

One of my favorite singers says “I have better things to do than survive” and I used to agree with her. But I’ve come to realize all we do is survive. What differentiates people is how they approach their survival. This was illustrated for me in New York during senior project. New York can be a brutal environment, beautiful but truly tolling. Artists were surviving, in the city that was both inspiring them and trying them. After spending three weeks in a city that never sleeps, immersed in an art scene that I’d never seen in a movie or read in a book, I began to really grasp the meaning of the struggle that not only artists but *all* people endure. I would say that we are all deeply affected by our environment and high school is an environment that occupies some of the most important developmental years of our lives. We have been surviving at CRMS, learning the skill of meaningful existence. We have been practicing and being influenced whether or not we choose to acknowledge that, in order to continue our survival endeavors wherever we go. The correlation between surviving high school and surviving any other environment is *how* we choose to do so.

It seems like people survive in 2 ways. The first being people who are scared and let it cripple them and second people who are scared and do it anyway. We all have a choice to lead fulfilling lives and plunge headlong into the fear that I KNOW we all possess. Everyone knows that doing things in life is hard but more often than not the most satisfying moments we have are the ones when we take uncanny steps towards our passions and desires **DESPITE** our fear.

To survive as an artist, as most of you know, is pretty daunting. The term starving artist is not a joke, but art in New York flourishes despite lack of income. For most people **NOT** having shows in big galleries, being an artist means having a day job and fitting in the personal work at every available moment. But I was in awe of the perseverance despite the financial havoc most up and coming artists endure. Not only were they living on bean tacos and necessary day jobs, but that survival became their inspiration, their fuel. It’s like looking your destroyer in the face and painting his portrait.

I’ve lived through these 4 years struggling to find my place, struggling to fit in. Just as everyone does in their own way. But I now know that the struggle is where I fit in. The struggle is my place because that is **ALL** there is. The struggle defines us. If we are like the people in New York our struggle, our **SURVIVAL** becomes our art. It becomes our fuel, the passion needed for a rich exciting life. It has the power to change us if we become aware of its force.

I can’t think of **ANY** other high school that encourages this kind of educational and personal struggle in its students. That would use it as a tool to construct ourselves. Though we’ve been experiencing this for 4 years I finally understand the importance of being able to embrace the struggle. New York has magnified this belief and I have never felt more able and satisfied to not wait but go, running despite fear into the next part of my life.