



THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 2012

 **CLASS OF 2012**
HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT

See Forever Foundation
Maya Angelou Public Charter School

EVANS CAMPUS CEREMONY AT 10:00AM



Location

TRINITY UNIVERSITY

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WHO WE ARE / WHAT WE DO...

The See Forever Foundation (See Forever) supports the Maya Angelou Schools (Maya Angelou), a multi-campus collaboration of two successful alternative high schools and an alternative middle school in Washington, D.C. In addition, See Forever also operates the Maya Angelou Academy at New Beginnings Youth Development Center (formerly know as Oak Hill), the long-term secure facility for D.C. youth who have been adjudicated delinquent, as well as a Transition Center to support students released from New Beginnings with their transition back into our community. This year, See Forever/ Maya Angelou serves approximately 600 students across its campuses.

For more than 10 years through innovation and persistence, See forever/Maya Angelou has run a highly successful academic program for lower income students with a particular focus on court-involved youth, students who have failed in traditional school settings, and students with special needs. We refer to our holistic approach to education and youth development as the “Maya Way.” Many of our students enter our schools performing several grade levels behind, and struggle with the effects of poverty and violence in our communities; but at our school they overcome these challenges and transition to college career, and a lifetime of success at a rate that exceeds the national average.

With a core expertise in integrating all of the support services a historically challenged student needs into one seamless, intensive school program, See Forever/Maya Angelou students experience small classes, individualized instruction and a wide range of wrap-around services. Tutoring, mentoring, career preparatory training, internships, enrichment classes, mental health services, residential opportunities, transition support and “real-world” authentic learning experiences help See Forever/ Maya Angelou students set and meet high expectations. Through its programming, students receive individual attention; they learn marketable skills and move on to postsecondary institutions or employment at a rate exceeding 80%. The school strives to be a place of hope where students, teachers, parents and community members form unique bonds through an intensive academic curriculum and special programs.

To learn more about the program and our schools, visit us at www.seeforever.org.

A CALL TO ACTION

MAYA ANGELOU PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL GIVES STUDENTS A CHANCE TO BEAT THE ODDS AND SUCCEED

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

CONTRIBUTE – Whenever possible, consider a tax-deductible contribution in support of our efforts – your dollars can help a high school dropout transform themselves into a college graduate.

VOLUNTEER – As often as you can, give the gift of time. Help us in making a difference in the lives of our students by serving as a volunteer.

ADVOCATE – Remember, just one voice has the power to make an impact. One voice joined by many, has the power to create everlasting change. Advocate for youth who deserve the guarantee of a promising future.

LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LUCRETIA MURPHY, J.D., PH.D.

Dear Seniors,

In the fall of 2011, two schools - the Shaw and Evans campuses - came together as one. You all have been models for the students from your campuses as you proved that we are, indeed, one Maya family. This will now be our largest class of seniors to graduate from the Maya Angelou Public Charter School. I know that I speak for your family and friends, teachers, counselors and your friends when I say, "we are very proud of you."

Take the sense of family with you. This is the commencement, but where your journey ends will be determined by you. Be bold! Be wise! Be kind! We will always be behind you!

In the words of Dr. Seuss:

Congratulations!
Today is your day.
You're off to Great Places!
You're off and away!

You're in charge of your own life, so don't let others control your actions.
You have brains in your head.
You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.
You're on your own. And you know what you know. And YOU are the guy who'll decide where to go.

Enjoy the good times, but embrace the bad times: that's when you learn and grow the most!
You'll be on your way up!
You'll be seeing great sights!
You'll join the high fliers who soar to high heights.
You won't lag behind, because you'll have the speed. You'll pass the whole gang and you'll soon take the lead.
Wherever you fly, you'll be best of the best. Wherever you go, you will top all the rest.

Except when you don't.
Because, sometimes, you won't.
I'm sorry to say so but, sadly, it's true that Bang-ups and Hang-ups can happen to you.

Never give up on yourself or your goals.
And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed!
(98 and $\frac{3}{4}$ percent guaranteed.)

We bid you on your way with tears of sadness and joy. We will miss you, but we know you will make us proud!

With respect and pride,

Lucretia Murphy

Executive Director, See Forever/ Maya Angelou Schools

MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI PROGRAMS

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2012! Today you join a network of 350 alumni who are living out the “Maya Way.” Alumni have earned various post-secondary credentials and are working in health care, government, business and in other non-profit organizations where they are giving back to their communities. In joining our Alumni ranks, we know that you will find the same success your peers have accomplished.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Office of Alumni Program delivers and develops post-secondary access and success practices as part of a continuum of services designed to ensure post-secondary success for Maya Angelou Public Charter School graduates.



SERVICE INFORMATION

The Office of Alumni Programs mirrors our high school programming in designing individualized support plans. However, the majority of our work falls into the following four categories:

CASE MANAGEMENT: Coordinate academic, financial, and social-emotional services for college enrolled/recent graduates. Additional services include site visits to campuses and advocacy to university personnel.

FINANCIAL SERVICES: Disburse and manage scholarships, Individual Development Accounts (IDA's), emergency fund awards, and support in renewing federal and state aid. Alumni can also receive referrals to additional financial services like tax preparation, credit counseling, and financial management courses.

CAREER SERVICES: Provide career exploration software, career search, and help updating application materials. In addition, provide workshops and job training opportunities with the help of community partnerships.

PEER NETWORKING SERVICES: Provide online and live services for alumni to engage, network, and support each other in their post-graduate endeavors.

“NOTHING WILL WORK UNLESS YOU DO.” by Dr. Maya Angelou

Good luck, and we look forward to hearing from you as you set out to build rewarding lives. If you need help along the way, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. Call Jessica Rucker, Alumni Programs Coordinator at 202-797-8250 or e-mail her at jrucker@seeforever.org

EVANS CAMPUS

ORDER OF CEREMONY

Processional

Presentation of Colors

The National Anthem

Welcome

MAPCS- Senior Reflections and Staff Tributes

Acknowledgement of Scholarship Recipients

MAPCS-Senior Reflections and Staff Tributes

Musical Selection

Conferral of Diplomas

Alumni Induction and Support

Turning of the Tassels

Closing

Recessional

Pomp & Circumstance

Anacostia High School Color Guard

MAPCS Choir

Corey Carter
Principal, MAPCS-Evans

MAPCS-Evans Graduates and Staff

Steven Foster
Assistant Principal, MAPCS-Evans

Nick Michalopoulos
Senior Academy Lead, MAPCS-Evans

MAPCS-Evans Graduates and Staff

MAPCS Choir

District of Columbia Public Charter
School Board Official
See Forever/Maya Angelou
Leadership

MAPCS Alumni Representative

Corey Carter and Steven Foster

Lucretia Murphy, J.D., Ph.D.
Executive Director
See Forever Foundation and Maya
Angelou Schools

MAPCS Class of 2012





PRINCIPAL'S NOTE

COREY CARTER

MAPCS-EVANS CAMPUS

On behalf of the See Forever Foundation and Maya Angelou Public Charter School, I would like to welcome parents, family members, and community members to the graduation ceremony for the class of 2012. As a school community, we entered this year with a lot of unknowns but also with a great deal of hope. The closing of our flagship Shaw campus meant that there were rising seniors who would have to transfer to another campus, and another group of rising seniors who would have to open their arms to welcome new faces into their senior experience. It has been a special sight to see this year as our students from the Evans and Shaw campuses merged to form a unified Maya Angelou Public Charter School, and we are all better because of it. We are extremely proud of this class of seniors and know that they will represent themselves, their families, their communities, and the school well.

These young people have had the benefit of receiving an education that addresses nearly every area of their lives. They have participated in classes to help build on their academic skills. They have attended retreats to develop in them a sense of community. They have engaged in Future Focus activities to prepare them for their worlds of work and post-secondary education, and countless other activities aimed at helping them grow on the socio-emotional front. We are confident that they will take their experience at MAPCS and draw upon it as they grow into adults who will one day be leaders in our society.

To the parents, family members, advocates, friends, and staff, we thank you for supporting these students through their journey. Please know that your continued support will give these young people the hope and inspiration that they need to continue on their life's journey. Our hope is that they draw upon the lessons, the love, and the preparation that they have been provided to help them reach their goals, and that they one day become that "rainbow in the sky" that our namesake Dr. Maya Angelou speaks of so eloquently. These young people set a goal to finish high school and they have accomplished it. Let us congratulate them, be proud of them, share their joy, and remind them that there is much work left to be done because we are counting on them to change the world.

Sincerely,

Corey E. Carter

Principal, MAPCS Evans Campus



EVANS CAMPUS

STUDENT REFLECTIONS & STAFF TRIBUTES

Nicole Alexander
Nija Andrews
Larre Borom
Vanessa Calloway
Quaishaun Colbert
LaQuita Cook
Brian Dye
Tiara Foster

Delonte' Gamble
Charlotte Gaskins
Kiya An-nisse Gregg
Niya Gregg
Jasmine Handon
Brenken Johnson
Shawnta Johnson
Ecila Jones

Shantel Jones
Michael Kinard
Laverne Marie Leak
Nidia Leak
Ashley Lindsey
Perrika McGrier
Shakira Mosley
Deborah Murray

Kiamesa Nath
Jeffrey Owens
Demia Pearson
Ashjame Pendarvis
De'Ondrya Phelps
Darshai Randall
Alisha Schools
Darien Shorts

Yetunde' Solomon
LaPria Spain
Ta'Shaun Thomas
Danielle Vance
Eric Wallace
Faith Williams
Kadejah Wise
Charles Wood



NICOLE ALEXANDER

STUDENT REFLECTION

I remember my first year of high school like it was yesterday. I was living in Charlotte, North Carolina. I found myself not taking school very seriously. I would go to school each day, but I was more interested in being the class clown than doing my work. I received a report card each quarter of the year and would have all F's. The following summer I moved back to Washington, DC. I looked for a school where I could better myself and came across MAPCS online. I read some of the success stories and knew I had to apply. On my very first day at MAPCS, I knew I was in a different environment.

I remember all of my teachers made sure I would be successful. I began to receive report cards with A's and B's and found myself on the Honor Roll for the entire year. I was so proud of myself. I knew that if I applied myself and had helpful and caring teachers who went beyond their jobs, I could do well.

During my twelfth grade year, I started realizing that I had to finish school this year. I was really motivated during the first quarter. I remember meeting my English teacher Mr. Michalopoulos. His first lecture really intimidated me. I didn't pass my first quarter and barely passed the second. I knew a change had to come for the third quarter. I worked my butt off, coming in on Saturdays and revising my essays.

Mr. Michalopoulos is a teacher who will always have a special place in my heart. He was my motivation. Just to know that he noticed how hard I was working gave me that extra push. When I came to class one day, he told me I would be proud of the grade I received on a paper I had revised. When I saw it my heart dropped to my feet. I was very surprised; I had passed his class with a B. I felt like I was on top of the world.

Working hard in his class has helped me to know that if I apply myself, I can handle any obstacle that may come my way, and I can be successful.

TRIBUTE FOR NICOLE ALEXANDER BY ERIKA BUNTON

"But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Isaiah 40:31 (KJV)

It has been such a pleasure getting to know you this year! I'll never forget how we first met. I'll always remember how you rushed into my office to inquire about colleges even though at that point we hadn't even exchanged names. At that time, you impressed me with your excitement and commitment to graduate and to achieve greatness through education. And now here we are, celebrating this awesome accomplishment.

I am so very proud of you! You have shown great strength in challenging times and the determination to succeed with God's help. In preparing for motherhood, you have allowed the Lord to renew your strength to persevere this school year; and you remained a student of promise thirsting for the knowledge you desired to attain.

God has truly blessed you. Always rely on the truth that He has equipped you with all that you need for your next steps in life. You are intelligent, talented, and kind. And as you stay close to Him, He will continue to transform you into a woman after His own heart.

