

# The Augusta

Newsletter



Spring | 2020

Letter from the Dean

Dear Students,

In this third issue of The Augusta, you will read about the importance of family and support. I feel very fortunate to work at Mildred Elley where faculty, academic advisors, tutors, social workers, administrators, and staff work hard to support a community of learners.

College is not easy, nor is it for the faint of heart. It takes determination, perseverance, and grit to complete a degree or certificate. As we enter this new year and new decade, I encourage you to take full advantage of all the support services available to you at the college.

We are delighted to accompany you on your journey, and we applaud you as you work towards achieving your dreams. May 2020 be a prosperous year for you and your loved ones.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Jill Carol Maggs**

*Dean of Academic Affairs,  
Mildred Elley*

BE INSPIRED

“**People** with self-respect have the courage of their mistakes. They know the price of things, exhibit a certain toughness, a kind of mortal nerve; they display what was once called character, a quality which, although approved in the abstract, sometimes loses ground to other, more instantly negotiable virtues. Nonetheless, character – the willingness to accept responsibility for one’s own life – is the source from which **self-respect** springs.”

*-Joan Didion, from “On Self-Respect” (1961)*

## POETRY REFLECTIONS

**what the mirror said**  
by lucile clifton

listen,  
you a wonder.  
you a city  
of a woman.  
you got a geography  
of your own.  
listen,  
somebody need a map  
to understand you.  
somebody need directions  
to move around you.  
listen,  
woman,  
you not a noplac  
anonymous girl;  
mister with his hands on you  
he got his hand on  
some  
damn  
body!

**untitled**  
by lucile clifton

in the inner city  
or  
like we call it  
home  
we think a lot about uptown  
and the silent nights  
and the houses straight as  
dead men  
and the pastel lights  
and we hang on to our no place  
happy to be alive  
and the inner city  
or  
like we call it  
home

# Student Spotlights



**Dr. John McGrath**, President of Mildred Elley College and Empire Education Corporation congratulates **Dwan Torres** and **Simeon Jordan** for making the Dean's List and the President's List. Congratulations on your achievements!

A student receiving a grade point average (GPA) of 3.5 to 3.79 is placed on the Dean's list. A GPA of 3.8 or higher places a student on the President's list for the module. Students who achieve this honor receive a certificate, pin, and are recognized at graduation. Do not let anything stop you from achieving this prestigious recognition. Make study a priority; just do it!



**Jayne Callender** and **Jacqueline Faria** celebrate the zombie apocalypse.



**Karanviar Sing** is originally from Punjab, India. He and his family moved to America to have better opportunities for education and employment. He settled with his family

in Valley Stream and Karanviar graduated from Valley Stream Central High School in 2018. After that, he enrolled in the Business Program at Mildred Elley. "I really do not miss India because all my friends and family are in the United States or Canada. After I graduate from Mildred Elley, I want to work in a bank and gain experience. Then, I want to start a very high end shoe store. The thing that I like the most about Mildred Elley is that the classes are small. Your professors really pay attention to you. Even professors that do not teach you in class are available to speak with you and to offer advice about career and life."



Another happy graduate! **Liza Carrasco** was hired at Maiden Lane Medical. Liza's advice to students is: *"If I can do this at 48, you can do it too. Stay the course!"*



**Yasmin Guzman** and **Julian Montalvo** get in the spirit of Halloween as **"Robin"** from *Stranger Things* and **"Mario"** from *Mario Bros*.



Look-it's Bernie Price and his doppelgänger! **Julian Montalvo** dressed up as **President Price** for Halloween. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery!

## On Self-Respect

By Ashley Rodriguez

**Once in a blue**, I get these flashbacks. It feels like every bad decision I've made in my life just replays itself in a millisecond. In Joan Didion's essay, "On Self-Respect," she states: *"Although now, some years later, I marvel that a mind on the outs with itself should have nothing less made painstaking record of its every tremor, I recall with embarrassing clarity the flavor of those particular ashes. It was a matter of misplaced self-respect."*

As I got older, I realized the incidences that occurred when I was younger left behind a painful yet also embarrassing scar, due to the fact I simply didn't know better and made poor decisions at a time I thought were the right ones. I now have an outsider perspective, looking in on my younger self. I realize I had misinterpreted my self-respect.

True self-respect means growth, the power of learning from your mistakes, having the simple courage to admit you were wrong,

and remembering not to repeat those patterns again. You know you learned a life lesson when you finally realize the terrible outcomes of your decisions, and you say, "won't ever do that again." Didion says, "people with self-respect have the courage of their mistakes," which, for me, means actually sticking to your word and realizing where you went wrong. When I was 18 years old, I started attending the College of Staten Island. It didn't work out as I expected. I ended up flunking out due to the fact I didn't know how to prioritize or balance the school, work, life trifecta. That was an important lesson in self-respect for me; it showed me how important education really is. You need higher education to follow your dreams, and that's not impossible if you work hard, stay focused, and accomplish your goals. I keep assuring myself that I won't repeat the same mistake twice; I will care about my education.

Self-respect is also being true to yourself and your beliefs, even if people closest to you disagree with them. Every person has a different life and a different upbringing. Parents, Didion says, "had instilled in their young a certain discipline, the sense that one lives by doing things one does not want to particularly do." As children, our parents or the adults around us instill in us this idea of respect. As we grow older into adulthood, we adapt our own life-values.

I grew up in an old school, strict, and Catholic household. The meaning of self-respect that was instilled in me is not something I believe in today. My parents disagree with almost everything I do: they don't like the music I listen to, the clothes I wear. If I were to follow their rules, their ideas of who I should be, and what I should look like, then I would be disrespecting myself due to the fact that I'm not being and expressing myself in a way that makes me happy.

