

OLYMPIAN



MT

Page 4

***A Letter from the
Editor-In-Chief***

Page 6

Aristans of the Year

Page 12

Trendsetters of the Year

Page 18

Woman of the Year

Page 22

Man of the Year



A Letter from the Editor-In-Chief

What Does Man of the Year Mean to Me?

The first "Man of the Year" magazine I read was from 2016. One first things I read from that edition was Jason "Jase" Overby, Jr.'s letter as Editor-In-Chief.

"It's not easy running this newspaper. I swear it's a full-time job. I've just been going through the motions, that's about it."

I never would have imagined that I'd be writing this letter nor sharing the same sentiments. Being Editor-In-Chief without a doubt is an experience that I wouldn't trade for anything. It wasn't all good, but it wasn't all bad.

To be frank, being involved in The Maroon Tiger in general is an experience I wouldn't trade. The Atlanta University Center is filled with creatives that partake in many different mediums. One reason that makes The Maroon Tiger so great is that it can serve as a hub to showcase all these different talents while also telling the stories of those that don't get the recognition they deserve.

That was the mission we as a staff

wanted to capture with this year's Man of the Year. Most of the time when you look through this magazine you find people who have been spotlighted before in some way shape or form. This year we wanted to ensure we were shining a light on a diverse group to exemplify how eclectic it is in the AUC.

When "Man of the Year" comes up in conversation, I always think of this project being our way to give people a platform for them to tell their story.

If you look at the page before and after this, you won't see my face because this magazine is about people - not one particular individual.

Instead of just focusing on the accolades that people receive, we also want to talk about the journey that people may not know about. That what I think of this magazine.

Whether or not we achieved that, is up to perception. However, I feel as though we did.

After reading these stories as they were submitted, it made me eager

to see how it would all come together, especially with the theme. After meeting with my staff, we pitched around ideas with what the theme of this year would be for the magazine.

We decided have the theme be "Olympian" after throwing around these different concepts and were looking for a word that captured all these ideas. After looking at Managing Editor Isaiah Johnson's computer, I saw he searched "olympain." After reading the definition, I knew that was the theme, and everyone else agreed.

When we talk about olympians, we think about the Olympics comes to mind. Our idea of an Olympian is someone who has been knocked down but continues to get back up.

I would like to close this with sending a special thanks to all the staff members that contributed to making this magazine what it is. Your work is what has made this edition what it is, and it has not gone unrecognized.

To the reader(s), enjoy!



Text: DeAndre Washington &
Ayana Marie Davenport

THE ARTISANS

Images: DeAndre Washington &
Jair Hilburn

ARTISAN OF THE YEAR: AUSTYN WYCHE

Austyn Wyche is a graduating senior, Psychology major from Chicago, Illinois that for the past four years has at Morehouse has truly created a legacy for himself. He is a multimedia artist who has continued to grow in his craft by creating art that takes his viewers through a profoundly captivating experience. Though his four years at Morehouse College, Austyn has prodded and brought definition to this photography by capturing that stories black people and hip-hop.

“Hip-Hop is a huge influence in my life,” Wyche said. “That’s why I like to doing concert photography. Aside form that I am really interested in capturing the stories of black people. Just being able to tell their narratives through images”.

When asked how he has developed as an artist at Morehouse, Austyn speaks how he has been able to participate in a study abroad opportunity that has helped re-shaped his photography, shooting big named celebrities at various campus events, and being appointed Ssenior Photographer for the Maroon Tiger, and shooting the One Music Festival.

“Sophomore year was the start of something unbelievable,” he stated. “I found different ways to approach storytelling. Before I was more invested in art for the sake of vanity, from then I have been able to

use my art to construct narrative for other people”.

Austyn wants to use his passion for photography and his calling for physcology to be able to serve as guide to rappers. He wants to provide mental health care to artist while being able to document their stories, by being the guy behind the camera while working with them through their everyday issues.

“It’s really like a dual thing I want to work with these artist and cover their day to day but I also want to serve as a therapist to them,” Wyche said. “I want to work with them and provide psychological care, but I the same time I want to be able to document their shows and lifestyle, and really just combined the two”.