Although our relationship was initiated this year, I am so happy that our mentor /mentee connection will stand as you continue your life journey. You are beautiful both inside and out. Be confident that "... he knoweth the way that [you] take: when he hath tried [you], [you] shall come forth as gold." Job 23:10



NIJA ANDREWS

STUDENT REFLECTION

I walked into Maya Angelou Public Charter School not knowing what I was getting myself into. My Maya family greeted me with an open heart. I felt welcomed, loved, and comforted. I met teachers and staff who stood beside me on my best and worst days. I faced a lot of challenges, but I accomplished a lot during my two years at Maya Angelou Public Charter School. I had to balance grades, separate my personal life from my education, and make my mom proud. Working on becoming an adult was the toughest thing; I knew at some point I would have to become more responsible and independent. At Maya I had trouble setting time for myself, getting my priorities straight, and getting organized. Helping me to reach my best was my mother Denise Lipscomb, who has been beside me for 17 years. I knew she would help me get to where I am today.

Teachers like Mr. Michalopoulos gave me hard advice, which pushed me more. He opened my eyes to see that life is no joke, and if I wanted to be brilliant at something then I would have to do more than want it. I would have to reach higher than I thought I could. I took that and ran with it, and look who I am now. An achiever, a writer, a basketball player, a model, and a dancer. Having accomplished these things, I know that hard work pays off. In order for you to become successful, you have to be committed, dedicated, and focused.

Maya Angelou has become my second family; I thank them for seeing the good in me and helping to get the worst out of my system. I have a lot of confidence as I graduate from Maya Angelou Public Charter and go on to college. I know that I will be a model of success for Maya Angelou.

TRIBUTE FOR NIJA ANDREWS BY JOSEPH BESS

Banking the corner as she walks into the hallway to class, Nija Andrews treats the hallways of Maya like a runway. The catwalk is one of the many places where she is comfortable in her skin, and she reminds us why originality and style are a part of the “Maya Way.” I met Nija a year ago as we began preparing for the annual fundraiser. Nija volunteered to dance on the main stage of the event and was dedicated to making her performance stellar. In that time, I got to know Nija’s bubbly personality and love for her family. There are not too many people I have met that have the natural ability to be good at so many different things. Nija is not all about her looks and dancing; she’s also an aspiring actress and a skilled basketball player. Why wouldn’t she be, as she stands at 5’11 and played with the Maya girls’ basketball team? With all your talents and skills Nija, you often question what’s the best fit for you. But as your mentor, I always tell you it’s only natural for you at this age. You have so many options and time to find out what truly makes you happy. But as your mentor, I must tell you to use your talent and gifts to make a way in this life for yourself. I know that you will find a career that affords you a better life and that you will use all the opportunities that are out there to your advantage.

If ever you need me, you know you can call, text, or e-mail. I will always give you honest advice, and you can still ‘try’ to advise me on “what not to wear.”

I want to leave you with my mother’s words: “Good, Better, Best----Never rest until your good is your better, and your better is your very best!”



LARRE BOROM

STUDENT REFLECTION

My two years at Maya Angelou Public Charter School have been a blessing. It came with some good experiences and some bad experiences. When Luke C. Moore gave up on me, Maya Angelou gave me another opportunity to become something. Maya Angelou welcomed me and made me feel like I was at home. I had to stay up late some nights to complete some of my work, but I was able to pat myself on the back for getting it done.

When I reflect on my time at Maya Angelou, there are a couple of teachers that come to mind. The very first person is Mr. Micholopolus, who constantly pushed me to strive for nothing but the best. He has encouraged me in so many ways. Knowing that there is someone who cares and will try to whip you into shape is like having a second father. When I started MAPCS in the 11th grade, I loved my English III teacher, Ms. Jones-Miller. She was more than a teacher; she was a role model and a mentor that helped to prepare me for college life. Another teacher that comes to mind is Mrs. West aka “Mama West.” She is the realest teacher in MAPCS and that is part of what makes her so awesome. She is another person at Maya that I could count on as a teacher and a role model. MAPCS is a very caring place and was there when I needed a helping hand. Maya Angelou helped me realize that there will be challenges in the real world and helped me reflect on what it means to be a phenomenal woman. There were tough times, but I know they were there so that I could become the mature young adult that I am today. I fought, I won, and I conquered. I am a rebel, and congratulations to the class of 2012.

Tribute for Larre Borom by Nakita West

Larre’, you are intelligent enough to do anything you desire. Don’t ever allow people to beat you down or discourage you. Never ever settle for less than what you deserve, because you deserve the very best.

I wish you happiness and gratification as you move towards your endeavors. Obstacles are natural and necessary lessons that assist with success. Keep a positive attitude towards yourself and make sure you surround yourself with pleasant people. Always trust your instincts and not what others choose for you.

Chi-Chi, I love you, and while I am enthusiastic for you to move on with life, I am heartbroken because I will truly miss you.



VANESSA CALLOWAY

STUDENT REFLECTION

When I reflect on my four years at Maya Angelou, the first person I think of is Ms. Henry, my mentor and my counselor. Ms. Henry has been by my side since the first day I met her, and I appreciate everything that she did for me. She has helped me reach my full and unique potential. I will also remember teachers such as Mr. Michalopoulos and Ms. Simonsen. Mr Michalopoulos has helped me excel academically. His tough love approach has allowed me to push myself and improve my confidence. I will always remember Ms. Simonsen, who gives students much more than just education by making every person who interacts with her feel special.

Maya Angelou Public Charter School's mission is to help us reach our potential, and I am proud to have experienced such a mission in action. MAPCS has helped me prepare for the real world, and I am still learning. Many are not aware of the personal challenges that I have experienced. These challenges have influenced how I interact with others, the decisions that I make, and my outlook on life. While some of the obstacles that I faced were beyond my control, some of them were the result of my own poor decisions. These personal challenges have made me a stronger person, because I overcame them and I didn't give up.

Last, but not least, I want to thank one of the greatest women in my life- my grandmother. My grandmother has been here by my side for longer than I can remember. She has been there to keep my family together, and she has kept me together. I thank her for everything she has ever done for me.

I will always remember the friendships I've made here and the moments that I've shared with all of you. With that being said, I want to say to the class of 2012, "Congratulations! We Made it!"

Tribute for Vanessa Calloway by Eboni Henry

"Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

-Joshua J. Marine

I first met Vanessa Calloway four years ago. There was something about this young lady that demanded the attention of those around her- her voice. She yelled everything. You can imagine how problematic this proved to be in a school! Over the years, I came to know Vanessa for her bright smile and warm greetings. Every morning she would come to my office and say, "HEYYYYY! You miss me?" even though I'd just seen her the day before.

During her time at MAPCS, Vanessa didn't always express what she felt in the best way. Sometimes that means being misunderstood. But, I get Vanessa. I get that when she pretends not to care, it's only because she thinks it makes disappointment a little easier to handle. I get that although she doesn't talk about the seemingly unbearable challenges that she has had to face in her childhood, she carries them with her every day, and sometimes that load gets heavy.

I have seen amazing growth in Vanessa. Behind her sometimes tough exterior is a sweet and caring young lady with a beautiful spirit. I have seen her face every setback with more determination than she did the last. She has found a way around every obstacle, and has never given up.

Vanessa, I am so proud of you. Remember that you will make mistakes, and you may fall. Just know that sometimes being brave is simply making the quiet decision that you will do better tomorrow. Continue to face adversity with determination, because the feeling of victory you will experience when you overcome them will be priceless. As you walk across the stage, enjoy your victory, and know that many more are to come. This is only the beginning.



LAQUITA COOK

STUDENT REFLECTION

During my years at Maya Angelou, I have had some of my best and worst moments. Throughout my years here, I can honestly say that I found myself. I found who LaQuita is exactly. My first year at Maya, I was a complete mess. I was loud, rude, and disrespectful. I just had no respect for myself, my peers, or the staff. As the year went on, I began to realize that I was making a bad name and a bad reputation for myself. Everyone saw me as the complete opposite of who I really was. Everyone, that is, except Ms. Maya. She worked with me day in and day out on my attitude, never once giving up on me. With her help, I began to improve my attitude. I knew that this was not something that would happen overnight, but I improved each day. Now here I am today accepting my diploma and walking across the stage that once seemed so far away. I am so thankful for my experience and for the people I met here at Maya: Ms. Young, Ms. Maya, Ma west, Mr. Wiggins, Ms. Carter, and Mr. Michalopoulos. These are all people that have become a part of my life and will also become a part of my future. Thank you Maya Angelou for your help molding and sculpting me into the intelligent, mature, leader that I am today. Thank you. And let us not cry because it's over, but rather smile because it happened.

Tribute for LaQuita Cook by Shanee Harrington-Young

Fiesty. Vocal. Independent. Intelligent. Four mere adjectives that summed up LaQuita Cook in the first five minutes I met her during orientation week of her 10th grade year. She was quick to move beyond the procedural icebreakers expected during the first week of school, and ready to get down to business – the schoolwork. “I got things to do”, were the words she sang from the rooftops. And from that day forward, I knew the world would be at her fingertips. Grown beyond her years on this earth but lighting up the room with the smile of a baby, LaQuita hinted to us all that her presence would always be felt, appreciated, and respected most of all. Never afraid to stand out from the crowd and in the process, do it with style.

Some would say, “she got too much of a mouth on her”, but whoever uttered those words truly never got to know the real “Quita.” Quite frankly, they probably knew the words you spoke were nothing but the truth.

LaQuita, continue to show the world your strength, but give of yourself to those who could benefit from your guidance. I can honestly say from my heart you are one of the very few I'm not worried about. The “savviness” with which you speak your thoughts, the natural intellectual capabilities you possess, and the simple street smarts you exhibit are going to take you well beyond this small world you have been exposed to thus far. Soar to your highest altitude, and I can guarantee you that a segment of this world will forever be changed. Love You Quita.

By the way, fierce shoes you got on this Graduation Day!



QUAISHAUN COLBERT

STUDENT REFLECTION

My time at Maya changed me into a good student. I learned that I can ask my teachers for help whenever it is needed. I also learned how to be aware of important deadlines and that I should always have good attendance. My favorite memory at Maya was the Maya's Got Talent showcase. March 29th, 2012 was my big night. That night, the staff, students, and parents were there. I was so nervous that my stomach was aching before I performed. Finally, it was my turn to sing. I started singing "Ooo Baby Baby." When my performance was finished, everybody loved it. That is my best memory of Maya Angelou.

My other favorite memory was the event called "Malaria No More." Melinda Doolittle sang a cover of the

Impressions' "People Get Ready," Eliot Yamin sang "Wait For You" and then Jason Castro sang "You Are." After those performances, we got to take pictures with the stars. The whole event was outstanding.

During my time at Maya, I have gotten through challenges. I am sad to leave Maya because if it wasn't for Maya, I wouldn't be here. All the teachers that helped me with my struggles are Ms. Maya, Ms. Jones, and Ms. Katia. Ms. Maya helped me because she gave me a calendar to keep me organized and to remember which class I had homework in without doing it all at once. Ms. Jones helped me because I always showed up early for some assistance with my homework. Ms. Katia helped us because she prepared us to apply to college. I am thankful for all of their support.

As I go to college, I know that I will be a good person in the future with the lessons I learned at Maya.

Tribute for Quaishaun Colbert by Deidra Bell

There are nice people, and then there are exceptionally nice people in this world. Quaishaun Colbert is one of those exceptionally nice people. He's someone you would want to have as a friend, a confidant, and a neighbor.

He stood out in my classroom because of his gentle nature, and he is an exceptional student, which is an admirable quality in itself. It didn't take long for me to appreciate that he is one of the finest art students I have had the pleasure of working with. The two artistic disciplines he enjoys the most are drawing and painting. His drawings are very deliberate and exquisite.

Quaishaun is always willing to offer help to other students, which in my view translates as a real "team player."

