

# FACING FORWARD

A Macalester Alumni of-Color Zine // Volume I // 2017

Lo que me sana...



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

# CONGRATULATIONS, YOU MADE IT!

I know it wasn't always easy, but I hope you'll think back on your time at Mac fondly. For me, it was a place of love, and a large part of that was because of the community that I found in other students, faculty, and staff of color. I hope you'll take a moment to look around yourself today, during Rites of Passage and any other time that members of your many communities are gathered around you, and think: "These people are my family; I love them, and I know they love me."

Hold on to that thought for just a moment. We do love you, and we wish you all the best. <3

EVAN HUGH COLES-HARRIS, 2010

# IT CAN BE ISOLATING TO LEAVE THE MAC BUBBLE AND STRIKE OUT ON YOUR OWN.

Know that there are so many people who would love to hear from you even if you are not doing what you thought you would. You have to seek support since it will no longer come to you.

ALEX CANO, 2014 (SHE/HER/HERS)

My partner, who is also a Mac alumnus, and I always say that going to Mac was bittersweet. Sweet because we met the most amazing, like-minded, strong, and LOVING lifelong friends—but we live all over the world. Keep in touch with your friends as they will keep fueling you to be the advocate that you want to be. <3

RIYAZ GAYASADDIN, 2008 (HE/HIM/HIS)

My Macalester community is truly global. I have been connected to Macalester people in Australia, England, South Africa, and throughout the United States.

There is truly something special about the time I spent on campus with my friends. I have had numerous people that attended other institutions comment about the connection I have with fellow Mac alums and how nice and down to earth my Mac friends are.

Because love is friends from Mac supporting you through the highs and lows of life. Love is seeing your college roommates and friends at funerals and weddings. Love for Mac is paying it forward, interviewing prospective students in your city, representing Mac at college fairs and explaining to people that they can survive a Minnesota winter and that they will love a Minnesota summer.

JUSTIN BRANDON, 2000 (HE/HIM/HIS)

I used to think success meant working in a job that let me align exactly what I enjoy doing with paying the bills, but I've learned that I have so many other priorities that don't fit within that logic. Success for me now means just living near my friends and family so that I have a support network on hand. There are times when I don't always get that luxury, but I've learned now that I want to work towards that goal in all of my pursuits. I prioritize location a lot more than I used to, and I'm ok with that becoming a major guiding force for the future. I have time to figure out the monetary stuff later, so as long as I'm stable and finding out a way to share with my family, I'm good with moving where my people are.

ALVIN L.J. KIM, 2014 (THEY/THEM/THEIRS)

You hear stories about Mac friends being close friends long after college. What they don't say is that it takes work. Careers, relationships, marriages, kids, divorces—life takes us in different directions. The day to day takes over and we realize we haven't heard from or seen our friends in years. Keeping connected is easier than ever but it takes effort to maintain deep relationships. It is worth the effort.

CONSUELO GUTIERREZ-CROSBY, 1998 (SHE/HER/HERS)

Be a better friend to everyone you know. Friendships take a lot of effort to maintain once you leave Mac. Put in the effort. Visit the cities where your friends are living and crash on their sofas. Eat many lunches out together. Drink beer and coffee and go see their stand-up or their lectures or their bands. Go on hikes and bike trips and trips to the movies. Mail them cards on their kids' birthdays. Be present and listen and be listened to. Think of them whenever you can.

**YOU WILL BE ONE  
ANOTHER'S GREATEST AND  
MOST PRECIOUS  
RESOURCE.**

GABRIEL LLANAS, 2000 (HE/HIM/HIS)

# THE SEVEN THINGS I LEARNED AS A MAN OF COLOR AFTER GRADUATION

- 1 Stay in touch.** Get the emails, phone numbers, addresses of people who made a difference during your time at Macalester before you part ways and write to them.
- 2 There's nothing wrong with you.** My director took me aside and gave me a 5-10 minute lecture on how to pronounce certain words despite the fact everyone understands me. People will find any excuse to tear you down as a POC; remember there's nothing wrong with you and a whole lot of wrong with them.
- 3 It's okay to cry.** I applied to several dozen jobs, switched jobs three times, and ultimately broke down crying during the summer after graduation because of the overwhelming transition.
- 4 Pay yourself... if possible.** Start a savings account and put money into it every paycheck. My parents live paycheck to paycheck so we never talked about saving money. Use money as way of achieving your dreams but don't let money consume you.
- 5 Remember your roots.** You all came from somewhere and learned many things along the way. It took an entire community to raise you. Don't forget that and stay humble along your journey.
- 6 Be patient.** Graduation festivities can be hectic. For me, the fact that my parents didn't speak English stressed me out until one of my good friends pointed out that Macalester was not meant for them reassured me to be patient.
- 7 You're loved.** Appreciate the people around you at this moment. You don't realize how much you will miss them until they're no longer there. Talk, hug, kiss, sing, hell do the funky chicken with them. Enjoy the moment!

