

BRIGHTER HORIZON FOUNDATION'S 2ND ANNUAL

COLLEGE REVEAL EVENT



The Commonwealth Chateau
Chestnut Hill College
June 10, 2021

WELCOME TO THE COLLEGE REVEAL

THURSDAY JUNE 10, 2021

TRADE SCHOOL SCHOLARS



Nasir



Carlos

COLLEGE GRADUATES



Kalice



Vee

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Tatiana



Camya



Jaymaba



Itzel



Aisha



Malik



Vonyeh

EVENT PROGRAM

Welcome



Brighter
Horizon
Scholars



College
Reveal



Closing
Remarks



In person guests are welcome to join us after the program for dessert, snap pictures at the photo booth, meet the Scholars and mingle with friends .

**Save the date: Brighter Horizon's 3rd Annual College Reveal
Saturday, May 7, 2022 @ 6:00-10:00 PM**

Thank You For Your Support!
www.brighterhorizon.org

College Scholars

Kalice
Howard University
Class of 2021



Virgen
Drexel University
Class of 2021



Kelsie
Grand Canyon
Class of 2022



Brianna
Indiana U of PA
Class of 2022



Zybrea
Clark Atlanta
Class of 2023



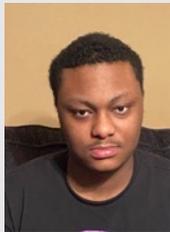
Amira
Gwynedd Mercy
Class of 2023



Jamie
U of Miami
Class of 2023



Safiyyah
Cornell
Class of 2024



Darien
Kutztown
Class of 2024



Terreshia
U of Delaware
Class of 2024



Tyie
Millersville
Class of 2024



Anna
Rowan
Class of 2024



Michaeya
Penn State
Class of 2024



Barry
Temple
Class of 2024



Myles
Penn State
Class of 2024

I AM MY ANCESTOR'S
Wildest
DREAM



High School Scholars



Tatiana



Carlos



Nasir



Itzel



Jaymaba



Camya



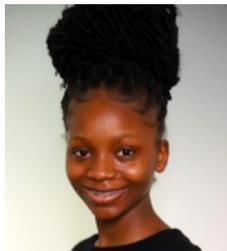
Malik



Vonyeh



Aisha
Valedictorian



Christine



Skye



Jacob



Michelle



Benjamin



John



Jada



Charity



Aiden



Malik
Cristo Rey High School
College Essay

“Get out, you don’t belong here.”

I move with a quickness. After all, this isn’t my first time. Isn’t my first time dodging the belt. How am I supposed to find a home, when the one I have doesn’t hold the feeling of comfort? Scratch that. What is a home? Home to me was a single mother taking the last piece of my puzzle, leaving me incomplete. Home to me was being one of five children birthed from different fathers but being the only one my mother seemed to hate. Home was unstable. Who said home was a good thing? Some say my story will never be complete because I never had a home, because I’m still missing that piece, and they are right. I don’t believe in stability, for it’s a foreign way of thinking.

Except for my younger brother and me, each of us was eventually sentenced to separate foster homes. Some people see the foster care system as a saving grace, but for me it was hell. My back still aches from being dragged along bare wooden floors. Foster home number one. My arms still burn from having to cook for eight children. Foster home number two. My hands are still sore from having to fight foster siblings because I wasn’t a “real brother.” Number three. My heart still breaks from having the chance at adoption until being denied because my brother was attached. Number four. My body hurts each time someone says, “sexual assault can’t happen to men.” Number five. I arrived at foster home number six in 2013. And guess what? I’m still there.

Though my living situation has improved somewhat, I still wound up becoming mentally, physically, and emotionally drained from constantly trying to prove myself. Yet through it all, something inside me changed. I evolved. I adapted. I have a voice and decided to speak up. I said, “I am valuable and worth your time.” I now know that was all I needed to do to thrive. Now you can’t shut me up or shut me down.

As part of my time in the “system”- which isn’t much of a system at all - I was falsely diagnosed with various mental health disabilities such as bipolar disorder and ADHD. So, I made a promise to myself. In high school I would learn everything I could about mental health. Then I would major in Psychology in college, work as a psychologist for a few years, and eventually become a Psychology professor. This is not a plan that came about last week. This is the goal I have been working towards since I was thirteen.