Coming from a large family, Quaishaun is also very family-oriented. With three brothers and three sisters, his demeanor in the classroom indicates he understands being reasonable and intervenes as a good mediator when necessary.

He really enjoys working with people, and when it comes to public speaking, his mild shyness takes a back seat to the confidence he projects. This young man is headed for greatness at Montgomery College where I have no doubt he will do well. Thank you, Quaishaun, for being such a wonderful spirit. I am so very proud of you!



BRIAN DYE

STUDENT REFLECTION

Maya Angelou Public Charter School...It was an interesting place to start off at in the 9th grade. I met a lot of different people while in Maya, some who inspired me to do greater. In the 9th grade, I met a teacher who was the first person to become a mentor/brother like figure to me and his name was Mr. Ayers. At first, and through my middle school years, I didn't expect for anyone to pay too much attention to me, but he told me that he saw "potential and a drive that would surprise anyone." Then later on that year I met two people who I never expected to be very close friends with, Cameron and Ishola. When I first met Cameron, he seemed kind of off to me, and I didn't think we would connect in any way. It turned out Cameron and I had a lot in common in traits, skills and friends. Then when I met Ishola, we were polar opposites. But because of Cameron, we became a close knit trio. This helped me open myself more to others since I was a very introverted person during my 9th grade year.

My senior year has been a good experience to me and probably one of the most rewarding times of my life. Throughout this year, although I didn't participate much with the school activities, I have done many new things outside my school that gave me many life experiences. At the beginning of my 12th grade year, I traveled with my friends who were in a program involved with biology. The new places and scenery opened my eyes towards traveling around and going to places I had never been before. I was also involved with them in going to perform various community service projects as well as doing activities that helped me gain skills that I didn't have like communication and teamwork. This year is coming to a close and, I hope I can stay in contact with all the people I have met and befriended during my four years here. I hope we all succeed beyond high school.

TRIBUTE FOR BRIAN DYE BY CHARLES DIGGS AND HEIDI SIMONSEN

Brian is a scholar! He endeavors to do what is necessary to achieve his academic goals. He has demonstrated time and time again that he will rise to the occasion of making his dreams become reality. I've enjoyed helping Brian overcome some of his challenges like getting to school on time. Brian, in college, be sure to get an alarm clock! I admire Brian's dedication and level of commitment to reach his future goals.
Charles Diggs

First Impressions at the beginning of this year: Steven, respectful, laid back, smart, reserved, thoughtful, creative, and hardworking. As I got to know Brian, I found that many of my first impressions were true, but not all! After school had been in session for about four weeks, Brian came up to me one day and I said, "Good mornin', Steven!" Brian looked at me a bit bashfully but very sweetly said, "Miss Simonsen, my name is Brian." Since then, I have found Brian Steven (as I now call him) to be all of my first impressions, as well as being a young man of many other strengths and talents. My first impressions grew into a real picture of the true Brian Steven, a young man of integrity, inquisitiveness, intellect, insightfulness and ideas for his future. Brian Steven, continue to seek out advice from those whom you trust, continue to try to go to bed by midnight, and continue to develop in trusting your own intuition. I am proud of you and look forward to hearing about the adventures of Brian Steven!
Heidi Simonsen



TIARA FOSTER

STUDENT REFLECTION

It all started September 1, 2008 when I came to MAPCS, home of the rebels. It seemed like not knowing anybody would have been the best thing because once I started attracting friends, it seemed like I also started attracting trouble. I got put out of class a lot, and my mother constantly got calls from the school about my behavior. Mr. Foster was my English teacher, and I hated going to his class. Mr. Foster loved me like I was his own even though I never listened. Throughout my whole 9th grade year, I got away with so much stuff so in 10th grade I was still acting up. I was not on top of my work like I should have been which caused me to have to do make up work on my spare time. Once I got to the 11th grade, I noticed that I had to calm down; my sister and mother were getting tired of me, and I was getting older. I also realized that things were going to be more serious during my senior year, especially in Mr. Nick's English class. I was told by multiple seniors, mostly by my niece Diamond, that if I didn't focus, I was going to fail. She told me that he would give us a test almost every morning. I think that was the best advice any junior could get. When I finally made it to the 12th grade, there was so much pressure and so many deadlines to meet. Not just with schoolwork, but with college applications and more. Without my two play sisters, the staff and teachers, especially Ms. Jones and Mr. Nick, pushing and encouraging me to focus and keep my head up, I don't think I would have made it to walk across the stage.

TRIBUTE FOR TIARA FOSTER BY STEVEN FOSTER

On an unassuming January 2008 morning, a whirlwind blew into my 9th grade English classroom. Full of energy and sassiness, Tiara Foster possessed the uncanny gift of disrupting class with one corny joke. That first year was fraught with calls home, and several talks with Mr. Foster. Tiara informed me that year that she was adopting herself into my family since we had the same last names. I reluctantly agreed.

Over the last four years, I've watched the beautiful transformation from childhood to womanhood. I'm reminded of the times that Tiara would unselfishly take time out to help counsel, encourage and tutor her fellow classmates. These are actions that are not frequently seen, even in adults. It's remarkable to see this young woman self-reflect and self-correct to her betterment.

Tiara Leah Foster has an awesome story. She has taken her destiny into her own hands and has decided to shoot for the stars. With her time at Maya Angelou Public Charter School, Tiara has cultivated the attributes of compassion, empathy, and responsibility. These qualities will serve her well as she endeavors to reach any goal in life she chooses. I wish you the best Tiara!



DELONTE' GAMBLE

STUDENT REFLECTION

Senior Reflection

My first year here was so sweet didn't know anybody
So I had to ball on my own two feet.
Seems like the new kid had just reached his peak.
But my senior year I got too comfortable
My grades dropped like the falling action in the Huckstables.
Skipping class make up work so abundant
I didn't care because I was in the gym euro stepping to the bucket.

During my time at Maya Angelou, I had to undergo many obstacles where I had to use intelligence instead of street smarts. My grandmother told me I was going to be the one with a granddaddy pocket watch. I was never a flashy dude, so she told me I never needed a ginormous icy watch.

"Delonte, you just needed to get your school work done to be the best you can be."

So on my days out on suspension, I got on my knees and asked God for guidance and God gave me a sign. From that time on, I knew that I was going to make it. Soon after, I was blessed with words of wisdom from guardian angels all around me; Porter was one of the most significant by taking me out of D.C. to Rocky Mountain NC for a basketball tournament. That's where I learned leadership and team work, and was awarded with the North vs. South championship trophy. During the final months of my senior term, I learned that I shouldn't have to "stupify" myself to fit in with what I thought was the right crowd of people. Now I will be attending UMES in the fall and majoring in premed. Now I have to thank my fellow senior classmates for their determination to graduate.

TRIBUTE FOR DELONTE' GAMBLE BY KENDRIC HAWKINS

Reflecting on my experience as Delonte Gamble's mentor, I must say that it has been very productive for the both of us. I have known Mr. Gamble for two years now, and our relationship has grown through these years. Mr. Gamble has exemplified growth in all aspects of his life. He has always been very strong academically and has strived to improve with his behavior inside and outside of school. I also was one of Mr. Gamble's football and basketball coaches, and he was definitely one of the leaders for both teams. He demonstrated the ability to balance school and athletics to become a model student-athlete. I hope that he will progress and continue to grow as a young man and scholar as he moves forward towards college.



CHARLOTTE GASKINS

STUDENT REFLECTION

When I came to Maya Angelou in 2008 at the Shaw Campus, I was a completely different person. I went in there with big behavior problems. There was never a day when you didn't see me in Mr. Keys' office. As the years have gone by, people can see how much I have grown. If I ever had something bothering me, I knew I could always run to Ms. Maya or Ms. West. They always say the right things to get me back on track. MAPCS was like a home away from home. Everyone knew everybody, so it was like a big family. Every year, we would go on a school retreat. The school retreats helped everyone to get to know each other.

By my 11th grade year, you could really see me maturing. I learned from my mistakes from 9th and 10th grade. I was taking pre-calculus with seniors. I was always a grade level ahead in Math. MAPCS had so many great opportunities for me. I got to be in the same room as Dr. Maya Angelou at "Cooking Up The Future". During enrichment, I got to experience Yoga and Culinary Arts.

My 12th grade year was spent at the Evans Campus. I kind of enjoyed it. The first week of my senior year, my boyfriend passed away. I was so unfocused and even missed two weeks of school. When I came back, I had a rough start, but I pulled through and regained my focus for my schoolwork. Even though that tragic moment happened to me, I didn't let it be my downfall. I did what I had to do and had him in my mind while I did it. Everything I do, I do it for Tyrell and me. I'm proud to say I made it.

TRIBUTE FOR CHARLOTTE GASKINS BY MAYA JEFFERSON

"Stop whining little girl". Those are words Charlotte would hear from me almost daily in her first couple of years in high school. She made excuses for her negligence and was naïve about the potential dangers of life. In spite of these things, however, Charlotte has always been a scholar at heart. Grades were of great importance, and she understood the value of an education. She lived and breathed for opportunities for advancement and, she made it known that she was willing and able to accept challenges; whining and all.

A once shy and timid girl has matured into a confident and bold young lady. Her experiences along the way have contributed to the young lady she has become. Like many, she has had great losses that have threatened her motivation, but unlike many, she has demonstrated a spirit of perseverance. Her story is one of many that has touched my life.

Charlotte is a leader among her peers and was influential in the transition from the Shaw Campus to Evans. She was able to put her peers at ease about the move to a new campus in their senior year. She did this by showing her peers that the only difference between the students from Shaw and Evans was the location in which they attended school. At the end of the day, they were all a part of the Maya Angelou family.

Charlotte stands alone from her peers as she possesses compassion for others. This generation is often called the "lost ones," but not Charlotte Gaskins. She is dependable, responsible and well-mannered. She respects those in authority along with boundaries. She knows the importance of building meaningful relationships and aspires to become a social worker. There is no doubt in my mind that Charlotte has the power to change the world.

I will miss you, Charlotte. You are truly amazing. Never give up on your dreams because greatness rests in you.

Love You Girl!



KIYA AN-NISSE GREGG

STUDENT REFLECTION

My years at Maya have taught me a lot about myself. When I started attending Maya Angelou, I thought I wasn't going to like it because it was small. But as time passed, I realized how much of a family the teachers and students are, and I loved my learning environment. During high school, I became a part of the National Honor Society and went to South Africa, which was one of the best experiences of my life. Last year, I had a really bad year. Many obstacles stood in the way of me reaching my goals. So I got another chance to try again and shoot for the stars. This time I was at the Evan Campus with different teachers and students, so it was like a fresh start. So yes, I am a senior for the second time, which has made my accomplishments this year that much better. I wanted to cry when I realized I only had 15 days left of school and I was writing my senior reflection.

My motto is: "Everything happens for a reason. Fight for what you believe in and everything else will fall in place. Just leave it to the man upstairs." So I just want to let everybody know that this is not just the start to my future, this is my beginning. I want to give a special thanks to the people who never stopped believing in me and the new believers and the people who pushed me to my fullest potential. First I would like to thank God, Niya Gregg, Sherdina Fletcher, Cheri Moore my Social Worker, Jennifer Troya, Nakita West, Kathy Procope, Brittney Salter, Tiffani Boykin, Gloria Salter, Antoinette Brock, Melanie Holmes, Carolyn Jackson, Jennifer Morris, Mr. Mick my English teacher and Tiffany Salter the love of my life. I love you all and thank you.

Tribute for Kiya An-nisse Gregg by Melanie Holmes

I have known Kiya for less than a year, but it feels as if I have known her all my life. Kiya is the phenomenal woman whom the school's namesake describes. Her struggles were once her stumbling blocks, yet she has managed to turn them into a solid foundation and pave her own way to success. In just 18 years, she has experienced more hardship than many adults. But still, she rises. I could not be more proud of her! Her perseverance is both admirable and inspiring to girls and women of all ages, including myself. She has a story to tell which she courageously shares. She has already proven to be unstoppable, but once she earns her Bachelor's degree and Juris Doctorate, she will undoubtedly soar to unseen heights.