# SUCCESS DOESN'T HAVE TO BE FANCY OR IMMEDIATE

or announced with awards and sparklers. Success is the ability to change paths and love the new view. When I graduated, I thought success looked like my name on the covers of magazines announcing my literary accomplishments. I have friends doing that, and it's wonderful. But I reach more people daily in my classroom, and today my success looks like their active discussion about the words of Toni Morrison or Roger Reeves or Natalie Diaz. I have learned through the struggle outside of college that my success doesn't have to be Facebook-worthy or filter-friendly. Sometimes my success is as simple as a glass of wine from Trader Joe's after a long day of grading student papers. This is completely okay with me. Define what success looks like for you based on your own standards, and edit them as you go if things don't work out immediately.

## YOU'RE ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN JOY.

I am finally working in my dream industry, 13 years after my own graduation, so I feel burdened to share the secrets of my survival. People will say the perfect job doesn't exist & you are being picky holding out for it. They're wrong. Whatever jobs you must take while searching, use them to shape the career you want to be in, in terms of the skills you employed/learned. Stay open minded. Read about sick systems and emotional vampirism. Learn to practice active listening. Join a credit union. Think about what you need to survive—not just food and shelter, but what you need to feel dignity. Makeup? A certain haircut or shoes? Dining out once a week? Make space in your budget for it & don't let people tell you it's wasteful. Your progress is your own & cannot be compared to others. You are the one who must live with your thoughts & actions at the end of the day: act accordingly. Plan your actions, not your results—if you perform excellently, there is no room for regret later, no matter what the outcome. If I can do it, you can!! So, finally, never give up.

**MARY BURNS, 2004 (SHE/HER/HERS)**

When I was a student at Mac, I felt free to be who I am: curious, unafraid of pursuing all of my interests, and insistent that no one try to stop me just because I am a female person of color. I wish someone had told me to still value and uphold the traits in the real world. "Adulthood" does not mean shying away or changing who you are. Yes, priorities change with age. My biggest concern in my 20s, for example, was getting into grad school and then getting a job. I did that, although I encountered a few bosses who equated my being female and black with a degree of inferiority. I handled that by training people how to treat me. In my 30s, my biggest goal was to rise as far as I could in my chosen industry and get married. I did that, too, sometimes walking away from jobs because respect and fairness meant far more to me than money. In my 40s, I focused on work-life balance. Now that I am 50, I care most about being happy, which I define as enjoying what I do for a living and spending time with family. As Maya Angelou once said, "I have learned that making a living is not the same as making a life." Remember that and continue to soar.

**JILL COX-CORDOVA, 1988**

- 1 Success is to be persistent.
- 2 Macalester gave me a worldview that I did not appreciate when I was there. I have come to learn that it was invaluable.
- 3 Life's challenges can be embraced and not defeat you.
- 4 Love is not a one time / one person state of the heart. It changes with time and age.

#### ERICA, 1973

I had no concept of success in college. Today I have no concept of what success is. I don't equate titles or money with success. The number of fb "likes" or LinkedIn friends you have does not equate to success to me. In my reality, success won't comfort you on a really bad day at work. It won't help your child with developmental delays and special needs navigate an educational system that's only for neurotypical people. Success will not hug you back, eliminate ageism, sexism, or racism in the world.

Success is feeling good about doing what you feel needs to be done. Things that will help you feel good: Start your retirement account with first paycheck. Take time off. Know that being fired is a good thing. Don't be anyone's copy. Don't let anyone make you feel less than who you are.

And remember: "The world is a circle without a beginning and nobody knows where it really ends. Everything depends on where you are in the circle that never begins. Nobody knows where the circle ends." Macalester provides a place in the circle. Your experiences can be endless if you wish them to be.

#### KIM E. WALTON, 1979 (SHE/HER/HERS)

If you are working for a company of any size and are not self employed, know not every person in a position of leadership has the best interests of everyone in their employ. Do not to be afraid to leave a place of employment if respect for all is not a core value. There are many opportunities available globally to find the right fit—especially for a Mac grad.

