is created, a caterpillar inches its way through survival. When the time is right, it cocoons itself and struggles to become even more than it was: a butterfly. This extraordinary creature is a free-roaming creation, built to withstand as much as is possible. Without the little caterpillar's inches and struggles, that butterfly would have never existed.

My message to my fellow graduates is to keep going despite how hard it is. Cherish the moments when you're smiling, laughing, and enjoying yourself. There will be many more difficult as well as beautiful moments to come. But, just like the precious butterfly, once we have gone through so much, we will be freer. Our significance only grows. At last we have made it to graduation, and if we have gotten this far, we can get farther.