Kiya, you are the little sister I never had but always wanted. Throughout college and beyond, know and never forget that I love you and will always be there for you. I am your mentor, lead cheerleader, academic coach and friend who will always have a shoulder for you to cry on, smile to brighten up any bad days and long, strong embrace to force upon because I know how much you enjoy them!



NIYA GREGG

STUDENT REFLECTION

As a high school senior, I think I've learned the most valuable lesson in life; to love me first. Believe me, it wasn't an easy task and sometimes it still isn't. But whenever you have support, it makes it 100% easier. As I look back on my years of high school, I've learned to set limits that everything I do won't always be perfect. I have learned to put my best foot forward, and when I fall, to get back up and try again. I've also learned that having it all together doesn't just mean I go to school every day and I am getting good grades. It means I am also taking care of myself both physically and mentally and striving to be exactly who I am because being different makes me unique. Much has changed since I first came to Maya: who I hang out with, what I wear and the things I truly enjoy. I am still me just stronger, wiser, and mature, and my decision making has improved. Every year at Maya, I have gained something different. For some reason, this year was more meaningful, though it went by very fast. School was my number one priority even when my world felt like it was crashing at my feet. I was holding up a wall with school behind it. I had to get my priorities straight, throw my goal for perfection out the window and begin to create a life worth living with balance. As I do an overview on high school and move on from my past that has shaped me, I create a dream that will make me. I am just one person yes, but if I don't truly believe in myself, I will not create any room for success.

Tribute for Niya Gregg by Kara Winerman

I was impressed with you from the first time I met you. I couldn't believe that a student was in the building before 7:30 am, but you regularly arrived to school that early, ready to do work. That was a testament to your work ethic, and how far you would go to accomplish your goals. Next, I was impressed when you asked me to be your mentor. I was someone you barely knew, except to trade hellos and compliments in the hallways. Your willingness to be open to new people and new experiences will continue to enrich your life and present different opportunities to you as you leave Maya.

Once I got to know you well, I was quickly impressed by your intelligence. You are a talented writer and poet, and you consistently maintain good grades, even when circumstances require you to miss several days of school. You are also the only student I have seen learn how to conjugate verbs correctly on your own from Apex Spanish! Most recently, I have been impressed by your persistence in the face of obstacles. You have not let challenges overtake you or distract you from your goals. You handle all of life's curveballs with grace, and live by the motto: "Failure is not an option." I feel truly honored to have gotten to know you so well and to work closely with you. You are always sweet and make sure to thank me for listening and offering advice. But you should know that I enjoy our conversations as much as you do, and I have learned a lot from you about courage, grace, and persistence. You have all of the tools to keep on fighting and succeeding throughout your life, and I am excited to see in what ways you will impress me next.



JASMINE HANDON

STUDENT REFLECTION

When I started attending Maya Angelou Public Charter School, I didn't like it, and the environment was very different than any other school that I had attended. My experience at MAPCS truly taught me that education is the key to success. I started in August 2010 at the Shaw campus as a 10.5 student; I didn't know anybody, and I didn't live in the area, so I felt out of place. My biggest fear was meeting new people and getting used to the environment. I learned quickly that I didn't have to do much of the work because MAPCS had a very good support system. People at Maya Angelou reached out to me. My biggest challenge was getting to school on time and going to class, but with the help of the staff, I overcame that challenge. MAPCS showed me how important education was for my future. During the beginning of my senior year of high school at the Evans campus, I began slacking and stopped caring about school. I felt like being on the street was more important than going to school, but with the help of my mentor, counselor and my peers, I didn't give up. I appreciate all the people that supported me, and I am proud that I finally made the decision to finish school.

TRIBUTE FOR JASMINE HANDON BY SHANEE HARRINGTON-YOUNG

Who said a girl couldn't run the world? Because Jasmine Handon has proven time and time again that a girl can take the lead, be smooth while she's doing it, and still keep the followers in check. A quiet soldier with a heart of gold, Jasmine has made her way into the hearts of many (staff and students) in such a short period of time.

Jasmine came to Maya Angelou PCS in the fall of 2010. She made it very clear during the School Retreat that Maya Angelou PCS was "different" from any school she had ever been to. "Y'all don't let kids hang in the hallway and y'all give work." Clearly, no one had yet to take such a leader by the hands and show her the potential she possessed. Easily, Jasmine found her niche with friends, became acclimated to the academic expectations of the school, and all the while exuded a smile of gold that could make your heart melt.

Last words of advice, Jasmine, "Never let anyone take your leadership role away from you. It suits you. Remember, everyone can't be as good of a friend as you are to others. So choose your friends and comrades carefully. And finally, if you ever need anything, you know I'm here and I know where you live!"



SHAWN'TA JOHNSON

STUDENT REFLECTION

I have been at Maya Angelou for all four years of high school. My first year here I was nervous because it was my first time being in high school, and I didn't know too many people here. At first, I hung out with the wrong people. I didn't like being in class, so I walked around and went to class late. I ended up failing half of my classes and had to go to summer school. My second year, I got myself together and started to hang with the right people, but I still got in trouble every now and then. I learned enough from my mistakes in 9th grade that I passed all of my classes and didn't have to take summer school. That year, I met a lady name Krystal Willingham who has kept up with me since then. In my 11th grade year, I went back to hanging with the wrong people, and one day my aunt told me I had to grow up and start to realize that I was almost out of school. I am here today as a 12th grader getting all of my work done, getting ready to graduate and be on my own, and getting ready for college. During my 12th grade year, it has been hard getting ready for life and the real world. Looking back, I really didn't like this school that much my first year, but now I see that Maya isn't so bad. I want to thank the teachers and everyone else at Maya who helped me to be where I am today.

TRIBUTE FOR SHAWN'TA JOHNSON BY KRYSTAL WILLINGHAM

It has been a pleasure working with you to reach your goals this school year. We've shared a bond while you were an underclassman, but as your senior mentor, we both knew that the clock was ticking and you needed to get serious and work on pulling those grades up. There were times when you had fallen off track and felt disappointed in yourself, but you showed that you had aspiration, and you believed in yourself enough to prove that you could pass those classes. By the 3rd quarter this year, you were on top of your game, and you felt proud. I know that you had a strong sense of pride because you began to walk and talk with confidence; you would come into my office daily to show me that you were passing Mr. Michalopoulos' class – a class that you used to run from. This shows that you can do anything! After you would leave my office from sharing your accomplishments, I would close my eyes, and I would see this beautiful, bright face smiling and filled with potential. Take the time to applaud yourself because YOU DID IT!

With the help of others, always remember to utilize your resources, remain strong minded, and believe in yourself. I've watched you come out of your shell with perseverance and the ability to succeed in becoming anything that you want to become. When I was in college, my roommate had this quotation bordered around our room – "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." This quotation has encouraged me from years ago and makes me think of you and the challenges that you have tackled and survived. Believe in yourself and you will achieve. Also remember that you will not be able to achieve your life's mission by following in anyone else's footsteps.

As you embark on the next stages in your life, always strive to be the best. Be encouraged and know that Maya was just a stepping stone in the many accomplishments life is bound to bring your way. Congratulations!



ECILA JONES

STUDENT REFLECTION

I have a lot of good memories from Maya Angelou. I feel proud that I have taken all these classes. I had a great time here and always felt safe. The biggest problem was that the food was terrible. Maya was a place that gave me lots of opportunities to explore the world. I went on a college tour and performed a lot of community service and am thankful to have the chance to participate in all the senior events.

Sometimes school stressed me out, especially when I was worried I wouldn't pass. There have been some scary moments too: the earthquake was crazy. I once got suspended, which was a lesson for me. I've had to overcome some hard classes like English, Spanish and Math. I will miss this school a lot though, and I want to thank all the teachers, counselors, my family and friends for helping me get here today. Maya has helped me become a real person, and I am proud that I will walk across this stage to get my diploma.

TRIBUTE FOR ECILA JONES BY NIKKI SMITH

Ecila is a young lady who has overcome a great deal in high school. She is very passionate about her goals. I am most proud of the fact that Ecila has not been influenced by the assumptions people make about her. As I grew to know Ecila, I found out that she was very outspoken and determined to face any challenges that came her way. I will remember Ecila's smile, her spunkiness and how she persevered to get to this point. May God bless you Ecila and all of your endeavors. Congratulations to you Ecila Marie Jones!

SHANTEL JONES

STUDENT REFLECTION

The sun sets, to rise again. Freshman year was my best year. It started off so well; I was an honor student with the grade point average of 4.0. I had a large amount of friends, who I now consider associates. Most of them participated on the basketball team and other activities with me. Most of my freshman year, I spent time observing my surroundings. No matter what my peers were doing, I was always able to maintain being myself. Coming into a new community and being around a majority of older kids was different. The Maya family at Shaw was always very welcoming. It was mutual with every one, because I was a fabulous spirit with a heart- warming smile that everyone liked being around. Then the sun began setting slowly. As I became comfortable in the environment, my circle of friends/ associates began to break apart. I have always been told that no one knows you better than yourself. I began to learn more and more about myself, in fact I'm still learning. That's when the struggle began. I started to slack with my work, and started to worry too much about my social life. I never understood why my parents would be so upset, especially since I was able to do better the next quarter. Ever since that year, it seemed as if that was a habit that I picked up and continued to do. My junior year was my absolute worst year at school and in my personal life. Nothing seemed familiar to me. Every bad thing possible happened, and I didn't know how to handle it. Everyone thought I was the same girl that could light up a room. Deep down I was falling apart, but never liked the thought of any one seeing me so low. I thought I was strong enough to get through it myself.

Yes, I managed to figure things out, but it wasn't easy. As that's what I was used to. Then MAPCS decided to hit us with some shocking news. They announced that they were combining both campuses. Shaw campus had to transfer over to Evans which was way across town. I looked and spoke to them as if they were foreign. I didn't like or agree with one bit of the plans for senior year. As August appeared, I came over open minded and willing to be a part of new things. There was so much animosity between the two campuses in the beginning of the year, that I played no part of because I was so excited about being a senior. None of the stupidity even mattered. As the year went on, I found myself with so many mixed emotions that I began to think I was bipolar. The fact that I was filling out college applications and soon graduating, just all seemed surreal. People that I never thought I would even converse with, I became oh so very close to. And I, Shantel Jones, as a member of the senior class of 2012, I am honored and proud to say, we all made it! We started together and finished with others.



TRIBUTE FOR SHANTEL JONES BY KATIA JONES

Your smile is contagious, your creativity is innovative, and your style is unmatched. Shantel, you are truly an amazing young lady, and I admire your desire to always be your own person. For your first couple of years at Maya, I observed you from a distance but could clearly see your great potential and promise. There were times when you didn't believe in yourself as much as others around you, but you have definitely outgrown that. I know that when I expressed a concern about some of the colleges on your list you very clearly told me that, "you could handle it." That should not have been a surprise to me as you have always been the type of young lady that wanted what she wanted. And would occasionally show your disdain when you did not get exactly what you wanted. I am proud to say that you are now a young lady that has become much more appreciative of all of your gifts and opportunities.

I am grateful to have been able to experience your kindness and generosity, always willing to offer a hand whenever needed. I cannot even count the number of times you offered to help or were right there when I asked for assistance. I still have a little bit left of my last bottle of Girl's Night Out that you were willing to make for me even when you were out for winter break and Fragrant Oils was closed for the holidays. As COO of Fragrant Oils, your creativity and diligence became obvious to your Maya family. Those same characteristics are what will be the driving force behind your successful fashion design and merchandising business. I admire the fervor with which you dream. Your vision for your future is almost as bright as your smile. Continue to dream big but make sure you work as hard as you dream. Please know that I will truly miss you, and I will be expecting you to drive me around in your pink Bentley when I come to visit you in California.