#### DIANE GRANGER BOWMAN, 1976

**WHILE YOU HAVE SOME  
AGENCY IN MAKING HARD  
CHOICES THAT YOU THINK  
DETERMINES THE COURSE  
OF YOUR LIFE,  
THE UNIVERSE ULTIMATELY  
DECIDES WHERE YOU GO.  
LET IT.**

Thad Wilderson's office door stood ajar that spring morning in 1990. Thad was the director of Macalester College community relations, though I never knew his title. I just knew that he was an easy man to talk with. Like so many Macalester staff members and professors, Thad listened with his heart as well as his head. So I knocked on his door and asked what I should think about people who said I was accepted at graduate school because I was Ojibwe. I knew then that later, the same people would insist that I got a job or promotion for the same reason. Thad got a little furious. With a rising voice, he told me to turn aside criticism that questioned my worth based on race. He told me that I was competent and intelligent and talented, and that my heritage enhanced all of that. Fire shot from his eyes, and the words sank deep.

People who claim to be 100% happy and perfect post-grad are liars.

You'll lose contact with a lot of people. Forgive yourself and forgive others when this happens. I've found that the best of friendships bounce back just as fierce as they once were, no matter how much time has passed. Trust that, and focus on yourself.

White people are a reality and they will test you, especially in the work place. It's in your best interest to learn quickly how to pick and choose the battles you have the energy to fight and which ones you need to leave alone.

On that note, find your people. Find your people of color. Love them, appreciate them. Vent about said unpicked battles with them.

Stop seeking validation.

Take a personal day from time to time, if you are able.

Call your loved ones often. For me, this means my mom and dad. For you, it may mean someone else. But make an effort to call them at least once a week. They will appreciate it.

In the years since that spring day, some people have said that I or a person they knew was hired based solely on race. Each time that belief surfaces, I reply with a variation of Thad's impassioned speech that spring day. Like so many others at Macalester, Thad helped me define who I was, my purpose, and the importance of high expectations. Those years were life-changing. I went from dead end jobs with no expectations to a career that requires critical thinking, writing skill, and a willingness to learn about diverse cultures and people. To those of you graduating now, never forget your true worth and your potential. Set aside the world's noise and nonsense. Look for the competence, intelligence, and talent in others and listen with your heart. Just like Thad.

DEBORAH LOCKE, 1990 (SHE/HER/HERS)

Plan your meals out in advance and plan your groceries around them. Be open to challenging and broadening your ideas of what "X" looks like, feels like, smells like, is like. A sampling of what X was my first two years out: a good significant other, romantic relationships, close friendships, success, activism, being a "good" WOC. The list goes on and on and on.

There is a bucket list, but also a fuck-it list. (Google it)

The list of learnings goes on and on, and I'm still learning, too.

But I'll leave it with this:

**YOU ARE AMAZING.  
YOU ARE LOVED.  
CONGRATULATIONS.**

A FRIEND

I was loved at Macalester. After graduation, I distanced myself from this love. Maybe it's because I moved far away from my Mac bubble. Maybe because I wanted space. Maybe it's because I could get better at communicating. However, what I found was no matter how long it took me to get back to this community that loved me, and that I loved, it was always there for me. This love from Mac is infinite, as I hope it will be for you too.

**AYDA ALEMAYEHU, 2014**

Hope means keeping my spirit and heart calm and at peace.

**ERICA, 1973**

Hope means that Mac can continue create opportunities for dialogue to advance society.

**JUSTIN BRANDON, 2000 (HE/HIM/HIS)**

Hope means seeing possibility amidst the challenges.

**CONSUELO GUTIERREZ-CROSBY, 1998 (SHE/HER/HERS)**

As a person of color, hope means maintaining your sense of identify in the face of possible discrimination, knowing that there are plenty of people who will stand up for you and support you no matter where you come from or how you look. Hope means knowing that every day is unique and offers new possibilities. Hope is holding out for a better world in which you can make a difference even in the smallest way.

**HAYLEY BERRA, 2012**

When God Orders Your Steps, Dream Big, Go Far, and Touch The World!!!

**MARTHA A. WHITING-GODDARD, 1971**

Hope means that, with maximum effort and commitment, it is possible to overcome insurmountable odds and achieve victory when all seems lost. Hope is that "je ne sais quoi" encouraging you to fight when others have long since counted you out. People of color must never forget that we are the embodiment of all of the hopes and dreams of our ancestors who were often denied access to the opportunities inherent within this society. Our individual and collective achievements fill their souls with pride allowing them to rest in peace.