After graduating Morehouse he hopes to not

only obtain his PhD. in clinical psychology, but he wants to be able to continue to create in all different types of capacities.

“Whether is be photography, setting up community programming, or putting a photography studio with a mental health facility on the southside, I don’t want to be subjected to just one thing,” Austyn said.



DW: When did you decide that filmmaking was what you wanted to do? Was there a specific moment?

AD: What advice would you give to someone who wants to get into acting?

DW: Does being from Baltimore have any influence on your poetry?

Joshua Reed: I did a summer program at American University one summer towards the end of middle school. We learned about all aspects of media, journalism and filmmaking. For one of our courses, we had to make a short film. Our group ended up making a short stop motion film. I remember the audible gasp of the audience as our protagonist almost fell off a cliff in the film. It was the height of the action, and I realized that the movies I make have a real, direct impact on the people who watch them. If there was any moment it would be that one.

Booker Vance: Learn more about yourself and learn more about the world. A lot of acting is listening and being honest. When you can be honest with yourself that knocks out about 50% of the job because then you can know that this is the part of myself that I can bring to my character and then there is a part of myself that I do not want to bring because it can hinder me telling the truth. I would say acting is one of those things where practice makes progress. You have to continue to do it and practice every single day.

Deniero Bell: Oh definitely. My poetry family and I get so excited because our poetry is literally just Baltimore representation. We put together this youth open mic called “Salt, Pepper, Ketchup”; talking about chicken boxes in Baltimore. Even in the way we perform — our aggressive form is kind of known as Baltimore’s style. I take so much pride in where I come from simply because of poetry. I would’ve never liked Baltimore if I never met my poetry family, I would’ve never seen the art community, or the activist community.



DW: Is there a goal or message you aspire to translate through your work when you're producing content?

Schuyler Nickleberry: Well I was always taught the importance of self expression. And something I'm trying to master this year is transparency. Just being open. So when I'm producing content, I want it to be thought provoking. I want people to see themselves in my work because I feel like film is that powerful tool where you can shape a whole community with the images that you put out. I want to make sure that because it's primarily African American censored that we're not being painted in a light that we are often painted in — very negative, or loud is all things that I try to avoid when I'm doing my film and stuff.

DW: Where do you get your inspiration to continue shooting from?

Xavier Everyday living, just being able to wake up and move. A lot of the objects, people, and things I take photos of — I have no idea who they are, what they are, what their purpose is here on earth, and I don't really know what my purpose is. But I know I'm here to do something, I'm here to serve something, to give back to something. So just me being able to wake up and pick up my camera is enough aspiration for me to go outside and shoot. Me being able to wake up and breathe and being able to wake up to walk is my inspiration for me being able to go outside and take pictures. I may not have the inspiration every day, but that's what's gotten me here so far.

AD: How'd you only get into drawing faces and bodies?

Lindsay Harris: I find people's facial features and bodies interesting, and I love drawing black people. I want to highlight your features. There's a lot of art in society that only features white people, so I want to highlight black facial features and portray them in a beautiful light because they are beautiful



Consuming work put together by an artist is a challenge. The challenge is being able to give an artist their flowers without equating or minimizing the artist in the process. Thulani Vereen, Computer Science major at Spelman College, is an example of a creative who dived into artistic waters without fear of expectancy or definition waiting for her when she comes back up with something new.

Vereen wants people to know that even though she's loved dancing since moving into the work by coincidence, but she won't be labeled as just a dancer.

"I started dancing on accident," Vereen said. "My sister grew up dancing a lot, and I did tennis, basketball, and soccer. My mom forced me to pick up dance because of driving around all over the place."

Creating a specific something doesn't mean that's the only thing possible for an artist to be known for doing. Telani goes on to elaborate that while dance is essentially her second tongue, she's more than the movement she makes with her body.

"As a dancer, I'm inspired by the potential to create and the ability to create," Vereen said. "But I consider myself more of a creator than a dancer, or than a scientist. Dance gives me the ability to communicate and create beyond my being."

Since vocalizing has always been a means of redefinition, communication is Telani's goal when creating. Vereen searches for different ways to ensure that she says exactly what she intends to say.