MICHAEL KINARD

STUDENT REFLECTION

Maya Angelou Public Charter School has helped me develop into the intelligent and confident young man that I am today. Over the past three years that I have attended Maya, this school has showed me the importance of respect, friendship, and most importantly-determination. My first day here I was greeted and treated like family by my 10th grade Geometry teacher; we developed a great friendship, and over time, she became my best friend/mentor. That woman's name is Ms. Heidi Simonson. She was and still is the one who made sure that I completed every assignment given to me, that I applied for every scholarship that I was able to, and that I finished at least seven college applications before the end of March. She helped pave the way so that I could succeed no matter what the circumstance, and I thank her every day for the love that she shows me.

This school is very beneficial for any student that attends because you are given an unlimited source of support, and you get paid for simple things like going to tutoring, which a lot of others schools don't do. Also the extra time that the students are given to make up work is very helpful. To all my younger generations, the point I'm trying to make is that once you are a part of the Maya family, you are guaranteed success unless you don't put forth any effort. People say, "The early bird gets the worm" and at first I didn't pay it too much attention. However, by the twelfth grade, the statement really has meaning to your life, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

TRIBUTE FOR MICHAEL KINARD BY HEIDI SIMONSEN

Becoming more focused and determined. Becoming a strong leader. Becoming more inquisitive and open to new ideas. Becoming more adventurous. Becoming more thoughtful and compassionate. Becoming taller. Becoming a young man of integrity, intelligence and imagination all describe Michael. Back in the day of 10th grade, I remember you telling me how you were uncomfortable with giving presentations especially in front of those you do not know.

However, you have become a young man who can give a lecture about poetry to his class with much poise and insight, can articulately share his ideas in a group, and can perform an original rap in front of an audience with much enthusiasm. I also remember you were very strong-minded with your ideas, opinions, and what you would or would not do. But I have seen you become a young man who is STILL determined and focused on doing his best, but open to applying to diverse colleges, open to receiving feedback on essays written, open to try new things like playing football or going on a retreat in the woods, open to exploring new ideas, and open to being reflective about growing in character. As you take this next step, continue to grow and become the strong, young man and father you are created to be – a man of compassion, a man of wisdom, a man of integrity, and a man who does not settle for less than his best. You are powerful; use it for good! Remember your words are impactful, so be slow to speak, quick to listen, and quick to think. Also, continue to remember that I am proud of you and all that you have accomplished and will accomplish! I send you off with all my support, prayers, and love as you begin this next chapter in your life. "Jia You!"



NIDIA LEAK

STUDENT REFLECTION

In a certain sense, senior year was the roughest year since I began attending Maya because I had to spend it at a school all the way across town. All year, it took me 90 minutes to get to school. That's a long time, but as long as the ride was, it was worth the trip when I think about the people that I got to see every day who care for me. It makes me laugh to look back at that first day at Evans. It was lunch time, and the Evans kids were on one side and the Shaw kids were on the other. One student from Evans came and broke the ice between the two and the rest is history. I'm so happy that I did not leave Maya because I would not have met these new amazing students and teachers. Another reason why this has been one of the roughest years at Maya is because of the earthquake. It was the third day at school, and we were in town hall. The room started to shake a little. In my mind, I was thinking the shaking was the students in the hall jumping and running. But there was no noise coming from the hall way. All of the sudden, I felt like I was being shaken back and forth. I immediately hid under the desk just like I have seen kindergarten students in California do. Even though it was one of the scariest days in my life, the earthquake did not stop me from coming back. Sadly now, this is the end to one of the most amazing chapters in my life. "So long, fair well to you my friends. Goodbye for now, until we meet again." – Out of the Box

TRIBUTE FOR NIDIA LEAK BY LIZA CRUZ

"Nidia – a name of Spanish and Greek origin meaning gracious."

As precious as it sounds, this perfectly depicts your personality.

Nidia, I have been grateful for the opportunity of building a mentor- mentee relationship with you. This chance provided a positive, personal, harmonious and educational support system for both of us. During our mentoring sessions together, I witnessed how well-mannered you are from handling academic concerns to achieving academic excellence. I admired the way you politely responded to my demands. And so, I commend you for recognizing my high expectations of you.

Nidia, you are sweet, caring and thoughtful. I will never forget that day when you brought me delicious cupcakes. It was at that second that I identified your potential as a future pastry chef – we discussed it and you acknowledged it. The conversation made you realize what you wanted and even made you determined to succeed.

In your next journey, I want you to continue to run the race with perseverance and determination. I am confident that you will thrive in the field that you want to delve into. You are an ACHIEVER. Congratulations, and I'm so proud of you!



ASHLEY LINDSEY

STUDENT REFLECTION

My past four years at Maya Angelou have been extremely challenging. I have learned more than I expected to be taught. The classes here have pushed me to do my best, and I have accomplished much. Here I have received the help and support needed even when it was hard for me to accept. I received valuable advice that will help me to handle myself in the real world.

Even though I have had many difficulties and obstacles, I decided that giving up was not an option. Many teachers have displayed love towards me in many ways. Teachers and staff have challenged me, and I have come to understand it was to better me. This year, I have given birth to my son which is one of my accomplishments. I have enjoyed this challenge of learning to be a mother and a responsible student at Maya Angelou. This multi-tasking has taught me how to handle things on my own as I graduate. The responsibilities I have learned this year have really prepared me for how life will be as an adult in the world. However, I have received support from everyone at Maya. They have been there for me and have never once given up on believing in me. When I felt as though I didn't believe in myself or at times I needed someone to talk to, there were Maya Angelou teachers, counselors and staff to help. I had the biggest support my senior year from Ms. Simonsen, Mr. Michalopoulos, Mr. Foster, Mr. Carter and my teachers this year. For all I have experienced and learned at Maya Angelou PCS, I thank everyone at Maya for everything. I really appreciate and love you all, my Maya Family!

TRIBUTE FOR ASHLEY LINDSEY BY ERIKA BUNTON

“Silence is a source of great strength.”
~Lao Tzu

You did it! I am so very proud of your accomplishment of graduating from high school. And with this initial achievement, there is absolutely nothing you can't achieve.

I describe you best as a quiet strength. You make overcoming life obstacles appear effortless through the ease of your consistently gentle nature. Your quietness should never be mistaken for a lack of intelligence or apathy, because in getting to know you this year, I know that you are introspective, contemplative, and wise.

In the quietness of your heart, you have purposed to be the best in your roles of high school senior and new mother. This year I had the pleasure of watching you plan, learn, and wait with anticipation for the birth of your son. Throughout your pregnancy, I witnessed both your physical and social-emotional transformation as a result of your pending parenthood. Because of this, you have grown in tenacity of purpose and given birth to a greater sense of love, devotion, and purpose.

Although your words, at times, may be few, in your silence lives such a great love. And I am convinced that this love will propel you forward to greater endeavors in the future. “It is good to love many things, for therein lies the true strength, and whosoever loves much performs much, and can accomplish much, and what is done in love is well done.” – Vincent Willem van Gogh

So congratulations Ashley, new mother and graduate, well done.



PERRIKA MCGRIER

STUDENT REFLECTION

I came to Maya Angelou in 2010 as a junior determined and dedicated to graduate. I made a promise to Mr. Cunningham that I was going to come into Maya and maintain a good grade point average, have a positive attitude, and show everyone how much I want to finish school. There have been both positive and negative times throughout the school year, but I have maintained and did not let the bad things dictate the choices I have made.

Mr. Michalopoulos, Dr. Murphy, Dr. White-Hood, Mr. Carter, Mr. Kornegay, Mr. Foster, Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Henry, and Mom, thank you all for being my support team. You all have contributed to me graduating, and you'll play a big role in my life. Maya Angelou is not just a school to me. It is a place I call home. I'm really going to miss attending Maya. Mr. Michalopoulos has driven me crazy throughout the school year, but the whole time, I knew it would benefit me in the end. I was honored to have you as a mentor and appreciate everything you have done for me as one of your mentees. You are a good person, trustworthy, a helping hand, and someone I know I can depend on. Ms. Jones and Ms. Miller-Bey, you two also have been there for me throughout the school year giving me supportive advice. Without Maya Angelou, my mother, and myself, I do not think this day would have been possible. A lot of people underestimated me and did not believe that I would graduate. Well, I believe in myself, and my education does not stop here. I am proud to say that I am an Alumnus of Maya Angelou's Class of 2012. Congratulations to you all.

TRIBUTE FOR PERRIKA MCGRIER BY NICK MICHALOPOULOS

Perrika, you are the ultimate tough cookie, the nut that's tough to crack. You are a leopard – fiercely independent, strong, beautiful and intelligent. You are the little train that has been climbing up a hill for what seems like forever, knowing what lies ahead, but not yet knowing how to get there. You are not scared of the journey because you learn from life's lessons. In that way, you are wise beyond your years even though I always like to remind you, much to your dismay, that I still think of you as a kid.

Many times throughout this year I have thought about why you wanted me to be your mentor, even before you were a senior. I still don't know the answer. In many ways, we clash. But, maybe that's exactly what you needed, and you knew it - someone who was willing to corral your free spirit. Sure, this dynamic caused some intense moments, but we came out of them okay because of the trust we shared and our honesty with one another.

So since I can't put my finger on exactly why you wanted me to be your mentor, let me at least eliminate some of the things that definitely were not the reason you chose me. It's not because you love English, because you have more than once fallen asleep in my class. It's not because you like Greek cooking and it's not because you think I have good advice, because frankly, you never really listen to me.

But you did learn from me as I learned from you, and in some ways that may be one of the best things two people could ever say about one another. After all, something still made you come almost every morning to my room to tell me you were at school (which I never told you always meant a lot to me). Maybe you knew from the beginning that I really cared about who you were and who you were going to become. Through all of the struggles you have faced this year, I can't say I know what you will be doing or where you will be doing it five years from now, but I do know that whoever you become, you will never stop being the Perrika I know –the young woman who is always responsible, strong, proud and composed.

Being young is tough, especially when you have to be grown up at the same time, but as you have shown on so many different occasions this year Perrika, you are not the kind of young woman who “thinks you can.” You're the kind of young woman who “knows you can.” And I couldn't be any more proud.



SHAKIRA MOSLEY

STUDENT REFLECTION

“Success will not lower its standards to us. We must raise our standards to success.”-Rev. Randal R. McBride, JR.

Entering Maya Angelou during my 10th grade year changed me drastically. Before coming to Maya, I attended Central High School in Prince George’s County. I was not the best student when I was at Central. I was always fighting and skipping class, but Maya changed me for the better. At first I was not sure what I was getting into on my first day at Maya, so I did not open up to anybody; I always kept to myself. Once I completed my first year, I knew this school was here to help me and see me succeed. Coming back in the 11th grade, I was open and ready for school. I was willing to put my all in everything I did. This school helped me see that I can be anything I want to be as long as I work hard and am dedicated. The staff in this building is very caring and will not accept failure; they want everybody to strive for nothing but greatness. I want to give a special thank you to four staff members: Ms. Simonson, Ms. Willingham, Ms. Henry and Officer Jackson and our DC-CAP advisor Ms. Mitchell. They helped me to realize who I am and helped me form into the young lady that’s getting ready to graduate today. As I go into my post-secondary education, I will always be proud to say that I am a Maya Angelou Public Charter School alumnus.

TRIBUTE FOR SHAKIRA MOSLEY BY KRYSTAL WILLINGHAM

You were one of the first students who I met when I joined the Maya family. Ironically, it was your first year as well. Of course, everyone welcomed me and helped me to fit in, but you stayed by my side throughout both of our journeys. Even when you got frustrated, your frustration was short lived because you knew how to embrace the bad while working toward the good. Well, your high school tenure is just about up, so it is time to close this book and look towards the future that Maya has prepared you for. Never put the Maya years far out of reach, and remember the highlights that kept you pushing and striving toward your goals.

