

I'm Iris Rotberg and a research professor of education policy at the Graduate School of Education and Human Development. I have spent the last several years working on issues of school integration—an apparent irony at a time when we are now separated, each in our own space. Yet, although we may be isolated physically we are not isolated socially. Just the opposite, thanks to you—our students and our colleagues. Your courage, your dedication, your humor have made the difference. By your actions you have demonstrated the meaning of John Donne's tribute to our interdependence, written almost 400 years ago:

"No man is an island,
Entire of itself.
Each is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main"

And Donne's concluding words:

"... I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send not to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee."

Thank you.

When I think about this pandemic, I think most often about what lasting effects it will have on your age group and those younger. My parents were very young during the 1918 flu pandemic but old enough to understand what was going on. They never mentioned it to me.

How will you remember this pandemic 10 years from now? Thirty years from now? Fifty years from now? Will you tell your children and grandchildren about it or will it seem like a blip in the context of the rest of your life? And I wonder too how my grandchildren will remember it—and particularly my 5-year-old granddaughter, adopted from Wuhan, China three years ago, who suddenly can't go to school or see friends or go outside without a mask? And how will she remember it knowing she came from the city where it all started?

These are unknowns. But what I do know is that I will never forget your dedication, your optimism, and your humor. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with each of you, and I wish you bon voyage—figuratively, not literally, at least for the moment—as you celebrate your graduation. Congratulations!

*A virtual graduation message to our Education Policy class
of 2020.*