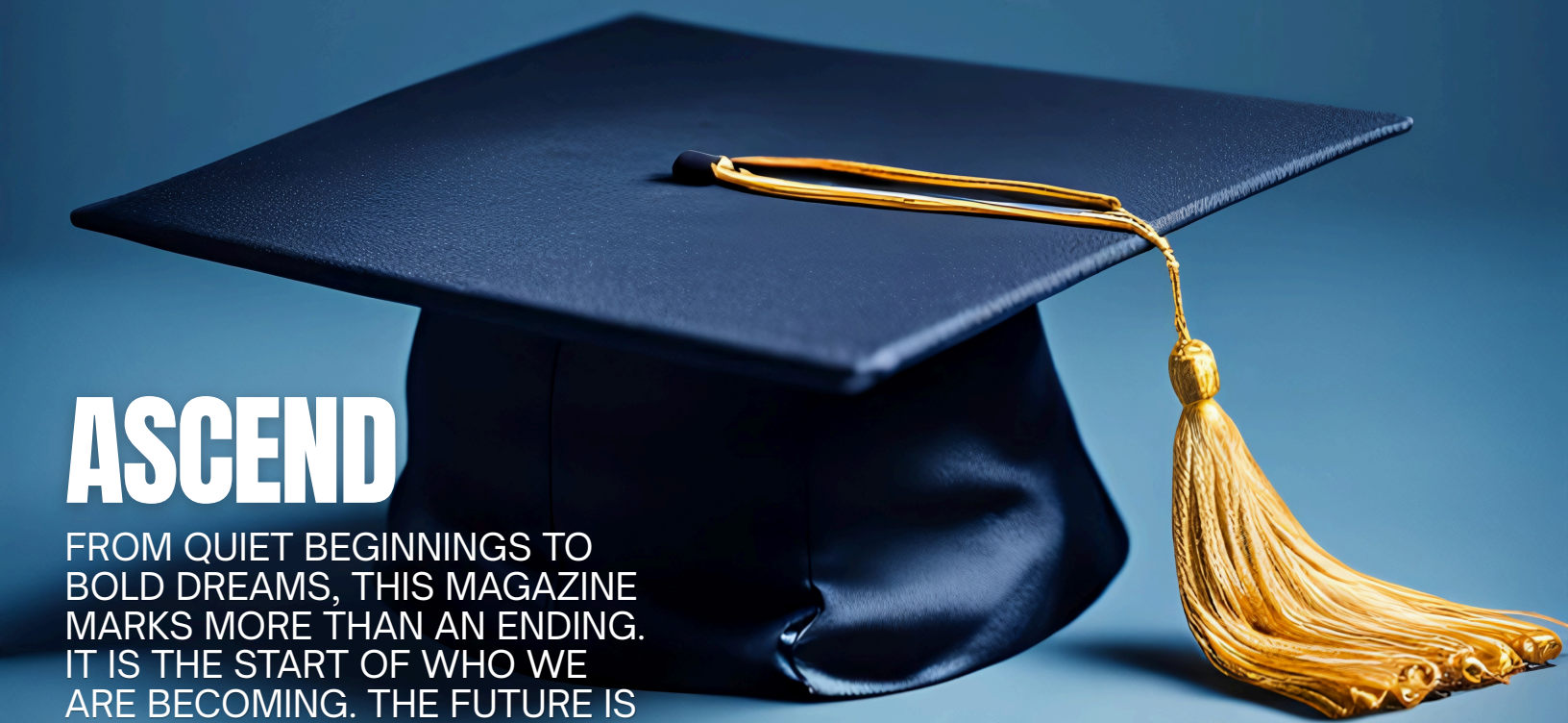
YOUR STORY MATTERS

HONORING THE 2026 GRADUATES



ASCEND

FROM QUIET BEGINNINGS TO BOLD DREAMS, THIS MAGAZINE MARKS MORE THAN AN ENDING. IT IS THE START OF WHO WE ARE BECOMING. THE FUTURE IS NOT A DISTANT IDEA....IT IS OURS TO CREATE.