Throughout the years, we have maintained a relationship of mutual respect and admiration. I perceive you as a hard worker, a team player and one who is caring and compassionate toward others. Your kindness and generosity extends far beyond yourself to others who are in need of support. There are many positive ways that you could be described, but I just would like to recognize your unselfish service to others.

Thank you for always knowing when I needed a hug, even when I would not admit to it. That speaks mountains to when you can read someone’s heart. You will always be appreciated. As you go forth, continue to utilize your many strengths of encouraging and helping others. Remember to stay on the right path because your peers look up to you, and adults are fond of you. This is not “good-bye”, but rather “I’ll see you later.” Keep this close to your heart as I will keep you close to mine.

Congratulations on graduating from high school. As you head to college, you will start at the very bottom, but you have the ambition to hold your head high and your sights focused toward your dreams. I am definitely sad to see you leave, but I will always be here for you whenever you return.



KIAMESA NATH

STUDENT REFLECTION

My experience at Maya has been an up and down ride filled with good and bad times. I have had lots of positive experiences with a variety of different people. The teachers and staff here at Maya Angelou want you to succeed in life, and they will help you with anything that you ask for. After graduating from Maya, I'm sure many of the teachers will follow me. Ms. Smith, Ms. Jones, Mr. Michalopoulos, Ms. Katia and Mr. F are all teachers here at Maya Angelou that have helped me along the way.

I did have some tough times at Maya too. Failing English 12 in the 1st and 3rd quarters was tough. There were some fights which were bad, but overall Maya has always felt like a family to me even though I have not been here for a long time. My cousin Yetunde is graduating this year, and my other cousin Enrico graduated last year. My little sister goes down stairs. I want to be like my cousin graduating and going to college right after high school. Maya has given me great opportunities to do different things such as seeking scholarships, and it was nice that we didn't have to pay for anything including prom. Maya Angelou Public Charter doesn't want anyone to pay for anything at this school.

Maya teachers go beyond just helping you in school, they help you with anything you need outside of school as well. Maya helped me improve my reading level for which I am very thankful.

TRIBUTE FOR KIAMESA NATH BY SHAUN FEDINATZ

I have known Kiamesa in passing last year in the hallways, but this year I have gotten to know Kiamesa not only as a student in US History, but also as a person. Kiamesa has shown a lot of growth this past year and made it very easy on me as her mentor. One thing that I appreciate about Kiamesa is her proactive style. Her work ethic has been consistent throughout the school year, and any time she missed a class she was asking me, "what do I need to make up?" or "how can I improve my grades?" She has struggled at times in both of her English classes but was willing to listen and work with her respective teacher to improve her grade and graduate on time from Maya Angelou Public Charter School.

Some of the best moments I have had with Kiamesa have been discussing her future over lunch. Kiamesa has a desire and drive to be successful in her post-secondary life. She is self-reflective, and realizes her shortcomings along with her potential. She has grown a lot in this area this past year. At the start of the year, Kiamesa was quick to make excuses and put the blame on anyone but herself. As she has matured as an individual and a student, she now realizes that she is her best advocate. These are life skills that will help in her success for the rest of her life.

I look forward to staying in touch with Kiamesa and continuing our mentor/mentee relationship.



JEFFREY OWENS

STUDENT REFLECTION

During my five years at Maya Angelou, I've been through a lot of obstacles such as losing my Aunt and having to repeat the 11th grade which made me seriously think about my future. I was stubborn and careless about my grades and other things dealing with school. I would shut people out when I was angry about issues bothering me, but I began to learn that my behavior was impacting my relationships with my friends, family and staff.

There were some good times as well like winning a flag football championship and going to Guatemala. Last year, I became determined to graduate. I was focused on getting good grades, making my Mom and Dad proud of me and making sure that my name gets called on graduation day. I wanted to walk across that stage proud of myself with my head held high!

I established some real friendships here at Maya, both Evans and Shaw. Some friends I even consider my brothers and sisters, but in reality we all are considered family, even if we never spoke to each other before because in the end we couldn't sit back and watch our fellow seniors fall behind. Even some of the teachers and other staff members are like family as they constantly help us and are known for staying on our backs (Mr. Michalopoulos).

Even though I complained, complained, and complained over these five years, I must say that I never gave up on myself no matter what. I would like to thank my mom, my teachers that stayed on me, my mentor Ms. Holley, and last but not least, my annoying counselor, Ms. Maya. My years at Maya have been very interesting and memorable despite all of the things I've been through.

TRIBUTE FOR JEFF OWENS BY L'TANYA HOLLEY

Jeffery Owens, when I think of him several things comes to mind:

- 1) "I got this"
- 2) He can find a J O B!

Let me explain. I have known Jeffery for several years and throughout those years, I have heard those words, "I got this." No matter what was going on with Jeffery, he always "got this." In the face of defeat or in the eyes of victory, Jeffery always "got this." He is very confident in himself, and I must say that he does know himself well. He knows his strengths and his weaknesses and works with them. Jeffery is able to turn a bad situation into a situation that he controls. When Jeffery puts his mind to it, there is nothing that he can't do.

Jeffery can find a job, and more than one at a time. He loves to work, and he loves the money. At one point in time, Jeffery had two or three jobs at the same time. I had to tell him to slow down. I can appreciate a young man who likes to work, but Jeffery, don't let the money run you; you need to run the money. Be in control of it, don't let it run your life. Find something that you love and want to do in your life. Once you find that career you will exceed at it because you love it, and the money will follow.

I want you to know that I am proud of you. You have had some hurdles to overcome, and you did it. You didn't give up. There were times when you told me that you "got this" that made me sweat because I couldn't see it. You didn't seem to see the urgency in the things that I thought you should have. You were cool and calm always saying, "I got this." Well the proof is in the pudding, you made it. You're graduating, but this is just the beginning of a bigger journey. I've enjoyed having you as my mentee.

Congratulations, Jeffery, you "got this."

DEMIA PEARSON

STUDENT REFLECTION



When I first arrived at Maya Angelou, I was very curious about staying because I didn't know what the school was about. When I first enrolled in Maya Angelou, I took a small tour of the school, and it grabbed my interest quickly. The class sizes were nice, the teachers were very engaged in teaching the students, and the principal was wonderful. I still didn't want to attend May Angelou though because I wanted to go back to my old school plus I was used to a different environment.

I ended up attending Maya because of this sweet lady named Ms. Simonson. My three years at Maya Angelou have been the best years of my life. I have cried, I met new people, and gained friends and lost friends. I've been through a lot during these three school years. I received a scholarship and got some experience living in a college dorm and taking some college classes through Maya Angelou's partnership with the DC College Success Foundation. My family's support through these last three school years at Maya has encouraged me to do my best and to succeed at everything I do. I am proud to say that even though I didn't want to attend this school in the beginning, I appreciate everything they have done for me. I am proud to say that I am a graduating senior.

TRIBUTE FOR DEMIA PEARSON BY KRYSTAL WILLINGHAM

I am super excited to witness your graduation day! I definitely can't wait to see you smiling from ear to ear. I will remember your smile as you walked the halls of the Evans Campus on your good days. I will also remember when you looked as if you had had about enough on your not so good days.

I admire your self-confidence and ability to love yourself and your friends the way that you do. I admire that you work hard to complete your assignments and that you ask for help when needed. I also admire that you love helping out when an extra hand is requested. I will always remember the day that we spent together eating crabs and shrimp, watching scary movies (your face was priceless), listening to music, and having "girl talk". I got a chance to listen to you voice your opinions and express yourself on various topics.

As you are preparing to venture off on your own in the world of college life, maintain your confidence and work hard to reach your goals. Never give up and push through to get through. I truly believe that you can do anything you set your mind to do. I am proud of you as a young lady and even prouder of all of your accomplishments. I know that you will do your absolute best and will remain focused because you have your Maya family rooting for you. Make sure that you continue to carry yourself as the respectful and classy young lady that you are.

Congratulations and good luck in all of your future endeavors. Demia, you will be greatly missed.



DE'ONDRYA PHELPS

STUDENT REFLECTION

“Desire is the key to motivation, but it’s the determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal - a commitment to excellence - that will enable you to attain the success you seek.” Mario Andretti

My biggest fear in life is failure, but knowing that determination and persistency are key concepts to success, I was then able to strive for a better future, and MAPCS helped me along the way. Some things are better said than done, and when I entered into the 12th grade, I had a determined mind to be a straight “A” student, become class president and even valedictorian. By the second week, I laughed at my dreams because nothing at that time seemed possible. It wasn’t until I received my first quarter report card that read A’s in every class that made me believe that anything was possible. In November, I ran for senior government and became 2012 Senior Class President. My success was the farthest from a walk in the park. Between the projects, papers and “Senioritis,” the pressure began to build up and strive for success began to quickly decrease. I began to give up on myself, and if it had not been for my mentor, Mr. Laws and the support system at MAPCS, I would have given up. I am very grateful for every opportunity that was given to me, and I can honestly say that I have matured and gained responsibility throughout the year. My commitment to excellence was my personal motivation to continue to strive for a better future. Because of MAPCS, I received my acceptance letter and will be entering Benedict College in the fall in pursuit of a Psychology degree. Desire is the key to motivation, a commitment to excellence and a road to success.

TRIBUTE FOR DE'ONDRYA PHELPS BY LOUIS LAWS

2011 is a year that I will never forget for it was the year that I met Ms. DeOndrya Phelps, during the joint college tour between the Evans and Shaw campuses. DeOndrya was not very talkative on the trip, but I could see that she was serious about going to college after high school. When it was time for the “Mentee Raffle,” and I was able to choose DeOndrya, I was quite pleased. I did not know what DeOndrya was capable of academically, but she showed me really quick. This year DeOndrya received all A’s on her report card for the FIRST time in her life (you must make sure to put emphasis on first or she may get her feelings hurt). Not only did that make her feel great, but she was able to show all who may have doubted her that she was capable of doing the unexpected. Sometimes, I had to call myself the mentee and DeOndrya the mentor because she has no problem coming to my office telling the younger students not to make the same mistakes that she had made early on in high school. Let’s not mistake this year as being a breeze.

By March, DeOndrya had developed a critical case of “senioritis.” Mr. Micholapous, Mr. Kornegay, and I have had to get on DeOndrya from every corner to ensure that she stayed on task. I would warn her that I would call her every morning to wake her up (I tried that a couple of times and the only answer I would get was from the voicemail). In order for me to not get on her case, she would always smile and hit me with her favorite line, “Mentor, I’m stressed!” I would then hit her with mine, “You don’t know what stress is!” She would always begin to laugh and hit me with her other favorite line, “Mentor, get your life!” I would then join in with her laughter. Thinking about DeOndrya not being in the building next year saddens me. I will no longer have her there to make me laugh at the times when I need it most, nor will I have her there to be able to walk down the hall to make sure that she is in class after I have received her daily “I’m here” text. I know that DeOndrya will enjoy college and will do what she has to do to ensure that she is successful. She also knows that I am only a text and a phone call away to assist her in any way that I can. DeOndrya, always remember you have your family along with your Maya Family rooting for you! Make good choices and remain strong!

DARSHAI RANDALL

STUDENT REFLECTION

It all started in the 10th grade. I was scared to come to Maya, a new school, even though my God-sister was encouraging me to join her here. Being here with her and seeing an old friend when I arrived let me know I was not by myself. Before attending Maya, I didn't realize how much teachers would help you physically and academically. I have so many stories from my time here that show me how much I've grown. I remember when I used to run the halls thinking it was cool and didn't think it would catch up with me, but eventually it did. I started to hang around the wrong people when I should have been hanging around the right people. Making this change helped me a lot. I had bad grades because I would skip classes and didn't think it would affect me, but this also turned around and hit me harder than I thought. I still remember going on my first school retreat and thinking how boring it would be. As soon as I got there though, I realized it was going to be fun. Many more trips like that one were to come. Remembering all the good times at Maya makes me think about what I would have been like if I had not chosen to come here. I now know that I wouldn't want to be anywhere else because of the people I met and the friends I made. I'm glad I came to Maya.



