

# FACING FORWARD

A Macalester Alumni of Color Zine // Volume II // 2018



**EVER FORWARD YOU MUST TRANSGRESS,  
AN UNKNOWN PATH LAID OUT AHEAD...**

# DEAR GRADUATING SENIOR OF COLOR

Congratulations! Set forth into this world with your truth—your kindness, your wisdom, your resilient spirit will guide you. You are so loved and I am so excited to see what miracles you bring into this world. Take good care.

Love always.

JINATH TASNIM, 2016 (SHE/HER/HERS)

FACING

FORWARD

**WELCOME  
TO  
THE  
COMMUNITY**

Four years ago, I was approached by the Department of Multicultural Life to be a Faces of Mac speaker at the orientation for your class. I was so excited to welcome you to our little community on campus and share with you what I had learned from my first two years at Macalester. In my speech, I encouraged you to take risks while you were here, to take an interesting class even if it didn't fit in your major. I encouraged you to keep an open mind to change, and I hope you did all of that.

And now, I write to you, not student to student, but as an alumnus, welcoming you to a new, larger community. My advice to you this time is less clear, but it is honest. The transition from student to employee was a difficult one for me as most companies were looking to hire people with experience. I eventually took a job, not in my field, that was referred to me by a connection. And though this position is not part of my longterm career path, it has been a good first step into the full-time adult world and it has given me the time to envision where I ultimately want to go.

As you leave the safety of the Macalester community and campus behind, please be patient with yourself if you don't land your dream job or graduate program immediately following graduation. It really is okay to not have it completely figured out quite yet. Knowing that you can utilize the skills that got you through Macalester to succeed, as well as the connections you've made with peers and faculty during these years, you aren't really leaving Macalester behind—rather, you're bringing Macalester with you wherever you go into our global community.

**GRACE NEWTON, 2016 (SHE/HER/HERS)**

In the months following my graduation, I fell into a depression that lasted more than two years.

I thought that it was my fault I was depressed. I thought maybe it was my constant critique of the world and its violent and unjust systems of oppression that made me so unhappy—maybe, I wanted too much, I was too idealistic, too radicalized, too sensitive, too hungry. I believed that I did not deserve to want more and better for my life. I tried to be quieter, “more realistic,” more satisfied to be loved, and happy and employed.

I thought I would be happy making myself small.

But, the man I thought I loved continued to belittle and demean me, the jobs I thought I loved continued to disempower and bore me. Despite feeling like I was lost, I knew unhappiness was not something I manifested, and the fire in my belly remained even in the bleakest times. It wasn't in one day, it wasn't in one experience or in any quantifiable amount of time when I finally embraced that my want of justice, love, and an ever-expansive world of a life was integral to my existence.

I shed the man one year, then the job the next year, and I know I still want more, and I am not ashamed anymore.

In the unfamiliar and terrifying world of adulthood, I found kindred spirits, and learned that the people in my life who had criticized my too-muchness were only afraid of their own wants. My depression loosened its grip on my life with the help of antidepressants, the necessary endings to relationships that were bad for me, an amazing therapist, and the love and support of friends and family.

I am still not sure where in this story my depression ceased.

Everything blends into one, and it is that blended whole of a person that carried me through this and will carry me forward.

I am what I have and I want her here, hungry and all.

**THE NEXT TWO YEARS  
MAY BE THE LONELIEST  
AND  
MOST DIFFICULT  
YEARS OF YOUR LIFE.  
THEY WERE FOR ME.  
BUT REMEMBER, EVEN  
BARELY MAKING IT  
IS MAKING IT.  
LET THE 🔥 FIRE 🔥  
IN YOUR BELLY  
GUIDE YOU TO  
WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.**

Congratulations on your graduation! Mac truly helped shape who I am today and strengthened my values of social justice, love, and equity. After leaving 1600 Grand Ave, I realized how important it is to commit to my values and ensure I'm filtering my actions (personally or professionally) through them. If you do this, you will continue to find fulfillment. Additionally, my hope for you is to never become numb to inequity. For me, it has been easy, at times, to ignore injustice or inequity, because it may not always directly apply to me. However, I truly believe, if one of us is not liberated, none of us are liberated. Every day I strive to become more conscious of who I am and how I interact with the world. I am always reminded of the words from Yuri Kochiyama (1921-2014), one of my heroes—"Remember that consciousness is power. Consciousness is education and knowledge. Consciousness is becoming aware. It is the perfect vehicle for students. Consciousness-raising is pertinent for power, and be sure that power will not be abusively used, but used for building trust and goodwill domestically and internationally. Tomorrow's world is yours to build." Keep learning about yourself and your roots, keep resisting and, most importantly, keep loving yourself.