"I hate talking; I'm not a loud person, I'm very shy and to myself," Vereen said. "So dance and just creating in general gives me a fourth dimension, or another medium to communicate with people in a comfortable way. For me, instead of forcing myself to talk to people, I'm able to communicate my ideas and my imagination without having to actually talk about it."

Vereen's involvement with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) playing a factor in her work. She has found intricate ways to merge STEM and dance together.

"So there's never enough time in one day to do everything that I have to do or that I'm involved in," Vereen said. "I'm forced to do both dance and computer science at one time, because there's no time to do both."

Though time may not be on Telani's side, she pushes herself to make time available for everything she wants to. The fruits of her labor show when dancing ascends to choreography which translates further into creation. Vereen got involved with Spelman's dance theater during her freshman

year and since then has choreographed her own work to be performed.

"When I first heard about Spelman my senior year of high school, my dad introduced me to the director of the spa density, and we got close," Vereen said. "I started my freshman year, and I've just been involved since. It's the only classical dance group on campus — I've danced my freshman year, sophomore year, and now, I choreograph for them. That's been a pretty cool journey to go from dancing to creating for other students."

Finding different ways to communicate is a constant in everyday living for Telani. When asked about the creative process for designing her own costume, Vereen reverts back to how she speaks most through her work when creating. As a creative, Vereen views her work as a way to say something she hasn't yet.

"It started with asking, how can computer science make sense in a dance?" Vereen said. "The only way I saw that it could was through a costume."

Telani goes onto explain the process that went into putting together the costume made for one of the many shows she's been involved in putting together.

"The creative process was what story am I trying to tell? That's really what creators do — we tell stories in different

ways" she emphasized. "So let's figure out how can I tell a story with this technology. And lights are so brilliant because there are so many different colors that you can create with lights. Different patterns that you can manipulate with the program. So it was just an iterative process of what lights am I going to put on here, what patterns am I going to create, and how did these patterns contribute to telling my story, while maintaining the themes of my dance."

Telani remains humble about being recognized as Artisan of the Year.

"It's so cool, I love the word artisan," Vereen said. "It fully encapsulates what I am. It's not dancer of the year, not something else. It's artisan, and that's everything I do."

She doesn't want to be boxed into being known for having done one thing. And she'll remind those that ask about what she does that she's a creator more than she is a dancer.

"It's important for me to reiterate that," Vereen said. "In these three schools on campus, we're often placed into one box. But we're multi dimensional beings capable of so much, and it doesn't make sense to separate our gifts and our talents into these different spaces; when all of our gifts and our talents can inform the other gifts and talents. So just create, you know."

ARTISAN OF THE YEAR: THULANI VEREEN





FRENZUS FIFERS

IMAGES:
CASSIDY MEYERS

TEXT:
BRYCEN SAUNDERS

DION BENJAMIN



Benjamin has worked with buyers in a showroom for PFW, was a stylist for Neiman Marcus's National Black Arts Festival - Fine Art + Fashion, and was featured in VoyageATL.



ARIANNA VALBRUN

Trendsetter of the Year

You've maybe spotted her fuzzy dice earrings or her many pairs of platform shoes, and her distinguishable bowl cut has been styled in a myriad of ways. The point being, she is hard to miss. Her eccentric style sets her apart from the rest in the AUC and soon, the world will know who she is: Arianna Valbrun - an International Studies major, minoring in Photography whose style and personality have even caught the eye of i-D magazine. With the imagination and vision to make even the most obscure items stylish, Arianna cannot be boxed in.

Born and raised in Maryland, Valbrun spent a lot of her childhood in New York, as her parents are from Queens. From a young age, she realized that the beauty of Blackness is its ability to offer an unrestricted sense of self expression. She's inspired by a number of subcultures, with Y2K aesthetics, and afrofuturism being huge determinants of her style. Characterized by a technical utopia and the intersection of the African diaspora and technology, her style is sustainably sophisticated.

Ariana purchases all of her

garments from thrift stores and more thrift stores. Shopping sustainably is more than just a fad for Arianna, but a catalyst to promote action against the harm Black and Brown bodies are constantly subject to, in addition to its ability to minimize her carbon footprint. The unique intersections of social activism is how she found her style growing up.