TRIBUTE FOR DARSHAI RANDALL

BY JASMINE GINN

Darshai, you did it! I am so very proud of you. I know it felt like this moment would never arrive, but here you are on your graduation day! I have known you since you started Maya Angelou, but it wasn't until this year I had a chance to really get to know you as my mentee and to see what a wonderful young lady you are. Now as you embark on the next chapter of your life, I wish you all the success and happiness that you deserve. Never give up on your goals and dreams and always strive to do your absolute best. When you have those moments where you feel things just aren't going your way, I encourage you to persevere, never give up, and remember that although the situation may seem difficult right now, it's not as bad as it could be. You are a young lady who is goal driven and determined. I know that you will be successful in your future endeavors, and if you ever need anything, you know that I am here for you. I'm proud of you Darshai and CONGRATULATIONS!



ALISHA SCHOOLS

STUDENT REFLECTION

My name is Alisha Schools and I believe that my experience at Maya Angelou has brought me light in my home life. I started at MAPCS in August of 2009. During my journey at Maya I met staff that I have grown close to. I believe that each teacher at Maya has served a different purpose in my life. I must say thank you to Ms. Simonsen, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Henry, Ms. Miller-bey, Ms. Willingham, Ms. Smith, Ms. Jones, Mr. Michalopoulos, Mr. Fedinatz, and Ms. Bell. I must say that I have had a lot of obstacles. When I first came to Maya Angelou I was distracted by my family and home environment. When I think of all that I have learned from each individual that I mentioned, I hear them saying “Alisha you can do it as long as you put your mind to it.” I now understand that my education is the key to getting away from DC. My home life changed for the better when I started to listen to what my teachers had to say. For example, I saw myself on a road of destruction when I was in the 11th grade. Maya Angelou is a high school that I found myself complaining about but when you sit back and look at the accomplishments and the good outcomes that the school has lead you through you begin to put closure to the questions such as “why don’t we have this?” or “why don’t we get to do that?” Maya Angelou Public Charter High School, to me, represents so many things that only one word comes into play: aspiration. I believe that Maya Angelou’s legacy is still being held on to by each student and each teacher who enters and takes part in someone else’s life. I will never forget where I came from because I truly believe that this school has molded me and made me into the intelligent young woman that I am today. If it wasn’t for Maya and the staff I wouldn’t be striving so hard for my education. I must say that I love Maya.

TRIBUTE FOR ALISHA SCHOOLS BY KRYSTAL WILLINGHAM

I first met you during the Maya Angelou’s 2010 Summer Exposure that I hosted. During that two week adventure, we had volumes of fun, learning and getting to know each other. From that point on, I knew that we would share a close bond. There has been much laughter on personal outings and tears when the truth needed to be told, but through it all you have proven to be a mature and classy young lady.

I have witnessed that during the past couple years, you have gone through a process of positive change in terms of personal and academic development, and leadership skills. I’d say that your greatest accomplishment through your high school years is that you remained strong through your academic and personal obstacles. You have grown to be not only a dedicated and conscientious student, but also one who is caring and committed to helping others reach their goals. Your strength as a peer-leader has been an invaluable asset that is appreciated now and will be beneficial to you during your college years.

As you prepare for college, keep in mind that this opportunity will open your eyes to a promising future. I can’t wait to watch you get that degree in social work in a few years! Remain focused because as high school did, college also will fly by. Remember that your decisions will impact your future and your future will impact the world. When it’s all said and done, look at your life as a lesson and do not take it for granted. Take advantage of all of the opportunities that present themselves to you. Embrace new challenges. Make sure that you stand true to your motto – “I am a woman striving for success, and I refuse to settle for any less.” I know that you will do well in college because you are a DC College Success Achiever. Never give up and remember that you have your Maya family cheering you on. We will always be available to guide you in the right direction. Congratulations!

DARIEN SHORTS

STUDENT REFLECTION

Ever since I enrolled in Maya Angelou Public Charter School three years ago, I have had many experiences that I believe I would not have had if I would have stayed in Anacostia High School. My whole outlook on school and life in general has been molded by what I picked up from this school. Along the way, I have made some very good friends with both staff and students.

Nicholas Michalopoulos, the senior academy lead became my senior mentor through a process that started when I was a sophomore. To this day while I'm typing this reflection, he nags me and stops me at every turn always with my best interest at heart. I was never the type of person to be so close with a staff member at a school. At one point in my life, my goal was to make things as hard as possible for the school staff. But Mr. Michalopoulos and Heidi Simonsen became two of my closest friends. John Wiley, my residential counselor has helped me mature and has played a significant role as a father figure. As a young black male growing up without a father, this made him an important person to me.

These people that I have met at Maya Angelou have incredibly impacted my life and are the reason that I am where I am today. And I thank them for helping me grow into the young man I am today.

TRIBUTE FOR DARIEN SHORTS BY NICK MICHALOPOULOS



My daughter thinks that you are the tallest person in the world since you're the tallest person she's ever met. I think that you have reached new heights that may be harder for you to see than you know. Even though you were just about as tall as you are now when I first met you three years ago, your view of the world and your stature were both so small. So what turned you into a "giant"?

Maybe it happened when I failed you on your portfolio. Maybe it happened when you got into serious trouble at school. Maybe it happened when you realized that respecting yourself and others was more than a handshake and a hug. Maybe it happened when you realized that no matter how much you're loved, you still need to be admired in order to become a man among boys.

Today, you're one step closer to becoming a titan who is loved and admired, not to mention spiritually and mentally heightened. You are closer because you never quit on yourself. You are closer to becoming a man because you realize that you are not one yet. You are closer because you have learned to mix your confidence with your humility. These are things which make you stand way above the crowd.

Through this year, your perspective on life has grown inch-by-inch. The funny thing about getting taller though is that you don't realize it until you're there. You may not realize that the fact that you have gotten the best grades in high school as a senior show that you are growing by the second. You may not realize that telling me the truth even if it's ugly not only makes you grow in my eyes, but yours as well. And you may not realize that being knocked down and getting back up lets you appreciate the view from up above.

In order to see above the clouds, we have to pass through them. The path may not be clearly defined, but it's there. Keep looking Darien, knowing that you'll always have me to help you guide you on your way.

The ancient Greeks said that humans could never reach the summit of Mt. Olympus. Maybe that's because they always believed we should keep trying. Three years ago, graduating from high school seemed like a mountain you could not reach. Today, looking down to the boy you once were, to the young man you are now, never forget that your Mt. Olympus is only as high as you can see.



YETUNDE' SOLOMON

STUDENT REFLECTION

I DID IT! My high school days are over, and I couldn't be happier. As I look back on who I was when I first came to Maya as a 10th grader, I can see the changes in myself. I started out as a shy girl, and I only knew the students from Freedom School. My tenth grade year was great as I had gotten straight A's the first quarter, and I was so happy. Ms. Simonsen was my geometry teacher, and she pushed me into being dedicated. My hard work paid off in the end. Eleventh grade really started my life, and I started seeing how everything I did at school benefited me in the future. I applied for the Achievers Scholarship Program, and I got it. This accomplishment opened my eyes a lot. Now I am the president of the cohort 5 Achievers for my school, and I represent Maya. My 11th grade year was very busy as I was trying to do everything at once. I performed at the Maya Event, I went on field trips, and a lot more things that I thought would be good for me. Now as a senior, my days at high school are coming to a close. The support here from this school is so great that it surprises me sometimes. My AP Lit teacher, Ms. Simonsen, my mentor are a few among the many people that helped me. Ranging from applying to schools to getting ready for prom, I can say I had a blast. I found a way to have my own voice and learned to use it to help me. Now I can see the change in me, and I love it a lot. So I'm off to college ready to start new memories and make new friends. WOO HOO!

TRIBUTE FOR YETUNDE' SOLOMON BY SANDRINE MILLER-BEY

Yetunde! What a pleasure and honor it was for me to be your mentor...

I could have not asked for a better student. What can I possibly say about you that people don't already know?

You are an exceptional young lady. Most everyone knows your intellectual acumen, lofty ambitions, modeling abilities, and kindness; indeed, you are a sort of legend in our small school community, but few know of the struggles you endured during your high school years because you carry yourself so well and never complain. You are a rare type of student who combines exceptional natural ability with a willingness and eagerness to learn. You already have what it takes to be successful in college.

You took ownership of your own success and brilliantly completed all your courses. You must be very happy to graduate after four years of sacrifice and hard work. It takes special dedication and perseverance to get through high school the way you did it. I am proud of you and congratulate you. I wish you the best as you embark on your next exciting adventure.

As you venture out, just remember that there is no perfect fit; there is no perfect college or institution; your self-worth is absolutely not equivalent to SAT scores or your GPA! Don't keep your mind confined in the Fabulous 500-word essay you wrote-you are more than that, and I think you already know it. It's easy to be imprisoned in that state of mind because you have ideas of how your college experience should be and that your dreams are only possible at certain colleges as you often shared with me. Just know that wherever you go, college is what you make of it. That's been true for me, it's true for my friends and colleagues, and it will be true for you. The sky is the limit for you so take a deep breath and relax!

And most importantly, keep in touch!



LA PRIA SPAIN

STUDENT REFLECTION

Throughout my high school years at Maya Angelou, I have faced many challenges which I have overcome. I came in contact with negative and positive minded people, and have struggled in more than one subject. I even have had some difficult experiences with some of my teachers, and yet I still stand here today ready to begin the next step in my life - college. When I first came to the Maya Angelou Shaw campus, I walked in the school doors with a nervous feeling. I didn't know anybody. Every year at Maya Angelou we played a game called the ice breaker which made everyone feel welcomed and like family. From that day forward, my freshman year was exciting, stressful and fun. My freshman year was my best high school year: I experienced my first retreat; I saw Maya Angelou herself for the first time; we went on many field trips, and we had fun in the classrooms. I admired all my teachers that year.

My attitude has progressed throughout the years. The teachers at Maya always try to make you smile, even on your worst days. They make it their goal to do something to make you feel better. The teachers here at Maya made me actually want to learn. I've always been outspoken and learned about how to express myself appropriately with adults. When I left Maya Angelou during my 10th grade year, I missed certain staff members and my friends from Maya. My tenth grade year was also my worst academically.

But I returned to Maya and now leave here with a smile on my face and ready to step out into the world and complete my dreams. This school year was not at all easy, but it taught me to control my emotions and learn how to accept constructive criticism. I am proud that throughout this whole year I have remained focused and carried myself with confidence and determination. I cried a couple of times and even missed days because of anger, but in the end, I managed to snap back. Thanks to all my teachers and the assistant principle for their words of encouragement. I'm here today ready to walk across the stage thanks to Maya Angelou and its wonderful staff.

TRIBUTE FOR LA PRIA SPAIN BY LOUIS LAWS

This year has been a year of transition for the Evans and Shaw campuses. No one knows about that transition more than Lapria. Living all the way across town and coming to 5600 East Capitol St. NE every day was quite a journey for her, but she persevered. I have never known a student who is late to school every day, and is still able to pass their class without any problems. Accountability and responsibility are two characteristics that Lapria holds, and they will take her very far in life. I am sure that Lapria knows our mentee-mentor script like the back of her hand. My lines usually go a little something like this: "Hey Pria. What time did you get in to school today?" "What are your grades looking like?" "Where have you been?" Lapria will then smile and answer each question. Whenever her grades are updated, she makes sure to let me know that as well. Just as much as Lapria has me figured out, I always have her figured out as well. Whenever I have a text from her, I am sure of what the text will include. They always begin with "Good Morning;" which is followed by, "Is today an A or B day? Can you find out for me please?" With those text messages, I could always estimate her time of arrival. I know that Lapria will do great things next year when she is on that college campus, because she has proven that she will not allow any obstacle to prevent her from reaching her achievements.



