

# ENVOY

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ASSOCIATION



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# THHS UPDATES

- Earlier this month, THHS celebrated its first Founders' Day at Colden Auditorium since 2019. Given the disruption of recent years, all students took (or retook) the Epehebic Oath together.
- The Girls Varsity Soccer team won the city championships this month, and the Boys Badminton team made it to the city championships game against Stuyvesant. Girls Volleyball made it to the quarter finals match in the playoffs.
- Election Simulation candidates this year expanded from local New York races to take on national races of interest such as the senate race between John Fetterman and Dr. Oz. The results featured a mixture of winners from both parties.
- Junior Sadie Bauer earned perfect score on the AP Seminar exam, one of only 37 students in the country to do so.
- THHS Librarian Arlene Laverde officially became the President of the New York Library Association at a ceremony in upstate New York.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: TERELL DRAYTON

## **Tell me a little about yourself.**

My name is Terell Drayton. I'm 27. I graduated in 2013 from Townsend Harris. I went to Syracuse University and played football and now I work at Nike, which is a dream of mine, in their lifestyle brand department.

## **What would you say is the greatest lesson you learned at THHS?**

I think that a lot of my friends were testing for specialized high schools, but I'm not really the strongest tester, so I wanted to rely more on my grades and ... my academic track record and my outside-of-school activities. One of my teachers told me [that] to get into Townsend Harris you didn't need to be tested, but it was prestigious. I kind of had my eyes on that as a top choice. I loved that it was a smaller school—I was a little intimidated by The Bronx Sciences and Stuyvesants of the world where you could get lost in the masses. That was really what it was: I wanted to go to a school that was special. Then also, kind of coincidentally, I had a couple of friends who were also planning to go there; so it sold me.

## **What is the greatest lesson you learned during your time at Townsend Harris?**

Maybe this isn't very inspiring, but I learned that nobody cares. I mean that in the best way possible. [At Townsend Harris] there's such a high level of expectations and the baseline is already above where most kids at that age are performing. It's overwhelming in the beginning and it is very easy to try to cop out or use excuses or try to blend in with the pack. And when I say nobody cares, I feel like teachers at Townsend Harris, the teachers and other students, didn't accept excuses.

That was a hint about what the real world was like, right? You can't just coast and expect great results. That was one of the things that stuck with me as a principle throughout life. You have to make your good luck and you can't ever expect anything good to happen if



Terell Drayton  
THHS Class of '13

you're not putting in your best effort. When things get really hard, it's kind of up to you to figure out a way out and not give up or try to use excuses. Like I said, "Nobody cares" was just an easier way to summarize that.

### **Where has life taken you since Townsend Harris?**

It's crazy because I'm coming up on 10 years which is really daunting. I feel like I'm still that same person. I don't know, it's hard to explain, but I feel like I'm the same kid who was walking through the halls nine years ago. After Townsend Harris I went to college like most people from Townsend Harris do, with the 110% graduation rate, haha. At Syracuse I played football. I walked on [to the team] which was a huge milestone for me. That was a major goal of mine, especially since Townsend Harris didn't offer football as a sport. But I worked closely with Mr. Hanson and he instilled that little seed in me; I could jump into any sport and dominate because of the things he was teaching me. I think he saw something in me and I picked up sports at Townsend like wrestling and volleyball pretty quickly after leaving his weightlifting classes. So I owe a lot to him for giving me that confidence. He even wrote my letter of recommendation to the Syracuse football team when I was applying. I definitely owe a lot to him in my life; I'm not gonna lie. That's actually another place in my life where that idea of "no one cares," came into play. I never played football a day in my life, but I was on a Division I team and I had to perform at the highest level possible. A lot of it came down to the mindset shift that "Ok, I may not know everything but I have to be confident and work hard and in time, things will work out." So, that's what I did there during the three years I was on the team, which was amazing. That was really college for me. I interned at the NBA which was cool and I went to work at Red Bull afterwards in the Athlete Marketing Department [which consisted of] a lot of travel and a lot of fun. I went on to an agency to do a bit of creative strategy...working on [questions like] how do we build ideas around product and storytelling moments for brands? I was pitching for new business and doing a lot of market travel and executing on campaigns. It was a lot of fun and I wore a lot of hats. I did that for four years and, eventually, I knew I wanted to get to Nike. I can remember even being in high school and, you know, whenever I got a new pair of sneakers I would grab Devlin, a friend of mine who went to Townsend Harris, and do a mini- photoshoot that was like we were making our own Nike ad. I always had that dream and it finally worked out!

