

A POEM OF CELEBRATION FOR THE CLASS OF 2021
THE ST. LUCIAN POET, DEREK WALCOTT WROTE THAT A NOUN IS
NOT A NAME YOU GIVE SOMETHING. IT IS SOMETHING YOU WATCH
BECOMING ITSELF, AND YOU HAVE TO HAVE THE PATIENCE TO
FIND OUT WHAT IT IS.

Be a song
A soft symphony
a booming bass
A bouquet of jazz
that blossoms
in the coldest winter
that lifts your voice
for the nouns
that matter

Be a tree, dependable
and upstanding,
swaying in conversation
with the winds
of change,
always stretching
your roots.

Be a silent sea
chasing the sun
or a mighty river
with bold vision
that flows
toward a dazzling new horizon
of possibility
and the promise
to serve
that we have bestowed
upon you.

Be a flower,
Ready to bloom
Reaching for the orange sky
Better yet, be the whole garden
bursting with food
for the soul
a community of knowledge
a commonwealth teeming with innovation
a gathering of goodness

be a love supreme
a moonlight Serenade
to someone special
a first kiss
the sweet thunder
of a second
a flamethrower
a firestorm of desire
a noun that knows your heart
and makes it blaze
like a morning bugle call
on Upper Quad

When the world is not
So beautiful
Close your eyes
open the window
of your mind, be a seed
of hope, climbing out
embracing tomorrow
with discovery
and Hokie pride.

Be a friend
Be an ally
Be a dreamworker
Be a pocketful of plans
Be prepared for some to fail
Be okay with that
Be patient
Be resilient
Be a million laughs
Be cotton candy on a rainy day
Be an empty page
Be the truth
Be a poem
Become a poem
that is contagious
let your words
scream and whisper
join and fight
live and learn
dream and dare
to be kind
to be sad
to be brilliant
to be grateful
for how far you've come
for this new place you are headed
and what a delight it will be
when you turn that key
when you walk through that door
when you fall in love
with the world
and become yourself

KWAME ALEXANDER

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