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Edutainment Enrichment Empowerment

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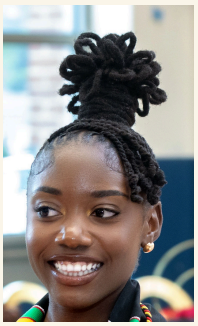




As editors of this graduation magazine, it has been an honor and privilege to help bring together the memories, achievements, and stories that define this graduating class. This magazine is more than just pages filled with photographs and words; it is a reflection of the friendships formed, challenges overcome, lessons learned, and milestones reached throughout this journey.

To the graduating cohort, congratulations on reaching this remarkable achievement. Each of you has shown resilience, dedication, and growth in your own unique way. As you move forward into new chapters of life, may you carry with you the experiences, values, and memories created during your time together. The future ahead is filled with endless possibilities, and we hope you continue to pursue your dreams with confidence and determination.

We wish the entire graduating cohort success, happiness, and fulfillment in all that lies ahead. Congratulations, Class of 2026!



JULIET NAJJUMBA
CEO/Founder: Africano Waltham

To the Graduates of 2026,

What a beautiful moment this is. Every late night, every challenge, every doubt, and every small victory helped bring you here. Today, we celebrate not only what you have achieved, but also the determination, resilience, and courage that carried you along the way.

As you celebrate this milestone, remember that you did not get here alone. Behind every graduate is a village of people who believed in you, encouraged you, prayed for you, sacrificed for you, and cheered you on when the journey felt difficult. Take a moment to appreciate them, just as we celebrate you today.

As you step into your next chapter, may your knowledge open doors, and may your values keep them open. Stay curious. Stay humble. Keep learning, keep growing, and never forget the power you have to make a difference in the lives of others.

Congratulations, Class of 2026. We are proud of you, we believe in you, and we cannot wait to see where your journey leads next. With pride and celebration,

JNajj's 4 Ls - Lifelong Listener & Learner

MONICA
NWAMAKA





I believe it is important to stay focused because everything has its time. I recognize that school pressure is real, and when I try to do everything at once, I become overwhelmed, so I choose to handle school first and save fun for later. I also believe it is important to ask for help when things feel like too much. I stay motivated by thinking about college and my future as a flight attendant, and I reset through my routines, Africano check-ins, art, music, and spending time with friends. I dream of traveling, meeting new people, and giving back to my community while having a stable home, less stress, and more time for music. I am excited for college because I will meet new people, gain opportunities, and build skills in communication and community. I have learned that grades are not everything—I value my mental health and accept that I do not have everything figured out. My high school experience was challenging at first, but it improved with support from Africano and my friends.

Peyton Nsubuga

Committed to :

University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

Pursuing: Accounting





About Me

Hi Everyone, my name is Peyton Nsubuga, 18 years of age born here but raised Uganda, I am from Watertown graduating from Watertown high, first and foremost i would love to thank God who has blessed me and all my fellow graduates with this achievement that shows our sustained persistence in our respective fields and has given us the zeal to keep pushing until the finish line, I came to this country in August of 2024, I started off as a Junior in high school due to how outstanding my grades had been in Uganda, I am currently committed to the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth to pursue accounting and i plan to be a successful accountant in future, I took on this path of accounting due to how passionate I am about business and finances and also being influenced by my father as my role model who also studied accounting and currently is a successful accountant for National water in Uganda.

The advice I would love to give either to my younger self or other high school students that has kept me very persistent on my goals is a quote that comes from a very famous civil rights activist, Martin Luther King that "If you can't fly, run; if you can't run, walk; if you can't walk, crawl; but by all means keep moving." which has a very self explanatory message that I think can keep any high school student consistent more so someone who understands what Martin Luther stood for. The motivation that kept me going all throughout high school even when things got rough was the fact that I have my parents, friends and everyone whom i had known all my life that I left in Uganda counting on me to succeed, I know this may not be the reality of my theory but I just always had it in my head that people in Uganda always believe that America is the land of opportunities and everyone who comes here must become rich, whereby that isn't far off from reality because this country indeed has many opportunities but only for those who decide to put in the hard work!. If nothing was holding me back, i'd love my dream life to be in California or Florida, basically anywhere by the coast, as I just love the scenery of the beach, the sunset and sunrise by the water as well, I'd also imagine it with a nice car, and a happy family. I am excited for the fact that college is an opportunity to rebuild myself, i don't believe that College is a fresh start because one's personality can't really be renewed but instead modified, and so I believe that I can meet new people in College, that can connect me to the outside world and further enhance my career in accounting for the future. Before starting high school, I wish i had been told that I'd be traveling to America soon, for that would've encouraged me to live life even more, create more everlasting memories with my friends in Uganda, show more affection to my family that I left there and maybe even get a hard start on the major i'd be studying in college. Overall I'd love to say I didn't fully get the peak American high school experience of all the parties and fun of it, but I have to say I don't regret it because the little time I got to spend in high school showed me that life is too short to be wasting time not chasing your goals and can be effective if you know what you want. In conclusion, don't live life reminiscing in the past, know what you want, set a goal for your self and don't stop until you achieve it but don't forget to have fun while doing it. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity and I really admire Africano and everything it stands for!