Every day, I log on to a psychology course through Khan Academy and, as I continue through each lesson, I feel closer to achieving this goal. I also make sure to share what I learn with the people who follow me on all of my social media platforms. Through my “Psychology Fact of the Day” series, I contribute to society by presenting respectful knowledge about mental health disabilities, in order to fight against false labels and misinformation. In addition, to make sure that

I’m holding myself accountable, I donate to and stay updated on the postings of a nonprofit organization called the National Alliance on Mental Health Illness (NAMI). Each and every one of these efforts are small steps towards reaching my ultimate goal of becoming that professor in Psychology.

My past has now become my greatest advantage. My experiences are what allowed me to find my passion so early, while also taking the steps necessary to excel. Remember that puzzle piece my biological mother took? I found it. All along it has been there inside me - my pure passion and potential. Now that I am complete, it’s time for me to complete others.



Itzel
Jules E. Mastbaum
College Essay

Ever since I can remember, my mom worked seven days a week as a housekeeper. Every day after school I would go with my mom back to her job. I would wake up, go to school, and wait for my mom to pick me up. Sometimes she would come late, and I would wonder, “Did she forget about me? Is she coming?” No matter what, I would eventually see her coming down the hallway to get me. I knew that I had to get up and walk fast because we had to get back to her job. During the train ride, we had a conversation about my day, and how school went. When I was younger, I would just sit, do my homework, and wait until she was done. As I got older, I would help her clean, mop, vacuum, or anything that needed to be done. There would be times I thought it was all too much, I wanted to spend time with my mom but there were responsibilities and dreams to make come true.

My mom worked this hard to make sure she could afford to pay our bills, save for our family, and still have enough left over to send to her family in Mexico. After years and years of working every day, my mom bought a house, which we currently live in. But just because she was able to buy a house, didn’t mean the hard work could stop. The house was a mess and needed a lot of fixing so, every day after school, my mom, uncle, and I would go to the house and work on it. We threw out trash, painted, cleaned, and repaired everything you could imagine. Some days I would be tired and upset and didn’t want to go to the house, but things had to be done. Eventually, the house was clean, we had working water, and anything a house needs to be home. It took us months, but that hard work and effort paid off. The joy on my mom’s face when we finally saw the finished product is something I’ll never forget. Seeing her happy made all the hard work worth it. Her dream was accomplished.

I was raised by a very hard-working, independent woman. My mom has always told me, “to achieve your goals and dreams you need to work hard and put in the effort.” Growing up, I watched her live that lesson and it has motivated me to do the same. I’ve always put my studies first, and have taken on additional activities, such as sports (soccer and basketball), my shop class (nursing), HOSA (a state and national competition for nursing), and cadet training with the Philadelphia Police, in order to challenge myself. I want to be someone in life, specifically someone who obtains her goals and dreams. My biggest dream is to go to college. Once I have a degree, I will be able to achieve any other goal I set my mind to. Going to college would be a very big step for me in showing the world that anything is possible. I say this because growing up I’ve heard so many things about minorities not being smart, not being capable of success, and other things that just aren’t true. One of the ways I want to help is by going into law enforcement to help others get justice. I’ve heard and seen on the news so many crimes, even crimes that have not been solved to this day and I don’t want that to keep happening. I want to do right by the people who deserve justice. I want to prove to everyone that being a minority, anything is possible as long as you put in the hard work and dedication.



Aisha
Jules E. Mastbaum
Class Valedictorian
College Essay

On August 10, 2019, I picked up a phone call from my aunt.

“Cita! He just got shot, he just got shot, he's getting rushed to the hospital now!” My heart dropped, but I knew I had to be strong for my aunt and cousin. A bullet went through his lungs, past the diaphragm, then hit his spleen, then intestines, then grazed his kidneys. The doctors had to work quickly to remove his spleen, a piece of his intestine, and repair his kidneys and diaphragm. They put in a chest tube, but his lungs would collapse whenever they tried to take it out. The doctors worked for 4-5 hours to save his life. They were only able to take part of the bullet out. I wasn't able to visit him in the ICU, but I was able to FaceTime my aunt to speak to him. I'll never forget seeing him mouth “I love you,” while holding his hand out to me.