**YOU  
ARE  
THE  
LEADERS  
OF  
TODAY**

# FOTOS Y RECUERDOS

I took a photo like this of the *Passiflora incarnata* flower while in Texas.



This particular plant is wonderful because, not only is it beautiful, it may be ingested to manage anxiety. This resonates with me as I am constantly on a journey to manage my anxiety. What gives me hope is finding joy in life through photography, plants, and creating beautiful pieces of art. I am an optimist and a romantic at heart so looking at and creating beauty always energizes me. See more of what gives me hope at [cavazosarte.wordpress.com](http://cavazosarte.wordpress.com). (8in x 8in, oil paint on wood)

EMILY CAVAZOS, 2016 (SHE/HER/HERS)

“Aside from the fact that you can’t keep a job...” she said with dry humor referencing my wayward life as a: community organizer; voting rights and civil rights lawyer; law professor; Ford Foundation Program Officer... and she didn’t even know I once owned a women’s clothing and accessories boutique. I’m sixty-nine years old now and I wish for each and everyone of you the courage to forget five-year/ten-year “plans.”

# **FOLLOW YOUR HEART ESPECIALLY WHEN THAT’S SCARY**

Run toward that which challenges. Risk everything. Do not wait until some magic moment of not being afraid. That moment will never come. May your road be winding and twisting... it is the only way to be truly alive. Don’t worry about “mistakes”—if you are lucky, you’ll have lots of those. That’s how we grow.

**BARBARA PHILLIPS, 1971**

I've never been good at big life transitions. My comfort is grounded in the familiarity of people, spaces, and routines. It's funny how the familiarity of  $\pm 4$  years can contract into a singular, peculiar moment: graduation.

Graduating is a socially agreed upon time of joy. But know that this is not a universal truth. Here's another version of the truth: graduating is an immense privilege that you are allowed to need to heal from. This can be a time of celebration, mourning, and everything that exists in between. There's no wrong way for your mind, body, and spirit to process such a major transition.

Just know that you have the capacity to be resilient. You already have needed to be to make it to today.

The one piece of advice that I would give you now that you have graduated from Mac is to always believe in yourself and in what you can accomplish. Others may help you along the way and you should always acknowledge the help and support of others. However, you are most responsible for what you are and what you will become. The words from the Billie Holiday song still ring true today:

**GOD  
BLESS  
THE  
CHILD  
THAT'S  
GOT  
HIS OWN**

You should define your worth. You must define your success. The road will be rocky. Less qualified folks will be promoted ahead of you. You will get frustrated and lose hope. Just keep the faith and keep plugging. Learn more and do more. Don't expect that others have your best interests at heart and will always do the right thing. Many of our people have sacrificed everything to get you to this place. You have been given the tools to take care of yourself. Go forth now and handle your business! Then, reach back and help someone else.

**BRODERICK GRUBB, 1973**

If one end of your burrito is hot and the other is cold do not trust that burrito nor the establishment that created said burrito.

**YOUR TIME AND JOY  
ARE IMPORTANT.**

If your friends insist that the aforementioned burrito shop is a good burrito shop and try to bring you along, do not go. Your time and joy are important. Even if your friends are being “nice,” and buy you a burrito thinking they are doing you a favor, hold fast and DO NOT eat the burrito, because all the kindness in the world does not equal understanding, and because

**YOUR TIME AND JOY  
ARE IMPORTANT.**

Furthermore don't be afraid to travel to the “rough” part of town to get a haircut, even when there is a place across the street, next to the aforementioned burrito shop, where all your friends get their 40-dollar-corporate cuts, and don't be afraid of them saying you're neurotic or high maintenance, and don't be afraid of all the time you're spending in search of that good haircut, because, at the end of the day,

**YOUR TIME, YOUR JOY, AND  
YOUR SENSE OF SELF  
ARE IMPORTANT.**

And when you get to the salon and the stylist that you trust is busy and the shop offers some other rando to cut your hair, do NOT be afraid and do not rush yourself or compromise yourself. Say no. You will wait. Because your time and joy are important. And when you are offered that job or that school in that fancy place faraway, and your mother and brother and your friends tell you to take it... Be honest, and brave. Sometimes the scariest thing to admit is that you need not leave to grow, that you are happy right here, that you are perfect right here, that you belong, you belong. Sometimes—but sometimes all the same. Be brave and plant your roots where you see fit, because