MENTAL HEALTH CORNER

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

WHO ARE YOU WITHOUT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS...

Graduation is one of the most exciting moments in a young person's life. It represents growth, hard work, and the beginning of a new chapter. But alongside the excitement can also come pressure, uncertainty, anxiety, and the feeling that you now have to prove yourself to the world.

Many young people begin tying their identity and self-worth to achievements — grades, success, recognition, or having life figured out quickly. And when things don't go exactly as planned, it can take a real toll on mental health.

But accomplishments should add to your life, not define your value. Your worth is not based on how fast you succeed, how perfect your path looks, or whether you have all the answers right now.

This is why mental health matters so much during times of transition like graduation. It's okay to feel uncertain. It's okay to not have everything figured out yet. Growth takes time.

No title, achievement, or milestone will ever be more important than your well-being, your peace of mind, and the person you are becoming along the way.

That said, CONGRATULATIONS to our graduates!



Victoria Nabunya BSN, RN



SHIFRAH NAKAZI

Hi everyone, my name is Shifrah, and I'm a high school graduate. First, I want to thank my family and friends for being there for me throughout this journey. I'm genuinely so grateful that I got to go through high school with such an amazing support system because it made all the difference in my life. High school wasn't always laughs and giggles, and there were definitely moments that were stressful, overwhelming, and confusing, but even during those times I never truly felt alone because I always had people in my corner encouraging me, checking on me, and reminding me to keep going, and I will always be grateful for that. I also want to give a special thank you to my grandpa, "Taata," who has been there for me since baby class all the way to now. He has supported me, guided me, and believed in me through every stage of my life, and I truly appreciate everything he has done for me more than words can express.

High school has been an incredible experience overall, and I've learned so much over these four years, not just academically but also about myself, friendships, and life in general, and I've grown in ways I didn't even expect while making memories that I'll carry with me forever. To the incoming high schoolers, I just want to say that high school can be challenging because it's a time where you really start to learn who you are, what you value, who your real friends are, and what kind of support system you need around you, and even though it can feel like a lot sometimes, it goes by faster than you think so make sure you take time to enjoy it, try new things, don't be afraid to make mistakes, and learn from them because that's really what this stage of life is about.

One quote that I've carried with me is, "Be yourself; everyone else is already taken" by Oscar Wilde, and it reminds me that there's no need to compare yourself to others or try to be someone you're not, just be authentic and trust your own journey, so overall, enjoy high school to the fullest, take in every moment, and don't rush through it because before you know it, it really does fly by.

Graduate 2026
Computer Science, UMass Dartmouth
Pursuing M.S. Computer Science, Fall 2026

Patrick Nsubuga



What did you love about college?
College was the mold. Everything I am today the discipline, the depth of my faith, the growth of talents I didn't know I had was shaped inside these four years. I found dance here, and with it a version of myself I wouldn't trade for anything. But above all, it was the people. I don't even call them friends anymore. They're family. And that's the thing about the connections you build in college as long as you're willing to maintain them, they don't fade. That's the part no one tells you to prepare for: how permanent the right people can be.

What has been your biggest lesson since starting college?
Embrace every single thing about yourself even the parts you're still figuring out. I spent too much time early on acting like the people around me were background noise. They weren't. My biggest lesson was learning to let people into my world, to stop moving through life like I didn't need anyone, and to realize that being present with people is not a weakness. It's actually where the best parts of life happen.