Earlier this year, in January, I started on the Nike New York City Team leading their lifestyle brand marketing. All that means is that I build campaigns and moments that connect back

into the community in New York City specifically. [This] is amazing because I grew up here! I've been doing that for the past 11 months; it's been a crazy journey from Townsend Harris to now. But it was very full circle. All the things I loved when I was 17 or 18, I still do love and I get to do [those things] as my job! I still do a lot of freelancing stuff, like fulfilling my other passions, so yeah, my high school self would be very proud of where I am now.

**What do you miss most about Townsend Harris?**

I miss the type of environment it was because we always had such small numbers and were always close. I also miss being surrounded by excellence. Every single person there was amazing at something. It didn't even have to be school and education and being smart. It could have been [playing] an instrument or ... fencing or they were just really sharp or they found something in their life that they really loved. There was so much passion, and everyone worked so hard. I realized after Townsend Harris that there are not many spaces like that. College was a huge shock to me. All these people didn't know how to work hard. Why are we complaining about a one-page essay due two weeks from now? That was surprising to me. Even in the real world, I think a lot of people kind of drop down to the average of the room and do just what's expected. If I had to look back at the skills I have now, so much of that goes right back to that work ethic [I gained] back then. That is the one thing I really miss. Everyone was just so excited to pursue greatness in their own way, not in a flashy way, [but] we all just wanted to build each other up.

And maybe the other thing is just being from Queens and being surrounded by different cultures. That was such a big part of my life and I feel so well-rounded in my adult life, being able to understand different perspectives and cultures and religions. I still have so many of those friends from Townsend Harris to this day and we all reflect on how that mixed bag of backgrounds and ethnicities impacted us. And since then I've always had a very diverse group of people around me because that's where I feel the most comfortable.

**How have you implemented the sentiment of the Ephebic Oath into your life since graduating?**

That's a tough one. I feel like that message always felt a little too daunting for me. It was a little overwhelming and dramatic, if I'm being honest. But I think the way that I can attach myself [to that idea] ... is more on a person-to-person level. I really, really, love mentorship and try to make it a consistent thing in my relationships. I want us to grow from each other. So that's my interpretation and personal ethos, not necessarily changing the company or changing the whole organization but more like, how can I leave every single relationship, and

person I have a relationship with, better than before we interacted?

**Is there any teacher that greatly influenced you during your time at Townsend Harris?**

That's tough. Can I say two? Number one ... Ms Nix. I don't know what it was but you just had to meet her. She's one of those people I mean when I say "nobody cares." She set the rules and if you didn't meet the standard, you faced the consequences, no matter what. Even the zero-band-mile runs... that's such a crazy thing to go through, and you're like 12 years old, 13 years old! She had a very loving and caring approach to being straight up. Maybe her rules didn't feel as loving in the moment, but you felt the sense of, "This is for your best benefit. She's not being mean to me." She was really that one person that from the jump, [from] freshman year, made me think, "Ok I need to step it up. There's no reason why I can't do better." I think the second person is Mr. Tsai. I really had no interest in physics, but I just [really liked] him and his very cool demeanor and his logical approach [to everything]. He just carried himself in such a confident and lowkey way and I wanted to emulate that a little bit, I think. So Ms Nix very much made me realize what I needed to do to become successful and Mr Tsai made me think more about how I could be my best self but still humble and level-headed and logical.

**What advice would you give to current THHS students?**

I would tell them that the work hard sentiment is already built in, so try to enjoy this time in your life as much as possible. It's an old-head thing people say all the time that gets lost, and people still tell me because I'm still in my 20s. But I think that I'm starting to realize what that means. Time just goes really quickly, so just enjoy it as much as you can. Trying to be perfect at everything and setting yourself up for college can seem like its either everything or nothing, like you win or you lose, but that's not the case. You've gotten this far and your work ethic is going to take you everywhere you want to be. So, just enjoy the journey as much as you can.

Also, be curious! Explore things that you're interested in and don't feel like you need to stick to pure academics. I feel like with everybody I see really rising to the top—at least in the industries that I'm in, which are maybe a little more creative and marketing focused—it's their interests and passions that really separate them from the bunch. There are a lot of sharp people in the world that can do the job that's on paper, but it's the passion and the things you do outside of your work that make you stand out.

So, I would tell [current students] not to take this moment in life too seriously and try to

enjoy it. Try to explore your interests and then have fun with it!

**How can other alumni and current THHS students connect with you? Do you have a LinkedIn or website you are willing to share?**

Yeah, of course. Hit me on my e-mail, [terell.drayton@nike.com](mailto:terell.drayton@nike.com).



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