All my life, I have been surrounded by women who have almost become nurses. My dad's mom always wanted to be a doctor because she always loved helping people, but she was never able to get to college. My mother's mom worked in a nursing home, though she had to stop when she got pregnant with twins. My mother was inspired by watching her mother, but she took a break after high school and her dreams were also put on hold when she became pregnant. I have always wanted to be able to help people when they are in need, and it has always felt like my destiny to go on to be a nurse since I was a little girl.

There are many reasons I want to become a nurse. When I was in 7th grade, I watched my grandma battle lung cancer. I was so inspired by watching how hard the doctors worked to help her, and I knew I wanted to be able to do that for other people. Specifically, I really want to work with little ones. There is something about little kids that motivates and encourages me. My whole life, I've been drawn to teaching and caring for children, and I know this would be where I would love to spend my career.

I've also grown up where people overdose around the corner from where I live, and I've seen them almost take their last breath many times. A few times, I've even seen them have that white cover placed over them. I know the importance of healthcare and medicine, and I want to be part of the group to save these lives in need.

Right now, I am taking a health-related technology shop class. We work on hands-on scenarios and focus on developing practical skills. This has helped me really know if I would enjoy medicine and if I'd be good at it. The class is very helpful and has been motivating for me. It's easily my favorite class of the day.

Because of this, I was able to really appreciate the hard work that it took to save my cousin's life. I asked as many questions as I could so I would know what they did and gain a more technical understanding of what happened to him. It was scary, but without those doctors and nurses, I wouldn't still have my cousin today. I hope someday that I can be the reason someone's kid gets to grow up and be healthy and happy.



*Tatiana
Julia R. Masterman
College Essay*

If I write about my many struggles, my scars left over from each tale I retell should already be healed, right? I could talk about the time I had to eat hospital pancakes with a spoon because I wasn't trusted with a fork. I could pass on the story of the "Archer Curse", which plagued my mother's side of the family with patriarchal parasites for generations. But if I peeled back those bandages, what would I find? I fear that blood may still trickle from those wounds. I'm less than halfway through the tunnel, stumbling through the darkness, grasping at my bleeding heart, and hoping that I won't succumb to the pain. I'm glad, however, that I've found a beacon of hope.

My hope comes in the form of colorful comics created by ambitious artists, driven not by a paycheck but by pure passion. As soon as I open Webtoon, I find myself teleported into wildly wonderful worlds, each one to be more thrilling than the last as I traverse through the app that has become my safe haven. In one universe, I can follow the story of an awkward and shy girl who learns how to embrace the beauty inside, one painting at a time. In another, I can watch as two twin witches fight valiantly for equality and peace between both the magical and human races. With over 160 comics in my queue, and *hundreds* more left to discover, there's always a relatable character to follow, a lesson to learn, and a new love to form.

While I was curled in a crisp hospital bed, while I hid in my bedroom to escape the drunken clamor downstairs, while I tried to cope with the devastating darkness that I've been diagnosed with, I found comfort in each of my stories. I watched as characters whose stories I've followed for weeks, months, or even years, battle their demons (whether real or within). I've celebrated their successes and cried at their failures. I feel an overwhelming sense of joy with each new comic I begin, and a bittersweet feeling as each adventure comes to a close. Being able to watch the characters I've come to love fight through their own struggles has given me the courage to conquer my own.

I not only feel passion for those in the comics, but those who've created them as well. Each artist gives their all, working hard to release a new chapter each week that surpasses the last. They offer their passion projects to be seen by the public eye. Their own inner struggles are reflected in the characters they write. Whether it be health issues, familial turmoil, skeletons hidden in the closet, or fears hidden underneath the floorboards, these artists convey it all in their comics. They use their scars as a map to allow others to find a sweet escape, use their talents to help readers traverse the tempestuous tides of life, and have given me a reason to hold on for just one more day.

Comics are a beautiful form of media, where art and writing work in tandem to build breathtaking worlds with brilliant messages and to inspire readers to keep fighting for the bright future at the end of the dark tunnel. *Spirit Fingers*, *Hooky*, and the rest of my Webtoons help heal my wounds, inspire me to push through the pain, and show me that the darkness won't last forever.

I now stand at the other end of the tunnel, having bravely traversed the darkness, holding one scarred hand over my beating heart. The path wasn't easy; there were times that the chasm felt too consuming. But now, my bandages have fallen at my feet, my scars tell the tales of the battles I've won, and I can feel the sun upon my smiling face. And I have my comics to thank for that.