What do you wish you would have known before starting college?
"Stay present in every single moment especially the good ones." That's it. Simple, but I had to learn it the hard way. The good moments don't announce themselves. You're in the middle of one before you even realize it, and then it's gone. If I could go back and tell myself one thing before move-in day, it would be that.

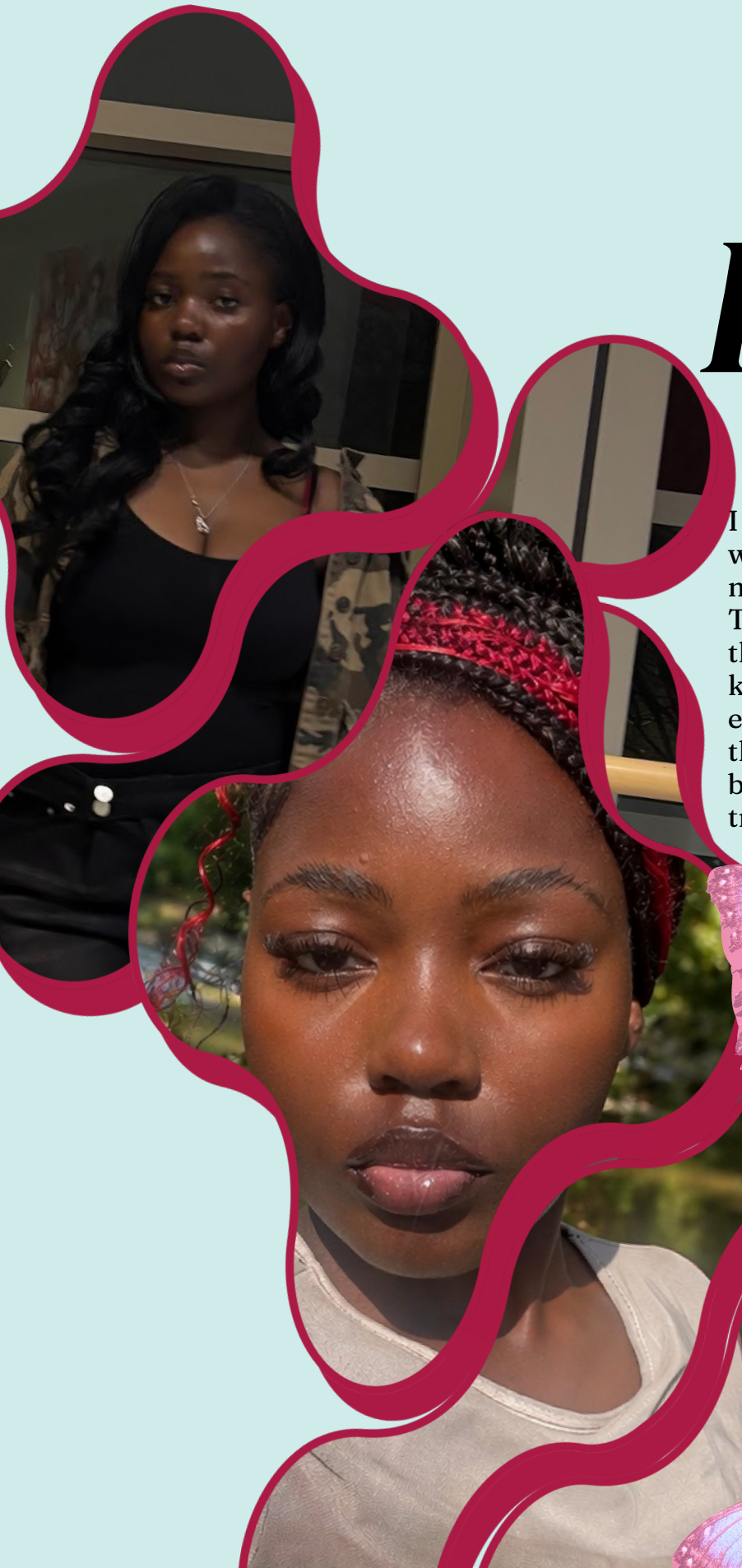
What accomplishment are you most proud of, and why?
The scholarships are real. The academic achievements are real. But when I sit with the question honestly, the answer keeps coming back to the same thing: the relationships. The family I built here. That's the accomplishment that actually required something from me vulnerability, consistency, showing up. And unlike a GPA or a degree, it doesn't expire. You just have to want to keep it.