**BRODERICK GRUBB, 1973**

# AN ODE TO THE AMERICAN DREAM & IMMIGRANT WOMEN WHO REFUSE TO REMAIN UNSEEN

Cold and silent,

the blood that flows through them  
 turned to standing water  
 that corroded my gums when I embraced them with the warmth  
 of my tongue, flushed away the remains of the languages it held before,  
 and filled in the cracks of an unearthened pot, dull and shattered—  
 yet achingly alive.

Their veins seized me by the neck and poured  
 concrete  
 down  
 my  
 throat,

so that I would sink in the festering dreams seeping out of their pores.

Fallen, I crawled on all fours in the pits of self-destruction;  
 wept for mercy.

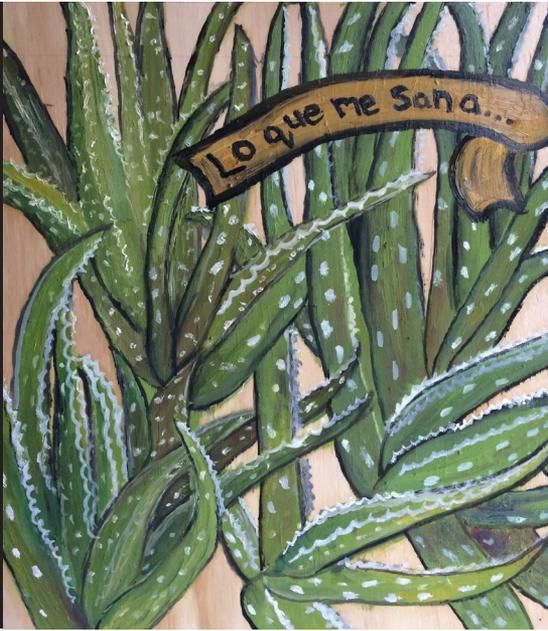
Through a tempestuous spring breeze, mi diosa responded by  
 resurrecting all of the women who have lived in me,  
 taught them how to use their calloused hands to stitch my rotting flesh  
 together with golden silk

so that if I sank, I would still shine under the kiss of the sun

and if I no longer wished to breathe,  
 she would still be able to smile upon me and remind me of my radiance.

CÁROL MEJÍA, 2015 (SHE/HER/HERS)

This painting of aloe vera plants is based on a photograph I took when I was working and living back in my hometown, San Antonio, Texas. One day, I passed by a man's casita and he was sitting in the front yard with his two chihuahuas. He greeted me. I told him I really liked the arboles palmas in his front yard and asked if I could tomar una foto. He told me that if I like plants he could give me some of the aloe vera growing in his yard. I snapped a quick picture before he plucked five plants from the ground for me to take home.



A mi, this image represents la importancia de la comunidad y el amor. Tambien, because the subject matter is a plant which cures so many ailments, esta pintura represents those aspects and their relationship to healing. Often, I struggle with anxiety and negative thoughts and I am still working on ways to practice self care and to heal my pain. This journey of healing es una lucha diario—it's something I have to work at daily—and it has changed so much since I graduated. Post grad life, for me, has demanded that I make a more conscious effort to pay attention to my emotions and mental health. I would say that everyone heals differently but I wanted this image to be a source of esperanza, strength y paz for all who see it. Find more of what heals me at [cavazosarte.wordpress.com](http://cavazosarte.wordpress.com).

EMILY CAVAZOS, 2016 (SHE/HER/HERS)

That 20th century philosopher Abbie Hoffman once wrote: "Sure we were young. We were arrogant. We were ridiculous. There were excesses. We were brash. We were foolish. We had factional fights. But we were right."

## WE WERE RIGHT

and I know this having been a co-founder of the Black Liberation Affairs Committee as a student. The intervening years have continued to provide insight into what it is we were right about—the value of community. We were right that valuing community should be transforming—personally and, for Macalester, institutionally.

## WE WERE RIGHT

that Macalester's tradition of community compels us to act in the interest of community and out of love for community and a just, caring society. In that fundamental way, we who experience Macalester should differ from those who fear difference; who use difference to pander to fear, anxiety, and distrust.

## WE WERE RIGHT

that life should be a creative experiment in community. That without the certainty of being right, we must nevertheless respond to Dr. Arthur Fleming's question, "What are you going to do now?"—with the emphasis on "now." That we must act and evaluate the experiment as it goes along. When community is broad and diverse, it is also complex. No one said the appropriate response would be easy or the process comfortable. But answers come from the transformative work of community.