"If I'm going to the thrift store, I'm not looking at pieces necessarily that are brand name," Valbrun said. "I'm just trying to find what I like, and try to build my style off of it. [To] make it look the way I feel most presentable, and the way I feel the best."

By incorporating pieces from different eras, Arianna revitalizes past styles, providing newness to pieces that are seemingly nostalgic.

It all started with a commissioned photographer from i-D at Afropunk, and soon after, Arianna was contacted for further engagement. When the producers found out she was a writer, they wanted her to write a piece for i-D magazine, to discuss her take on beauty. As expected, the team loved

her piece so much, that they insisted Arianna be featured in their online magazine. She was "flewed out" to NYC and the rest was magic. With a fresh nail set, to accent her signature bowl hairstyle, re-cut by Solange and Yara Shahidi's hairstylist, Arianna was and is nothing short of a star.

Eccentric, whimsical, inspired by childhood, are all ways Arianna would define her style. As a triple pisces--meaning her Sun, Moon, and Ascendant are all in pisces--her incredible imagination allows her to draw inspiration from a wide range of mediums such as toys and CD jackets. As an aspiring fashion journalist, she takes pride in studying the intersections of fashion, global cultures, and sustainability. Arianna also makes it a point to center one's need to actualize, and become their most authentic self.

Whether in i-D or on Brown street, her signature bowl cut, and vintage Muhammad Ali FUBU jacket signed by Daymond John, are always making moves, and keeping heads on a swivel.



CAMERON RESHAD

“Personally I use my fashion as a political statement.... If I was confident about how I presented myself, it would show people that I was just another person like them, and there’s nothing wrong with being different.”

CARLYTO JOHNSON



“[I describe my style as] versatile...
constantly evolving. When you limit
yourself to one thing, you become plain”



Late in the April night, I sat waiting with my Managing Editor Isaiah Johnson in the Maroon Tiger Office for an interview with the woman who'd be named our Woman of the Year: Anta Njie. After being congratulated for being nominated for being Woman of the Year, Njie expressed her sentiments about the magazine.

"This may not be a big deal to y'all, but it's a big deal to me. These," she said pointing at the past Man of the Year magazines, "mean something."

Before the interview began, she had to stop to take a phone call - which would be one of many she received during our sit down with her. That one call was the first look we got into her busy life which led us to ask how she'd describe her year.

"I'll honestly say... eventful and unexpected because I think people see success and they see other people's success and see it as something that can be garnered easily. I don't know what it is about this campus and me, but I have a particular kind of luck," Njie said as she clasped her hands together. "It's luck on one side."

After having a conversation with a student after she won Miss Maroon & White, she realized that wasn't the case; she was stuck in a state of shock after winning something she's dreamed of since freshman year. Anta recalled being told that another student during the Miss Maroon & White pageant said that "God's hand is literally on her shoulder and her back." It was an experience that "shook" her. As she recalls the moment, she reaches for tissues, but she presses on with what she has to say.

"This was a complete stranger," she said with a shaky voice. "I never considered any of what I did to be that big for somebody to speak those types of words about me and they don't know anything about me. This is when I realized just being myself is doing a lot for people."

From that night on, she kept receiving the same message of "favor not being fair" throughout her reign, and it's something she clung to because she was uncomfortable with how she made others feel whilst being herself.

"Everytime something was happening, I found myself asking if I really deserved it..., but it's just favor." Anta said.

One thing that made Anta's year so eventful was winning Miss HBCU, but not for the reasons you'd think. The day before the pageant she got everything she needed to compete; not because she was procrastinating but because Kevin Booker and Melissa Bailey

were trying to get her to focus on graduating and "protect [her] peace..., sanity and happiness" because they knew the responsibilities she had not only as a senior but also as a new member of Delta Sigma Theta Inc., but that changed after she attended get on the bus and remembered why she ran for Miss Maroon & White — the men of Morehouse.

Having the support from the support that she has received in all aspects of her life, she believes it's "mind boggling."