Where do you see yourself after college, and what steps are you taking to get there?
Right now, I'm stepping into my first software engineering internship. Later this year, I'll be starting my master's degree. The goal after that is clear: a full-time role as a software engineer in big tech not for the title, but for the scale. I define success by how many people are better off in life because you lived, and big tech is where the work you build can reach millions of people at once. That kind of impact doesn't happen by accident. So every application I send, every person I connect with in this industry, every skill I sharpen is one more step toward being someone whose work actually moves people forward. I'm not waiting on a shortcut. I'm just building.

What does success mean to you personally?
Success is defined by how many people are better off in life because you lived. Not salary. Not titles. Not the brand on your laptop. If the people around me are growing, If something I built or said or did made someone's life genuinely better that's the metric I care about. Everything else is just noise.

"She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future,"

Micah Kawere



I want people to remember me as someone whose strength came from God and who never gave up, no matter what I faced. There were moments in my journey where things felt overwhelming, but my faith kept me grounded and reminded me that every challenge had a purpose. I've learned that surviving hard times isn't just about being strong on your own, but about trusting God to guide you through them.

As my senior quote says, "She is clothed with strength and dignity, and she laughs without fear of the future," this reflects who I've grown into through it all. I kept going, kept believing, and kept growing, even when it wasn't easy. More than anything, I hope people see me as someone who turned obstacles into strength and trusted God every step of the way.

ELISABETH ROBINSON...



The thing I'm most excited about college is getting to meet other students. I've always been interested in meeting new people and having the opportunity to be in a new space with like minded people, exploring spaces I've never seen before and taking may chance to make new connections.



Looking back on my high school years, I praise God for being with me at all times during the challenges, failures, and triumphs of high school. There have been times in my life where I did not know which way to go, but God gave me a sense of direction in life through perseverance and faith.

High school was much more than simply academics; it was a period of time when I learned many things about myself and developed my character. With this new goal set, I look forward to seeing how God directs my future. - Elijah



ELIJAH NAGGENDA

JOYCE NABAGEREKA

The biggest lesson I've learned in college has nothing to do with a textbook , it's that your network is your net worth.

For a long time, I thought hard work alone would open every door. It doesn't. Opportunities live inside relationships, and the people who move fastest in life are the ones who learn how to build real connections early. I had to get comfortable sending the cold message, asking for the coffee chat, following up after the conference, letting people see who I am beyond a résumé. Networking isn't about taking, it's about showing up, adding value, and trusting that the right rooms open when you keep knocking.

As a first-generation college student, no one handed me that blueprint. I had to build it.

But the real reason I take networking this seriously? It has nothing to do with college.

It's my dad.

My father grew up in a small village in Uganda a place where opportunity wasn't something you stumbled into. It was something you carved out with your bare hands. He didn't have a network. He didn't have a mentor on speed dial. What he had was vision, grit, and the courage to leave everything he knew behind in search of a life bigger than the one he was born into.

He crossed oceans. He started over more times than most people start anything. He built businesses in two countries, all so his children could stand on ground he never had beneath him.

I think about that a lot.

I think about how much further my dad could've gone if he'd had access to the rooms I walk into now. The conferences. The recruiters. The mentors who pick up when I call. Every introduction I make, every relationship I nurture, every door I knock on , I do it knowing I'm walking through entryways he had to carve out of stone.

That's not pressure. That's purpose.

So when people ask why I network the way I do, why I show up early, follow up twice, and never let a connection go cold, this is why. My father didn't sacrifice everything for me to play small. He sacrificed so I could build something generational.

And the way I honor that?

I treat every relationship like the bridge it is, between where my family started, and where we're going next.

Networking isn't a skill to me. It's a responsibility. It's how I turn my father's foundation into my family's future.











Sandra Kintu

Hello Everyone my name is Sandra Kintu a Natick High School 2026 graduate. I cant believe im graduating let alone going off to college, which sounds daunting but exciting at the same time. Im grateful for such an opportunity to reflect/maybe give advice relating to my high school experience.Thank you, Africano.

First, I would like to thank God because I wouldn't be here without His grace and mercy. He has held me through whole my life and my time at high school, so all glory and honor belongs to him. I am grateful for my family as well, and all who put me in their prayers. I truly wouldn't be where I am or who I've become without them.

