

## Labels, Pizza, and Discomfort

*Written by Kaela Dunne, St. Mark's School Editor  
September 30, 2017*

I'm not going to lie. Discourse is not my favorite thing in the world. I am not good at finding middle ground; I thrive when the lines are black and white, not grey. But, politics are rarely black and white, all good or all bad -- and that continues to frustrate me.

I love labels and I tend to label everything around me, even during political discussions. The most frustrating thing for me used to be not knowing where someone stood on the political spectrum. I'm lost without labels, but though they work for me I've grown to realize that they don't work for everyone.

At St. Mark's, we have a lot of tough discussions, which I think is something that makes our community so special. I've challenged myself to be open-minded to others in the way I want them to be open-minded towards me. And, a lot of the time, it's hard to do. When you have an essay to write, other homework, sports, and clubs, everything piles up and it becomes easy to be on the brink of exhaustion at all times. It's also easy to be frustrated by political discussions and shy away from them because you're tired and they're uncomfortable.

A former teacher at St. Mark's used to always say, "comfort the disturbed, disturb the comfortable." And, when it comes to these political discussions, that quote is something I try to keep in mind. Sure, it's nice to live in my bubble where I can only focus on myself and my daily life, but it's a privilege to be able to do that. It's easy to be comfortable at boarding school and it's natural to want to stay comfortable. I know that I've sat in the dining hall and sensed a conversation arising that was difficult. And, too many times, I stayed silent or made a quick excuse to leave. But, this year, I've made an effort to speak up and share my opinion, even when it's not one supported in the conversation. And, honestly, sometimes it makes my stomach turn. But, I've realized that we should be having these discussions and that a good conversation should never be one-sided. Besides, you never really learn that way. You don't grow as a person and you leave boarding school similar to how you started.

I think it's safe to say that most of us came to boarding school because we wanted to be challenged. I also think it's safe to say that we we have changed for the better. We have an opportunity to participate in these discussions, and we should take it. So, the next time there is a club meeting or discussion happening and you make excuses to not go or participate, think about why you *actually* decided to avoiding the conversation. And, maybe even change your mind and go.

Also, at St. Mark's, most of these conversations are accompanied by pizza. So, you really have nothing to lose and everything to gain.