

COVID-19: Creating an Alternative Commencement!
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In communities across the world, children dream of their high school graduation and walking across a stage to receive a diploma. The graduating class of 2020, unfortunately will not share this moment with many classes before them as graduations and all public gatherings have been cancelled during this spring and early summer.

This disruption and breach from tradition reveals how we have taken the ritual of graduation for granted as well as many other ceremonies. Society loves ceremony, and while the act of a young adult being handed a piece of paper is not the pinnacle of their accomplishment, the ceremony signifies a rite of passage. Parents and/or caretakers watch the person they have raised receive a credential. Walking across the stage is a momentous point, and for many marks the end of the gestation period. In addition, it recognizes the students' work and potential, launching them forward into the world. Without this ceremony, students lack the moment that defines a separation of the previous chapter from the next one. Teachers and administrators at some high schools have made "commencement signs" to supplement graduation, and by planting the signs in seniors' lawns, schools have created an alternate ceremony to officialize the role exit of students.

Because our culture loves ceremonies dearly, we feel compassion for high school seniors who are being compromised by the virus and deprived of celebration. The commencement signs in graduates' front yards display students who have the achieved status of completing their formal education, and it reminds us, in a time of introspective isolation, to not lose pride for others or forget our youth. Graduates are like warriors with their positive spirits and persistence through this difficult and adverse time and are being appreciated in a novel way. The signs show us that while many things in our world are currently paused, these students are not, which I feel is a beacon of hope for the future.