With that being said, high school had so many ups and downs, and so does life.However, in the process, I've learned so much about myself–things I didn't know, and so many things i didn't think i could do. To me, high school was a catalyst for growth, but this only happened when I put myself out there, challenged myself and did things that didn't come easy.

So, to all high schoolers out there: challenge yourself– whether its taking that AP class, volunteering, joining a sports team, starting a club or running for a leadership position. Whatever it maybe, it will be worth it. Above all, thank God and look to him in everything you do. Remember where you come from and why you go to school in the first place–keeping in mind that their are so many opportunities we have access to that millions elsewhere don't, so take advantage of them–these are the things that kept me going and motivated. Thank you!

IMMACULATE NAJJEMBA

May 5th, 2026

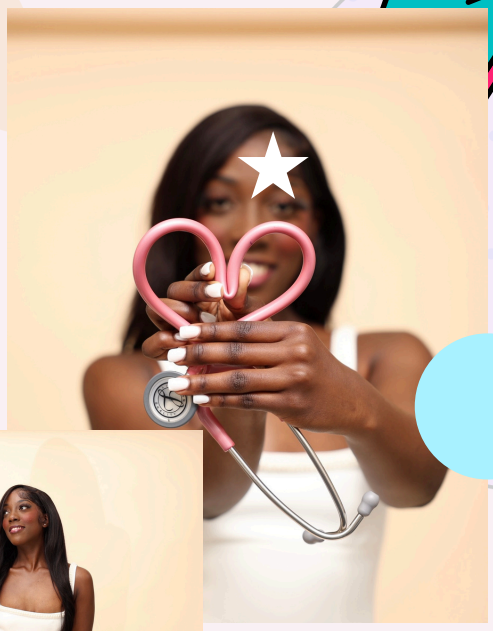


Dear little me,
I don't know where exactly you are or what you are doing right now. Whether you're sitting in your room, or watching movies trying to escape from a world loud enough it could possibly make you stone-deaf. You are probably carrying a lot more questions than answers. Asking yourself, “Why is it that everyone else is moving first, and they have everything figured out while it feels like you are so behind, even the little you do doesn't seem quite enough.” You might be thinking about what the future holds for you, and what you can do to make sure that every step you take is figured out and is very much so in line.

The grades, the decisions, the friendships, or that relationship with God that you are have been trying to figure out. But I am here to remind you that life doesn't necessarily have to move in a straight line , it has curves and corners. Life is more about learning through trials and mistakes and after every single one, picking yourself and reminding yourself it isn't the end of the world is the best way to go. It’s okay to take it step by step because it's the little things that build up the big things, even sky scrappers begin with a foundation.

You will have moments and seasons where you will doubt yourself and feel like you're not enough, but I am here to remind you that you are worthy and wonderfully made. Don't push things away because life moves very fast, so cherish the moments you have because at some point it will all be memories. Remember to cherish the people you love and most of all Trust in God because only you know how far he has brought you.
I am so proud of you.
Sincerely,
The older you who loves you dearly









Written by Patricia Nsubuga

Being part of the Class of 2026 has been a meaningful journey, and I thank God for bringing me this far. What I loved most about college was the freedom of living on campus, having my own space, and being surrounded by friends, along with the many events and opportunities available, especially in the first two years. One challenge was adjusting to having a roommate my first year, but over time it taught me patience, communication, and understanding.

Going into college, I would encourage high school students to come in with an open mind. You do not have to have everything figured out right away. Trust in God, always ask questions, and take things one day at a time. Staying organized, managing your time well, and surrounding yourself with friends who hold you accountable and share similar goals can make a big difference. If you ever find yourself feeling stuck mentally, physically, academically, or financially, it is important to speak up and ask for help.

One of my biggest lessons has been learning that you do not have to go through challenges alone. When I struggled in a class, reaching out to a tutor and a friend completely changed my outcome. I also learned the importance of building relationships with professors and mentors, staying organized, and understanding your syllabus early, as these are all key to success.

One of my proudest accomplishments was being selected as a first year student speaker at the UMass Dartmouth College Now Share the Dream event. I am incredibly grateful for this opportunity because it opened doors to scholarships, additional speaking engagements, and most importantly allowed me to share my journey as a first generation student from Uganda pursuing nursing.