"I think God has allowed all these people to show up in my life like this because that's who I am to people. I would hope I am that to people," Anta said.

After asking students if they wanted Morehouse to be represented, she let them know that she would do it if they wanted her to do it. When they said yes, she couldn't turn it down.

"When I won, my eyes just popped open," Anta said.

But that wasn't the only moment that stuck out to Anta. Weeks after Miss Maroon & White, she received a phone call. When she answered, there was "a lot of chaos" in the background. She found out that someone close to her had attempted suicide, and Anta was called upon because she had done it at that same age which resulted in her going to a psych ward for two weeks for multiple suicide attempts to talk to that person about it. Thinking she left that dark phase of her life behind, she realized she saw depression more for what it is at Spelman, but now it's not a thought in her mind because of the life she has in front of her.

"I have to stay alive for that person," Anta said.

"When they all of this grand stuff unfolding, they just think it's golden. No matter what anybody says, I feel like a part of them seeing what I experienced has contributed to how they feel in some way. [I]t's a huge, huge, huge responsibility that I carry with me everyday."

From that moment on, she had made it a priority to look on the bright side of things because she "wants everybody's light to shine."

"Before [that moment,] I wasn't making it my intention to be positive everyday... I was just kind of moving through it. Now I live in it, so I can have something to share for later and in the moment," Anta said.

In areas where she fell short, she was standing tall in others.

"I embrace this person every single waking minute," she said with tears in her eyes. "It's a lot of reasons why I wasn't a good Miss Maroon & White. From me having to bask in the representation part, I had to

be there for [someone I love].”

After that, she had to go one step further to make her year eventful and started her clothing line: An-Tuh. Before she started making her clothing line, she was full of doubt from thinking it wouldn’t succeed, but it ended up being her creative release.

“I have to show everything that life has to offer. I have something to live for now,” Anta said.

Throughout the year, she balanced two crowns, being a new member of Delta Sigma Theta Inc., being a student and more. Ever since winning Miss HBCU, she realized something.

“From that point forward, people thought I was doing things seamlessly, and it got difficult,” she said. “When people think you’re doing things seamlessly, the demand for you in their head is just easy. I found myself trying to become something everyone thought I was.”

After winning Miss HBCU, she was worn out, which is why she wasn’t present during homecoming, but while she was Miss HBCU she established a

Break the Bank Fund with the financial aid office in the event of students being in need of financial assistance.

“I’m grateful that the hall of fame has given me the power to leave you all with that,” Anta said proudly.

Through it all she recognizes where she had fallen short and where she had to take the blame, but while being a student she struggled because she knew what her future as a chapter member and a queen but not her future outside of it. It didn’t help that her absences for her events as queen weren’t being counted, and she was determined to make sure she would still graduate on time.

She spoke to us about taking the high road after hearing something offensive backstage at the Miss Maroon & White pageant and being arrested for allegedly speeding 30 mph over the speed limit and being in possession of marijuana. Whilst sitting in the back of a cop car with Nathan Samuel in a state of panic, she sent a text message saying where they were and what was happening as he was trying to calm her down. As the night went on, they were interrogated, being told to

get in touch with bail bond companies, staying in a cell, and more.

“It’s sometimes hard to curve your initial reaction — or the reaction that you really want to give,” she said. “I think that entire night when I was having conv[ersation]s with people it was really messing up their head because they thought I was going to be talking about my situation, and it was about way more than my situation.”

When asked what Olympian means to her, she said it’s somebody that can fall and get back up. Having a love for the Olympics, she had an affinity towards synchronized swimming, ice skating, and pole vaulting which speaks to her to most because it’s about running toward a goal and going up and coming down.

“That’s life. You’re gonna go up, and you’re gonna go right back down,” she said.

Because of that, she views herself as an Olympian. The Tuesday before the interview she was evicted. After trying to fight the eviction, she found that all her stuff was found in the fourth floor of the parking deck.

The one thing that she couldn’t take her eyes off of was the inventory for her business.

“I mention it because I had... so much to do it didn’t matter that I got evicted,” she said. “I believe it was the wake up call that I needed being as though I am on my way out the door and entering adulthood.”