In the end, self-respect is being true to who you are. It is doing what makes you happy before doing anything that makes someone else happy. Self-respect is also about making mistakes, "misplacing" it only so you can find it later on, in a way that makes you feel like you've learned something about yourself and about your life. Then, you can pass those values of self-respect down to your loved ones, or reject them in favor of values that make you even more authentic to yourself. As Didion says, "The dismal fact is that self-respect has nothing to do with the approval of others," but it does have to do with personal growth, helping others not to make the same mistakes you might have made, or learning from yourself so that you can help your loved ones realize the true meaning of self-respect, even if it means encouraging disagreement in favor of authenticity.

## Staff Spotlight

**Reginald Gator** has many titles at Mildred Elley Metro: maintenance, custodian, plumber, painter, locksmith, paper source, caterer, window repairman, and the list goes on and on. "I enjoy working with my hands," Reggie says, "fixing whatever's broken. Especially locks and windows. Because people really need locks and windows." On any given day, students and staff can find Reggie conducting a team of painters in the hallway, installing a corkboard display next to the library, rearranging room 1624 for a faculty meeting, fixing a broken sink, converting a storage closet into a new faculty office, or carrying a 40 lb. box of printer paper—if not all of these activities at once.

Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Reggie moved with his family to New York in the late 1970's and has worked as the head of maintenance at Mildred Elley for four years now. However, "I've been doing it all my life," Reggie says. Fixing things, that is. He comes from a family of repairmen. "My dad was a handyman in

Birmingham and in the city, so I took some skills from him. I was also an assistant superintendent of a six unit complex for many years. I learned a few things as I went along."

Equal to his profession as a handyman, Reggie has always been a family man, too. *"My greatest achievement has been staying employed for a long period of time and being a good dad."* If he's not bowling with his daughter for the weekend, then he's at Chucky Cheese with his grandson, or playing skeeball. It's safe to say that, for students, faculty, and staff, Mildred Elley would not be the inspiring place it is without Reggie.

**Advice to Students:**

**"Always do your best and be at your best"**



**Mareina Brewer** is **Fall 1 Student of the Mod!** She received her award on Nov. 5, 2019, with her mother and professors proudly watching on. Mareina credits her upbringing for her academic success, saying that her mother taught her that success is not only about herself, or her grades, but about bringing everyone around you up. In that spirit, Mareina dedicates time to helping other students and seeing conflict from all sides. What does she like about Mildred Elley? The age diversity! Mareina was nervous about being the youngest or oldest in her college classes, and says that the wide range of students helps her feel at ease. We appreciate all the hard work that Mareina puts in on our Metro campus, and we congratulate her on her success.

**Luciana De Leon** was born in New York City. She trained as a CNA and worked in doctor's offices, but her real dream was to become a Registered Nurse. A few years ago Luciana faced a setback. She was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. But the love from family, friends, and the joy her dogs bring her allowed her to beat the odds and she has been cancer free since 2012. She came to Mildred Elley to take the first steps towards achieving her dream of becoming an RN. In December Luciana took and passed the TEAS and will be starting in the Licensed Practical Nursing program this spring!



**David Martinez** was born in Bushwick, Brooklyn and currently resides in Harlem. He always had an entrepreneurial spirit and loved learning. He started a contracting business for flooring, painting & repairs. Ten years ago David saw his mother struggling financially. She was living in New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and was depressed. David wanted to help his mother, but was not in a position to do so. "At that

moment, I decided to change my life," David said. "I have four brothers and two sisters. No one in my family had ever attended college and I knew that if I wanted to get ahead, I needed to earn a college degree. A friend of mine was attending Mildred Elley, so I walked in and signed up. From that point on, I have had an amazing experience. I love the energy of the people in this college. When I went in to Financial Aid for the first time, it was the day that a man had jumped onto the subway tracks at Kingsbridge Road Station in the Bronx with his daughter. The man died, but the daughter survived. My financial aid advisor was so upset by this - she was really shaken up. She started crying and said she needed a hug. I gave her one. She told me she felt better. And you know what? I felt better because I knew that she would do the same for me if I was down. That's what it's all about. We have to take care of each other and help

each other. One of my greatest inspirations is Stephen Schwarzman, the CEO of Black Stone Group. I like him because he started a charitable foundation which is committed to inspiring entrepreneurship globally. I think that is just great. When I earn my A.O.S. Degree in Business Management from Mildred, I want to pitch a business plan to him. Maybe he will help me with my idea. Maya Angelo said **'We are all more alike than we are unlike.'** I believe that. I believe that we can do anything when we help each other. Everyone at Mildred Elley has helped me and this is just the start. I have about two years until my graduation. No one will be more proud of me than my family when I walk across that stage. Who knows? Maybe I'll inspire my brothers and sisters to earn a college degree. I am the first, but I will not be the last."

## We love our OASA team!

Whether you are a new or continuing student, chances are you have received guidance from your Academic Advisor. This dynamic group, headed by Dean Geeta Ali, went out to Toro Loco to celebrate the excellent student retention at the College. Students that stay in close contact with their Academic Advisors benefit greatly, so make sure you stop by and say hi!



Dean **Geeta Ali** and Academic Advisor **Supena Begum**



Bookstore Manager **Joseph Keenan**, Dean **Geeta Ali**, Academic Advisors **Bibi Soharab** and **Annesia Maharaj-Nesbit**



Academic Advisors **Alex Alexandre**, **Jenelle Adams**, and **Phil Roman**