TA'SHAUN THOMAS

STUDENT REFLECTION

4 years, 3 schools, 1 goal.... TO GRADUATE! Through all the tears and tantrums, laughs and losses, awards and achievements, it's finally here. The end of the road is near, and I believe I have been equipped with the right tools to turn off on to the right road. It wasn't the easiest trip in the world, but I made it. I ran into detours, dead ends, and even made some wrong turns despite others giving me the directions I needed. I've always let my circumstances and past hold me back from going full throttle and living out what I have the potential to be. I'm not saying your past doesn't matter, but you have to stay strong and focus on your future. If you are constantly looking behind you, you'll crash into what's in front of you. I guess that's why your rearview mirror is so much smaller than your windshield. So now I'm here, and I have so many people to thank for it. I will not let any of you down. I strive every day to become a more stable individual – LOL! Someone you will be proud to say you taught and mentored. I appreciate everything you all have done for me. I am forever grateful to my Maya Family.

TRIBUTE FOR TA'SHAUN THOMAS BY NICK MICHALOPOULOS

On the first day of school, you walked into my classroom late, and I barked something to you about not being on time. I told you to sit down, at which point you turned to me and said, "I don't think I'm gonna like you that much." By the end of the class, you said to me as you left, "I like you, you're honest". Well the truth of the matter is, Ta'Shaun, there has been a whole lot to like about being your mentor this year. I like the fact that I beat you at electronic basketball at Chuck E. Cheese. I like the fact that your name may be as hard to spell as mine. I like the fact that you sparkle in my AP Literature class. I like the fact that you are honest with me about your emotions. I like the many different colors of your hair. I like the fact that you are an artist. I like the fact that in one year, we have not had the smoothest ride together.

Mentors are teachers and teachers are not supposed to be happy that students like us. But I have to admit that I'll never forget when you kicked your heels in the air the afternoon you found I was going to be your mentor. Within a week, we had shared some intense discussions and a week later, you started calling me the Dude and my son "baby dude". All that made me happy.

What made me unhappy were the struggles you faced having to overcome your difficult past - "the story you've had to tell a million times" as you often tell me. Maybe having to talk about it makes it seem like you have to be totally healed from it. And maybe the best part of our relationship is that we have both shared the moments of our lives that still prey at us. What makes me most proud of you is that despite the hurdles you've had to overcome, you are not going to stop trying to forge a beautifully, meaningful future filled with helping others through your talents, your fighting spirit, your sharp mind and your peaceful smile which sets everyone at ease.

A month into school, you left me a little note, which I still have pinned on my board behind my chair, that said "I just wanted to let you know I appreciate you". Well Ta'Shaun, today is the day that I want to tell you that looking at how you have grown and anticipating the joy I will find at being part of the positive, creative force that will define your future, I want to tell you too that "I appreciate you."

DANIELLE VANCE

STUDENT REFLECTION

I came to Maya Angelou my 10th grade year as a repeating the 10th grade student. I completed the 10th and 11th grade here. I got pregnant with my son my 11th grade year at Maya. It wasn't a struggle then, but once I had him it was. I overlooked my problems and strived for the best because I wanted to show my son that no matter what challenges you are facing, you work through them and "never hate your try. When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on. I am a young growing lady who's feisty, sufficiently ambitious, determined and gifted. When a teen has a child, a chapter of your life will end, but an even more amazing one will begin. Maya Angelou showed me the victory of success is half won when one gains the habit of setting goals and achieving them. Even the most tedious chore will become endurable as you parade through each day convinced that every task, no matter how menial or boring, brings you closer to fulfilling your dreams. No matter what happens next, live this day as if it will be your last.



TRIBUTE FOR DANIELLE VANCE BY SHANEE HARRINGTON-YOUNG

It's definitely been a long road, but you have made it to the end of this trip. In your three years at Maya Angelou PCS, transition has been nothing new to you. I have watched you search for yourself in various manners and with various people. On any given day, it was possible to see a "new and different" Danielle. From your style of dress, to your attitude, there was no telling who would make a guest appearance for the day in school. But one thing was for sure, no one (staff nor student) could tell you otherwise, even if it was for your own good.

As you make the transition from Maya Angelou PCS to the real world, remember that the transitions will never cease, but the number of people that attempt to guide you along the way will diminish. As you embark on your new journey in transforming yourself into a "new and different" Danielle, remember the following. Your mother always has and will always have your best interest at heart. Keep her close for nothing is guaranteed in this life. Remember, just as we had expectations of you as a student, there will be expectations of you as an adult. It will never be easy, but you are more than capable of meeting the challenge full steam ahead. Also, and most importantly, remember that there is only one of you in this world. Don't allow anyone to take away your respect, dignity, or self-worth. Every drop of your self-worth must be embedded in your son, and he deserves everything that your heart and intelligence can provide.

If we never meet again, please remember that I still have your back, even when you don't want me to. That's my job. To guide you along the way and catch you when you fall.



FAITH WILLIAMS

STUDENT REFLECTION

I remember when I first came to Maya in the 11th grade. It was not easy for me switching schools not knowing what I was getting myself into. I was very quiet in school. The only time you would hear me talk was when I asked my teacher a question. But as time went by, I became more open to the people around me. I began to connect with my teachers more and more. I felt like I was surrounded by people who cared about me and my education. People like Ms. Jones Miller, Mr. Ferdinatz, Ms. Henry, Ms. Willingham, Ms. Reilly, Mr. Michalopoulos, and Ms. Katia showed me a lot of love which made me feel comfortable. My mentor Ms. Tia Johnson has been great with me. All these people were always on my back telling me to do the right things, keep up with my school work, and giving me advice on how to make a good decision.

At Maya, the staff really cares about you. Whenever you go through difficult times, they are willing to help you out. I remember one time I was having a bad day because my mother was sick in the hospital and that worried me. One of my teachers asked me if I was okay. When I told him I wasn't, he sent me to my counselor Ms. Henry, and she was able to call my mother for me to talk to her. After talking to my mother, I felt better.

Some of the best memories at Maya came from my school retreat, awards banquet, the senior retreat, enrichment program, and talent shows. These are memories I share with my friends and teachers which I will never forget. Although I faced some academic challenges, I overcame them. My mother also motivated me to keep doing my best. I want to give special thanks to Mr. Michalopoulos and Ms. Tia Johnson who were always there when I needed them. I want to thank the Maya family for everything.

TRIBUTE FOR FAITH WILLIAMS BY TIA JOHNSON

As I reflect, mixed emotions surface. It is great to see students succeed in their pursuits, but it is hard to say goodbye to those who we have gotten to know so closely through advising, frequent contact and extra-curricular activities. This year, I watched Faith Williams blossom into a beautiful young lady.

Faith and I first met at cheerleading tryouts. She started the year as a very quiet, shy young lady. Although she wouldn't say much, her smile spoke volumes. Boy, oh boy! That phase did not last long. She quickly became full of energy. As my self-appointed assistant, she made sure that I never left any of my belongings and that I was prepared to coach the team. She became my "Right Hand."

Little did I know that I was in for a surprise...again. Faith self-appointed me as her Mentor. Why? Because that's what she does. She has this "take charge" attitude about her. From then on, we became inseparable. We went to the movies, went bowling, filled out college and scholarship applications, discussed her hopes and dreams, and even went looking for prom dresses. I must admit there were times that I tried to hide, but she would always find me. Constantly asking, "Did you miss me?" and then responding for me "Yes you did!"

As a mentor, you always believe that your mentee is learning from YOU. The reality is I was learning from HER. She helped me become more patient, loving, caring, perseverant, and did I mention patient? It will be very hard to say goodbye to someone who is such a joy to be around. Although Faith will be attending George Mason University in the fall, I still will not be able to hide, nor do I want to. Faith you ALWAYS know where to find me! I will continue to be there for you no matter where you are.

KADEJAH WISE



TRIBUTE FOR KADEJAH WISE BY KATIA JONES

You are a young lady of remarkable diligence and determination. You manage to persevere through most any situation. Even when your close peers did not value their education, you did not fall victim to temptation. You stood firm and kept your goals in sight. You accept responsibility for all of your actions and work hard to overcome any and all challenges. You are the young lady that always seems to have it together. You know what you need to do, and you get it done. Every time I asked you what you needed help with or how I could support you, you always responded with an “I’m good. I’m on track.” And you were exactly right. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to work with a wonderful young lady. I want to remind you to keep your priorities in order. Stay focused on what is best for you and your family in the long term. As you know, success takes some time. Be patient with yourself and with others, but continue to have high expectations. In several months, you will begin the next step in becoming a registered nurse. Stay committed to yourself and always ask for help when you need it. Remember, you are the most powerful person in your life and can do anything you are determined to do.

“Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle.”
Napoleon Hill



CHARLES WOOD

STUDENT REFLECTION

My first day at Maya as an 11th grader was equivalent to the worst day of my life. Having to switch schools in the middle of my high school career was horrible. I was alone for that day, and I didn't know anyone, so I ate by myself for three days straight. On my 4th day of school, I met Ms. Simonsen, the nicest, most positive person I ever met in my life. I was wandering the halls, alone, when I saw this lady with long hair, and she was smiling at me. She said "Hi, what's your name?" I replied "Charles Wood." Then she said "Hello Charles Wood, my name is Ms. Simonsen, how do you like it here so far?" "I don't like it here" I said. She asked why and I told her that I didn't know anybody and I had been alone. She said "Well don't focus on the bad, stay positive, and from now on every day I will greet you so you won't feel so alone and at least know someone." From that point on, things began to get better. When I finally got my right schedule I was placed in Mr. Teman's Algebra 2/ Trigonometry class where I met Mike, Jeff, and Ashley. We all quickly became close friends, and I was then introduced to Marcell, Darien, Demia, and Juice. After the college tour that we all went on, we were pretty much bonded together.

My senior year has been the toughest year of my life with all the drama and work. But with the help of the best mentor ever, Ms. Winerman, the most difficult teacher I ever had, Mr. Micholopolous, Ms. Simonsen, and my best friends, this was also a great year with a lot of mental growth.

TRIBUTE FOR CHARLES WOOD BY KARA WINERMAN

Charles always tells me that I had to be his mentor because we both have such a great sense of style. I know that style is important to you, mentee, but you are more than your multi-colored high-top hair and your awesome 80's throwback clothes. Better than style, you possess STYLE:

Smarts: You are more intelligent than you give yourself credit for sometimes. You shouldn't be surprised when you write an outstanding English paper or know how to translate a sentence into Spanish without using your notes. Never underestimate your abilities, but rather continue to apply yourself, and there will be no college class you cannot tackle.

Tenacity: When the going gets tough, I know you sometimes want to throw in the towel, but you never do. You have dug yourself out of a hole in many classes, and stuck with school even when it was difficult for you to get here due to extenuating circumstances. Your willingness to stay focused and committed to achieving in the face of obstacles means that there is nothing you can't accomplish in the future.

Yearning: You have set lofty goals for yourself, and I know you will accomplish them. You desire to become an architect, and you speak about your future goals with confidence. Though the path may not always be smooth and straightforward, keep aiming high!

Love: You are one of the nicest, most caring young men I have ever met. You worry about and take care of your family and friends, and they know they can always count on you. Keep giving back to others as you journey toward your own success.

Extraordinariness: You are definitely unique, as exemplified by the style you are so proud of. You are happy to be an individual, and you are not afraid to think for yourself. You have made responsible decisions, even when those around you opted to choose otherwise. Your willingness to be yourself and to act as you know is right will lead you to a successful future.

Always remember, Charles, that your style may take you far, but your STYLE will take you farther. I cannot wait to see all that you accomplish!

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