After graduation, I will earn my Bachelor of Science in Nursing and take the NCLEX to become a Registered Nurse. I am deeply interested in Pediatrics and Neurology, and I hope to further my education to become a Nurse Practitioner or a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist. As I move forward, I will continue to trust God through every step and remain open to all the opportunities that come with this new chapter after graduation.

HANNAH NAMBOOZE

Hello, My name is Hannah Nambooze. I am 18 years old and an incoming freshman in college. After high school, I hope to find or know ME more. I want to get to know myself by becoming more outgoing, independent and intentional. One advise I would give my younger self is love yourself and do things that you love. People try so hard to impress others and in the process they forget who they really are. Knowing that bad moments don't last keeps me motivated because I know that this is just a phase and things get better with God on your side.

Am excited to being a new journey in college, I want to explore so many things such as being a young adult since I wont have anyone to tell me what's wrong or right it will teach me how to be responsible. Before high school I wish someone had told me that being yourself is being unique. Over roll, My high school experience was a lesson. I saw my self fall , get up and also grow from things. One message I would want people to remember me for always smile and SCUBAAA!!





CHICHI

My journey through college has been extremely unique to me, and looking back, I can say I did have the quintessential “college experience.” I had highs that were really high, and Lord knows the lows were very low, but through it all, I battled and came out successful. I love the freedom to truly redefine yourself; college gives a platform where the majority of who you will be as a fully fledged adult grows and develops. My advice to high schoolers is to come to college with an open mind. You will meet and see so many people and places embrace it all. It’s also okay to not have everything figured out immediately. The lesson I took away is that time is very limited, and the college setting may make it seem like you have all the time in the world, but you don’t. Prioritize your education first before anything else.

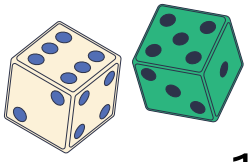




The people who have influenced me the most are my family. Seeing how hard everyone works just to put me through school is the reason why I work so hard. Lastly, if there is something I would like remembered about me, it is to embrace every opportunity. None of us know the future or what it holds, but when we take advantage of the opportunities we have, we maximize all options that can then show us our path.”

I wish I would have been told that not everyone has the same hygiene levels. Some people struggle with little things such as laundry, and we have to be accommodating to them as they grow. I think me taking the leap to play sports collegiately helped me grow my confidence a lot, and it instilled in me the process of growth and winning with every rep, showing me that I can do anything I put my mind and heart to.

I can see myself going into higher education, particularly getting my JD (Juris Doctor) and becoming a prosecutor for Massachusetts or working for a firm. I have taken the steps to prepare myself for the LSAT exam (law school entry exam), and with the internships I have had and the knowledge I have gained from different fields of work, this will cumulatively help me achieve my goal.



THE JOURNEY IS NOT OVER YET



When I was in high school, which was boarding in most cases during my time, we used to be so excited about graduating. We actually called it “going out in the world “ in Luganda “mbu tugenda mu nsi” and in our minds we thought we were now free and independent to do whatever we wanted. Little did we know that our journey was just beginning and the real meaning of being responsible people was just beginning to become a reality!

Graduating from high school or even from college is not enough to equip you with all the tools you need to be successful or even happy in life. Rather it teaches you how to persevere and keep moving even when things are tough. You didn’t graduate because it was easy but because you were determined not to quit and that is what you have to carry with you wherever life will take you. Don’t quit!



I am sure you’ve all done the hard part during your school time at all levels, not just the finals and the homework but real stuff! Picking up the pieces and trying again and again after failing a test, apologizing when scared or showing up when you didn’t feel like. That is strength right there and proof that you’ve been prepared for the life ahead of you which doesn’t give you a script but expects you to do the right things at the right time.

Graduating isn’t about a perfect GPA, it is proof that you can do difficult things and still be standing. So wherever you will go next, be it college, work, a gap year or just trying to figure it out, remember that you don’t have to be brave to do brave things; do whatever you have to do even when scared, just do it even if it’s not perfect. Life is about making effort.

Congrats to all the graduates of 2026! You didn’t just graduate, you showed resilience, consistency and strength!