# YOUR TIME AND JOY ARE IMPORTANT.

And most importantly, and most terrifyingly, and most giddily brilliant and topsy turvy of all, is that, wherever you go, wherever you've been, someone somewhere LOVES you, REALLY loves you, or wants to, and even though you've been traveling for so long, and been taking care of yourself for so long, and have survived often by shrinking or by hiding or by taking up less space because to wage war daily with the barbers and the burrito shops and the people that surround you would be an erosion, and you can't risk that erosion, can't risk getting caught, can barely risk being seen but this love that finds you is a spotlight that lances 'neath your ribcage and scatters the dirty rafters locked about your heart... I hope, I really hope, that, just for a week, maybe, or even a day, you risk letting that person see you. Love you. Love you. Because maybe you don't believe me yet, but I believe in you, and I say that

# YOUR TIME AND JOY ARE IMPORTANT.

RICHARD RAYA, 2015 (HE/HIM/HIS)

Q

what does hope mean to me?

A

a house at night, glowing warmly on the street, where all my friends are laughing and eating really good food, and i'm on my way to join them.



ARIEL ESTRELLA, 2015 (THEY/THEM/THEIRS)

I wish that someone had told me to not give up on my creative outlets while pursuing a career that my family wanted for me. I thought that I had to continuously achieve and burned myself out without having an outlet to support my emotional well-being. After leaving my original career, I did what I never thought possible. I threw myself into acting and began to slowly profit from it, aka gain my family's approval.

As a person of color there is an enormous amount of pressure to take the "sure" career, to make your parents' and the ancestors' sacrifice worth it, to show the world that you're a "good one." To hell with all that.

**BE SELFISH FOR ONCE.  
BE A DISAPPOINTMENT.  
LET THOSE AUNTIES  
CLUCK THEIR TONGUES  
AT FAMILY GATHERINGS.**

You owe it to yourself after coming so far. Those restrictive feelings aren't going to go away overnight, but you don't have to live your life by them. It can be daunting to challenge your family's views and your own idea of what you should be doing with your life. There is nothing wrong with being afraid, but do not let it paralyze you. Let your fear drive you to succeed in areas no one else thought you should. Take a one in a million chance. Be all you can be (as cliché as that sounds), because you are the most incredible person you will ever know. No one else is going to take that chance for you.

I love you Class of 2018.

**GO OUT AND KILL IT.**

DANIEL W YEE, 2016 (HE/HIM/HIS)

**...AND EVER FORWARD YOU WILL FIND US,  
READY TO RECEIVE YOU.**

# ABOUT

In 2015, a group of women and nonbinary seniors of color sought to raise the voices of their peers, but do so outside the already established platforms of reflection given to graduating seniors. Abaki Beck, Lisa Hu, Michelle Kiang, Alizarin Menninga, and I coalesced our efforts into the first Facing Forward, which took the form of a testimonio share that riffed off the first-year orientation event, Faces of Mac. When I had the chance to name a zine responding to the urgent need to uplift alumni of color voices, I immediately thought of that special night.

Facing Forward (the zine) is a project organized by myself as a volunteer, and Macalester Associate Director of Alumni Engagement Neely Heubach, 2006 (she/her/hers). Volume II will be presented at Rites of Passage on Friday, May 11, 2018. This event, sponsored by Macalester's Department of Multicultural Life and the Alumni Office, is an annual graduation ceremony that recognizes Macalester's graduating students of color and honors their contributions. This zine wishes to extend the magic by inviting alumni of color into the space through the gift of our support and care.

Note that this zine uses *people of color* as a means to reach for one another in solidarity across racial/ethnic familiarity and difference. We understand that this is not the preferred term for everyone. By submitting to Facing Forward, the contributors did not necessarily have to use the term for themselves in most contexts other than the self-selection they take on by being a part of this zine.

Thank you to all original Facing Forward organizers and to the alumni who shared their voices for this zine. Congratulations to the 2018 Rites of Passage crew and to all those who celebrate you during this heartwarm, heartstrong ceremony. I am honored to hold you as beloved today and every day henceforth. I hope in the chaos of the next few minutes and hours and days and weeks and months and years and decades, you can face the world with this zine as a sigil of hope.

Find the online archive for this and prior Facing Forward volumes at [www.macalester.edu/alumni/groups/alumni-of-color/](http://www.macalester.edu/alumni/groups/alumni-of-color/). Keep in touch by joining our Facebook group: Macalester Alumni of Color Collective.

**ARIEL ESTRELLA, 2015 (THEY/THEM/THEIRS)**