Camya
Hill Freedman Academy
College Essay

As a natural lyricist, I can turn anything into a song. Whether it's about a person, an experience, my pet, food, whatever. I've had a tough life - I grew up in an abusive, neglectful environment, I was in and out of foster care from the ages of 2 through 9, and I didn't know my biological father until I was 10, but I've always used songwriting and music to cope with that hard reality. The first song I ever wrote was when I was seven years old. I don't exactly remember what it was about, but I remember it was about my mom.

My mom and I had a really unhealthy relationship. We were close, closer than she was with my other siblings, but I didn't really understand that it was unhealthy until later. She relied on me, instead of me relying on her. I was her safety net. When she was "sick," but really overdosed on the medication that was supposed to be helping her, I would be there holding her hair back as she threw up, or I would be the one to take care of the babies when she left to go to the "store" and wouldn't come back till it was dark. She didn't rely on any of my other siblings like that. After I was taken away from my mom for the last time, when I was 7, I was placed in what was to be my last foster care home with a lady named Ms. Taylor. So here I was in another different environment. I was in another school with people I didn't know. I was the new girl, once again. I didn't really have any friends, my teacher was mean, I was made fun of because I had "imperfect" features. Through music, I was able to cope with these changes. I would still see my mom from time to time with supervised visits and every time I had a new song for her to listen to. My mom loved it, but Ms. Taylor didn't really approve of it because it wasn't *Gospel* in her eyes. There was nothing wrong with the songs, they weren't inappropriate at all; I was 7 or 8 years old. They were songs that told how I felt. Through those songs, I was able to cry out to anyone who would listen. I wasn't in any trauma therapy; I just had a caseworker. So, music was my therapy and it got me through everything that happened in my past. Today I live with my father's sister, my aunt. And she loves music as much as I do. She is supportive, caring, loving, and very strict, but she has helped me grow so much in every area of my life.

One of the biggest changes my aunt brought to my life was introducing me to soccer. I never even knew soccer existed before I lived with my aunt. Through soccer I have learned discipline, how to work collaboratively with different people of different ages and groups and have gained leadership skills that I can apply to any situation. Playing soccer has taught me so much about life. It has helped me mature and it has allowed me to make it through high school without going completely insane. After I graduate from high school, in college I get to be who I choose, not what my past says who I am, not what society says I have to be to be successful. I get to be a strong female who has come out of the dark past and broken through barriers that society has set up for me to fail. Going to college would give me the opportunity to basically hit the restart button. I get to create a new name for myself and to leave the past in the past and focus on my future and the opportunities to come.



Jaymaba
Philadelphia High School
For Girls
College Essay

“Lower your voice.”

I rolled my eyes; this was my mother’s favorite expression, and she had already aimed it at me several times that day.

My mother grew up in a Fulani tribe in Senegal, where women were responsible for holding the community together while simultaneously suffering the bulk of the societal restrictions imposed by men. She has always lectured me about the importance of sustaining a righteous lifestyle as a woman, reminding me how *family-oriented* our tribe was. Family-oriented – a phrase that had come to mean gender disparities, impossible expectations, and “how a wife should behave.”

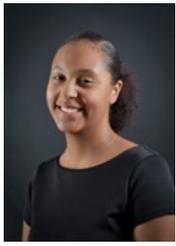
When I finally took my trip to Senegal, I was fully prepared to defy the norms I had heard so much about and challenged. What I didn’t expect was sweet and juicy roadside mangoes, farm animals roaming, and the sun beaming across acres of land. I didn’t expect the immense hospitality my family showed me, how much I was able to be my extroverted self, and how I connected with the relatives who I assumed lived such different lives from mine. I had been so worried about the differences between my extended family and myself, both because of my disagreement with their culture, as well as their mistrust of my “American ways.” My trip, and life, began when I realized how wrong my initial assumptions were.

In challenging my preconceived beliefs and starting to interpret things for myself, I saw beyond my simplistic notions into a more complicated truth. I always assumed women of my background living in our homeland were subservient and pandering to the men of the household, pressured to “lower their voices” and make themselves smaller. To my surprise, the women actually anchored the household, and their strength was admirable. As I bonded with this community of women, I began to let go of the idea that I was remarkably different. For example, at one point during my trip, the electricity entirely went out. The thought of this before my trip would be terrifying; in reality, the ability to connect with my family under candles, tea in hand, turned into the highlight of the trip.

