

Graduation Speech- *My Journey: Finding Strength and Resolve In Face of Fear*  
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A decade ago, January 12., 2010 started as any ordinary day. I went to my Port-au-Prince school. I came home a little early that day. My mother set my brother and I up to complete our homework. Within minutes, my house was violently shaking, and a deep and loud booming noise filled the air. We ran into the streets not aware of what was happening. Bloodcurdling screams of fear in my native Kreyol paired with the noises of a natural disaster created a cacophony of deafening noise that I will never forget. In fact, this was noise that no one could forget.

The tragic earthquake tore apart my home country. My brother and I were told that the devastation was too much and that we had to focus on school, a task that would be impossible from home given the chaos and devastation. We were told we needed to go to a new land where I didn't know the language or customs. It was impossible for me to understand how I might be successful given that our parents were not coming. These orders left me confused and breathless.

My arrival in the United States led to more heartache. My brother and I met my uncles at Logan Airport. One uncle took my brother to Randolph and my other uncle took me to Waltham. I sobbed as my brother walked away. Before my arrival, I never met my aunt and uncle and they were now acting as my parents. I rarely saw my brother except for short periods on holidays. I did not own a cellphone, long distance calls were expensive, and communication with Haiti at this time was all but impossible.

School presented a whole host of other problems. I entered sixth grade but did not know a single word of English. I took English and French picture dictionaries with me everywhere I went. This strategy helped but did not remove a general sense of constant confusion. My lack of language skills was not my only challenge; I had to adapt to a new environment, a new school system, make new friends, accept a new religion and figure out my role in my new family. While going through the worst phase of my life, I also started to get bullied. My peers made fun of my accent and my weight. I dealt with my problems through food. I would catch students laughing at me. When I spoke students would tell me, "to learn English." Students from my ESL class called me, "Big Mama." I felt ashamed.

High School and college were my best turning point. A turning point of maturity and to be better. The environment was more accepting and inclusive. Supportive teachers helped me see something in myself that I had forgotten. I wanted to join the 2016 freshmen class at Brandeis because I knew a Brandeis education will offer me amazing opportunities, most of all memorable people. The greatest thing that I have learned during my time at Brandeis is the lesson to continue to move forward. On this campus I have learned to be a team player, we do not stay stuck when we fail, we dust off and get back up. A decade later, I, every one of us, the entire world is experiencing a global tragedy. Many emotions rush through our mind, but as the Brandisian community that we are, we stand strong and in unity to move forward. We move forward as a symbol of hope, most of all because it is us that are the investors of the future.

As a foreign student, I intimately understand the importance of opportunity and access. Even when I was not yet a student, Brandeis has already provided me with access to many amazing

opportunities. I fell under the category of a student under the TPS status. These past four years for people under this status has been very hard. But the Brandeis Community ensures protection to its students and protects students like me the right to a great education. This place has been my oasis and my shelter. With the experience gained on this campus, as well as obtaining a degree in Education Studies I vow to contribute to Waltham and the world with my valuable skills. Because that is the mission of the community that Brandeis wants their students to reproduce. Alas, I would like to summarize my story to you guys in a slogan: Haiti Birthed me, Waltham raised me, and Brandeis made me.

Thank you.