

ST. CRISPIN AND THE MOTT HALL SCHOOL

Members of the Mott Hall School's Class of 1999—heartfelt congratulations on this happy day, one that will be long remembered.

It is the year that your elementary school chess team journeyed to the national competitions at Phoenix, Arizona and came in Number One in the United States; the year that your Junior High school chess team entered the national competitions at Columbus, Ohio, and also came in Number One in the United States; the year when the founding coach of your chess teams won designation as the first African-American International Grand Master in the history of chess; the year when the reading ratings released this month showed your fourth grade ranked Number One in all of New York City; the year you graduates earned admission in record numbers to New York's most competitive and meritocratic public high schools; and on and on.

One day in high school or in college some of you will study Shakespeare's play *Henry V*, where you will read in stirring verse of the pride and honor of those who triumphed over fierce odds at the battle of Agincourt on St. Crispin's Day. Although this is not St. Crispin's Day and I am certainly no Shakespeare, the sentiments are much the same.

Despite limited resources and against the odds, in the face of hardship and struggle, you, too, have triumphed. Mott Hall has no auditorium, no real gymnasium, and, until private donors supplied it, no outdoor playground.

But if you are short on physical facilities, you are long on spirit!

You have cultivated high aspirations and self-confidence, disciplined attitudes and the capacity for sustained hard work that invariably lead to high achievement.

Sustained and encouraged by your families and by outstanding school leadership that prides itself on bringing out the best in its students, you have achieved wonders.

Now, as you go on to high school and then to college, we hope that you will keep alive in your hearts and minds the vision that this wonderful school has labored to instill in you—a desire not only for schooling, but for learning, leading not just to a job, but to a fulfilling career, not merely to earn a living, but to lead a life that is productive and satisfying.

Graduating students of Mott Hall, we will follow your lives with encouragement and high hopes, confident that you will continue your trajectories of growth and development, and that you will demonstrate to the world what you are capable of achieving.

To those of us who have tried to be helpful, you have eloquently echoed the words that Winston Churchill addressed to the U.S. Congress in World War II, “Give us the tools and we will do the job.”

You are doing the job!

And we are so proud of you.

God bless you all!

*Commencement,
Mott Hall School
June 14, 1999*