When I came home to Philadelphia, I couldn’t help but notice the energy I put into creating care packages, getting involved with health initiatives, mobilizing my clubs to better my community, and serving others. I realized it was all a product of what I experienced in Senegal, specifically the state of healthcare. At one point in the trip, miles away from a local hospital, my brother fainted, and we couldn’t immediately access a doctor due to patient overcrowding. My family explained this was a frequent occurrence, and oftentimes those of higher class were treated first. A fire in me was fueled, powering a passion for healthcare I never knew I had and now know I will never relinquish.

My intention is to pursue a career in healthcare through the new, empathetic lens my experiences in Senegal created, and to actively help others improve their quality of health. My new ability to look past my own thoughts and biases and really connect with the complicated realities of other people’s lives draws me towards a healthcare profession. Organizing care packages, I thought back to those smaller interactions, the day-to-day dialogue, that powered my ability to help effectively, and I was inspired all over again.

Moving past “lowering your voice”, I know I can challenge those traditional beliefs and still hold space to learn something new by examining my own biases that can sometimes obscure what is most essential. Someday my own daughter may challenge my belief about who she should be. Instead of cautioning her to “lower your voice,” I will urge her to raise it, louder and louder, again and again, until she is heard by everyone.



Vonyeh
Burlington Township High School
College Essay

My family consists of eight brothers, four sisters, five nieces, and nine nephews. Different households, different parents, and different beliefs. When I was fourteen months old my parents decided to move me in with my aunt in New Jersey. Since then, being a part of my family has not always been easy, but it has molded me into the independent young woman I am today. Despite the difficulties I have faced, I have always been grateful to live the life I have.

My father and my mother have both been incarcerated multiple times since I have lived with my Aunt, and my two oldest brothers have also been incarcerated multiple times. Even though my father has been in prison, he has still made sure to be a parent to me from thousands of miles away, through a phone. Not being able to have him around for important events in my life has been hard. I spent the morning of my sixteenth birthday crying when I received my birthday card from my father. Reading that card, I started to understand that not having my father there at important times in my life was a situation I would have to deal with for years. For me, it is normal.

In my family, education is a big deal to our parents and grandparents. They did not attend college, so they wanted their kids to have an opportunity they did not have. So, when two of my other brothers dropped out of college, and my sister became a teen mom, my family lost hope. All eyes then turned to me, waiting to see when and how I would go wrong. Time and time again, family members, including my grandfather, told me that I was destined to turn out like the rest of my siblings.

This is the theme in my life: my family continues to talk negatively about me and tries to squash any aspirations I have to follow a different path than the one laid out before me. I have become the young woman nobody ever believed I would. The pessimism and lack of support from my family has fueled my own motivations to succeed - to prove everyone wrong. Proving people wrong is usually seen in a negative light and as vengeance. To me, however, showing my family that their lack of faith in me is not only unfair but defeatist, and does not mean I am directing my anger at them. Instead, I am using it as motivation to create a successful life for myself.

All through high school, I have been working hard toward my future. I have balanced school, sports and work and started my journey of finding my place in the world. My overall goal is to set myself up for more opportunities in the future, which will lead me to become a bright woman and an example of how people can achieve anything they set out to. Attending college will be my next major step and as a college student, I will continue to cultivate my interests in graphic arts to the point that I can someday start my own graphics business. I will also make sure to reach back and give other kids, from families like mine, a little bit of hope.

I have worked hard and made good decisions, but I know I haven't done it alone. My aunt has been my biggest support system. I am grateful for the independent young woman that I have become and continue to turn into. I plan on keeping the same determination and drive I have had all throughout my life for the next four years. I know that if I do that my path will only go up from here.

BRIGHTER HORIZON MENTORS



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*Casey
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*Sharon Mullen RN
May 15, 2021*

Over a cocktail in 2018, Sharon and I discussed the vision for Brighter Horizon. A supporter of our work from day one, a member of our event committee, and a dear friend.

May her memory be a blessing.

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Brighter Horizon's 3rd Annual

COLLEGE REVEAL EVENT

See You Next Year!



The Commonwealth Chateau
Chestnut Hill College
Saturday, May 7, 2022
6:00 - 10:00 PM