

**RACHEL ALEXANDER'S  
VALEDICTORIAN ADDRESS  
2009**

Freemont has helped shape many of my beliefs and given me experiences for which I am truly grateful. Whether it be something as simple as washing the dishes with Justin or talking to students during break. Freemont also organized a clothing drive for CAMH, and my personal favorite was being part of a documentary where Sean and the students took time out of school to interview Derek Jensen, a household name at Freemont. Or something as profound as questioning whether or not I am living an authentic life.

3 years ago I was faced with many issues, and couldn't imagine my life being any different. I was nervous to come to Freemont as my experiences in other schools were, to say the least – a struggle. I'm sure some of you can relate in one way or the other. Although I have struggled at Freemont, it has been a different type of struggle. It has been the struggle to always delve deeper within, to question my beliefs and values in this world, especially those that are taught from a very young age; namely, go to school to graduate, attend university, get a job, and have a family – be successful! Now, these are by no means negative things to strive for, although the key point is “success.” While at Freemont I have repetitively discussed the definition of success. What does that mean to you, to live a successful life?

Most of the time, success means making a lot of money and being happy. I always felt there was something more—and there is. At Freemont I was taught to believe in something greater than my own selfish or materialistic desires. To really ask myself if I was doing what I could to do reach my hand out and help others. Did I look at this world and see something that I could change for the better? I learnt to always persevere no matter how painful or uncomfortable something is. “Comfortable” means keeping something to yourself because you're fearful of what others will think, doing the minimal self-searching/evaluating, or ignoring those who are less fortunate. It is very easy for me to stay in my comfort zone although I have to remember that it is not there where I will ever find real happiness.

This past school year, the students in Sean's Utopian Visions class studied different types of philosophies for living, by reading Plato, Moore and Jesus – visionaries who did not approach life or society by aligning themselves to mainstream values. And as all of the students and teachers here know, Freemont is anything but mainstream. Of these visionaries, I will read a passage that speaks to me about what it means to step out of my comfort zone, to experience the struggle to be real, and embrace authenticity:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

My experience has shown me that whenever I have had to face a struggle, it has forced me to look inwardly for the answer, and in so doing it lead to authenticity.

**These are experiences and lessons that I will always take with me and share with others. I am forever grateful to this school, its students and the staff that put so much care and time into Freemont. I feel that I have been given the opportunity to go to an amazing school that is not only interested in helping its students to strengthen their academics, but to also broaden their outlook on their relationship between themselves and society. I am excited to start a new chapter in my life—I will always have this one to look back on and learn from.**

**I would also like to take a moment to thank all of the teachers here. You are nothing less than an integral part of Freemont—thank you.**

**Sean, you have been someone who has motivated me to live an authentic life—I will remember the times you have sat with me and shared your time with me. Your compassion has made it possible for students to get the most out of high school. Thank you.**

**I now pose the question to everyone—to think about where they feel most comfortable, but know that it is holding them back from something bigger and better. My challenge to you is to step out of that comfort zone and acknowledge your strengths. To know that anyone can make a difference—no matter how small you think your vision may be, it will grow and develop over time with perseverance.**

**And with that I would like to take the opportunity to encourage the students who are continuing their time at Freemont the best of years to come and congratulate the graduating class of 2009!**