## WE WERE RIGHT

about that. And my life has been greatly enriched because of it. I hope yours will be, too.

BARBARA Y. PHILIPS, 1971 (SHE/HER/HERS)

FACING

FORWARD

**WELCOME  
TO  
THE  
GLOBAL  
WORK SHIFT.**

I graduated from Mac with zero honors or awards and a nothing-to-shout-about GPA. Went on to become a geoscientist, an international consultant, and owner of a technology transfer firm specializing in analysis of aerial and satellite remote sensing and use of geographic information systems (GIS). I'm a badass American black woman who's said YES more than NO to experiences outside of my wheelhouse, and have managed to stay woke and relevant to challenges in our sphere.

Mac gave me the wings of a B.A. in geology, but more importantly, the wings to practice community engagement and affecting social, political, and environmental change, locally and globally. In the late 1970s, Macalester Black, Native American, and international staff and alums made it possible for my class to benefit from and carry on their push for the presence and voices of "minority" students of color. A memorable experience includes protesting apartheid and American investments in South Africa... I got a chance to attend an oil giant (Mobil?) shareholder meeting where I proxy-voted shares supporting divestiture (supplied by shareholding nuns).

My point? GPA doth not a progressive, evolving, citizen make! An undergrad degree, however, especially from a small private liberal arts college like Mac situated in the Midwest, gives you a unique base "vibe" to continue your journey as a world citizen.

Folks of Color, Class of 2017: You are matriculating from a majority-white environ into the epoch age of the "browning" of America. Your generation will define and impact the unprecedented legacy of "varying degrees of melanin-rich people of color," as majority Americans. Along with your international cohorts, what you do in the world will resonate into the 22nd century. Will you collaborate and respect all voices in the mix as you trail blaze into your 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s?

Welcome to the global work shift.

May you take your Mac experience and affect change that is far removed from a patriarchal, parochial, paradigm. This "progressive" baby boomer is depending on you to stay woke, unapologetic, and hip to the prudence of evolving wise.

Ashe. Good luck. Thank you.

**KIM-MARIE WALKER, 1980**

# S U C C E S S

Success is not linear. Like, you show up with a picnic basket day after day and often it's raining. Sometimes it's gorgeous and you can indeed have a lovely picnic. Of course, it's guaranteed to rain again. Likewise, you can't control the factors that lead to success, and you can't hang onto past success and expect it to continue in the same way, at the same velocity. You can show up for it and apply for it and network and strive and create, but who the f\*\*\* knows if you'll get what you want! Be proud of yourself for trying at all. Seriously, be proud. And get accustomed to failure, rejection, etc. the same way you're accustomed to rainy weather.

Also. Don't worry so much about your Grand Purpose. Life is utterly mysterious and you're never going to be certain that what you're doing is the right thing. The only thing that will save you from existential angst and horror is your relationships with others.

Lean on the people you love, and let them lean on you. In the end, that's the only kind of purpose that will get you out of bed in the morning.

*all that I have  
all that I will ever be  
is mere smoke and mirrors  
without you next to me*

inhale  
you are here.  
breathe.  
slowly.  
remember the first time college was too hard.  
the first assignment you didn't think you could complete.  
who held you in that moment?

breathe.  
slowly  
remember the first A you received in college.  
who cheered the loudest?

breathe.  
slowly.  
remember the first time you were humble.  
the kind of humble that  
utters the names of those who built you.

breathe.  
slowly.  
remember here means community.  
means someone to hold you  
means someone to cheer for you.  
means graduating and leaving are not synonyms.  
means this is where we are.  
here.  
for you.  
for all the times when you don't feel you are enough.  
for love.  
for existence beyond smoke and mirrors.

you are here.  
exhale.

# DEAR GRADUATING SENIOR OF COLOR

You are exactly what this world needs. You are enough. Set forth, and live your truth.

JINATH TASNIM, 2016 (SHE/HER/HERS)

**...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 I will be presented at Rites of Passage on Friday, May 12, 2017. 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 advice, support, and care. Thank you to my co-organizers of the first Facing Forward who have allowed me to revision this platform into a gift of alumni of color's reflections to all those honored at Rites of Passage.

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 for all the alumni who shared their voices for this, the first ever (but hopefully not the last!) Facing Forward zine. Congratulations to the 2017 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.

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