Grace Kamara
Mentor












YALE






RN
Class of
2026

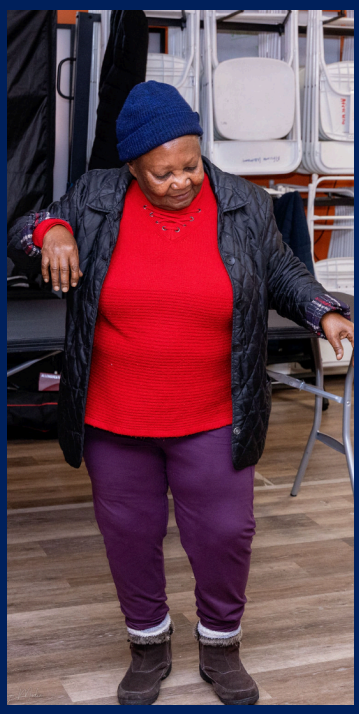

2026
















JAJJA'S FUN MOMENTS

Twejjukanye





COMMUNITY IS MEDICINE

After years of isolation, the Jajjas have now become part of a vibrant community at Africano. Here, they spend time together growing, learning, and supporting one another. With the supplies and resources provided by Africano, the Jajjas have been able to BOUNCE BACK.










A Community Asset Like No Other
EDUCATION • COMMUNITY • ENRICHMENT

Bounce Back!

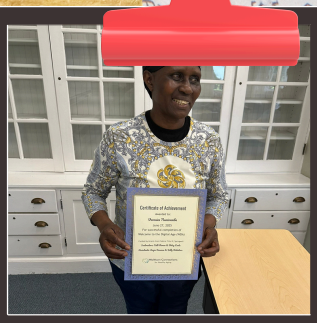


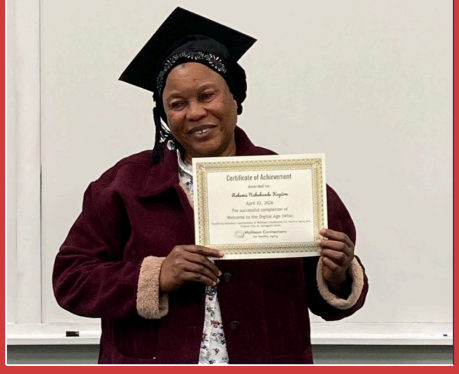

Asset Like No Other
MUNITY • ENRICHMENT

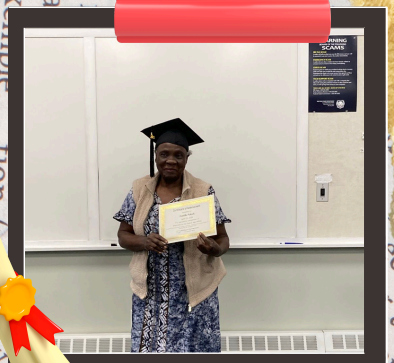

EDUCATION • COMMUNITY • ENRICHMENT













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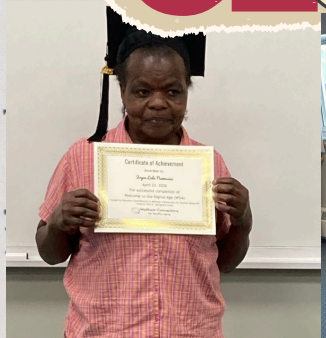







YOUR STORY MATTERS MAGAZINE

THANK YOU ALL PARTNERS AND SPONSORS!! WE CAN'T DO THIS WORK WITHOUT YOU!!

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Cummings Foundation

DCU For Kids
A non-profit charitable foundation

Jaymes'

Congratulations class of 2026. More blessings, wins and opportunities

To our dear 2026 candidates, congratulations, thank you for working very hard and being focused



KAMPALA UNISEX SALON BOSTON

BIG THANKS!!

Watertown Savings Bank

Mass Cultural Council

NEWTON-WELLESLEY HOSPITAL

BANK OF AMERICA

Abelcom CREATIONS
YOU DREAM IT, WE CREATE IT

Brandeis COMPACT

healthy waltham

Waltham Connections for Healthy Aging

WCC
Waltham Cultural Council

redspot
design • print • mail

Boston Children's Hospital
Until every child is well

mass HUMANITIES

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Bounce Back