Instead of staying down, she hit the ground running by using her eviction as motivation, especially after getting encouragement from her line sisters. She struggles with bipolar depression, but throughout this year she realized to be wrapped up in it - especially with the help of her boyfriend, Samuel.

“I say I’m an Olympian because... even my fall-semester-self would have crippled in the situation, but I was able to do it because of everything that occurred during fall semester.” she said. “I will be okay though. After graduation, I’m just going to figure out Anta.”

“I want to make sure everybody’s light burn.”

“When you’re able to see the highs and the lows, you appreciate them more. It’s okay to pause. [The race] does not stop.”

“When you’re able to see the highs and the lows, you appreciate them more. It’s okay to pause. [The race] does not stop.”



Anta Njie Woman of the Year

Text: Jair Hilburn

A close-up portrait of a Black man with a full beard and a white knit beanie. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a solid, vibrant red. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting his facial features and the texture of his beard and beanie. He has a small mole on his left cheek and visible tattoos on his chest and arms.

LeAnthony Freeman Man of the Year

Images: Jair Hilburn & Zek Harris

In an interview full of laughs and a couple of tears, there was a lot I learned about this year's Man of the Year: LeAnthony Freeman. He is a man on campus that isn't as involved in campus life but that doesn't mean he's not being proactive with his time. Freeman started his own organization Y.A.L.E. (Youth Acquiring Leadership and Excellence) Academy after the idea popped into his head when he was "laying in the bunk" in Miami, Fl. At the time, he didn't know what it all meant, he knew that it was something that was his own. After going back to Buffalo, NY, he knew he couldn't stay because he believed he'd be dead or in jail.

During his high school career, he was kicked out every year which lead him to not graduating. His parents thought that he had anger problems, so he was sent to an insane asylum. Afterwards, he went to Barry University in Miami was later kicked out for fighting prior to being arrested. Eventually, he found that the common thread in all his troubles was himself.

"I made some poor decisions, Freeman said. "I ended up some places that I didn't want to be. What I realized was the common thread for me was the lack of character, the lack of moral integrity, the moral standards. "I feel as though there is a need for that in our culture. Getting money is great, but if you go home and you're still a horrible father, a horrible son... it doesn't matter what your bank account is looking like. Our standard for character in this society has gone down, and we need to raise that."

With his life experiences and the ones of the students in his program, he noticed it wasn't just for students. He saw teachers suspending kids without understanding what was going on in the students' lives which as a result showed why they would be lashing out.

Even though Y.A.L.E. Academy has had great strides by partnering with My Brother's Keeper and Best Academy and Fulton County by assisting in their GED program, one of the best things seen come out of it is the growth of the students.

"I guess the best thing for me is anything relative to the students because that's what I'm here for [and] them trusting me because the students that I deal with have trust issues," Freeman said. "A lot of parents or family members have let them down, so the fact that [they] trust me means a lot. You love me as much as I love you."

"And them being receptive to my love."

The journey for hasn't been easy because old habits

die hard because when his pockets get low he wants to resort to his old habits he doesn't. "I can't compromise all that I've built because they are other people involved at this point," Freeman said. One of those people being his three-year-old daughter that he adopted when she was only three-days-old.

Last time he was arrested, it was for drinking and driving when he was 24. He already had two DWI's. He's a recovering addict. He went to Narcotics Anonymous at 18 and quit smoking weed at 21. "They say you substitute one drug for another, so after I put the weed down, I picked up the liquor," Freeman said.

When he was at court, he was shocked when his lawyer asked if he was ready for sentencing. He met an older man and realized that he's missing out on his daughter's childhood. At that moment, he decided to turn his life around.

"That was the real pivotal moment for me because at this point, I'm not just living for myself," Freeman. "There sacrifices that must be made and decisions I must change for the betterment of her. That's my world. I'd be damned if I miss out because of my own."

Earlier in the semester, Dr. Nathan Alexander went viral for taking care of a student's child while he was teaching class, and LeAnthony was in that class. As he reflected on the moment, tears started to develop as he began to feel those emotions of pride for seeing another man take care of his child - especially in front of younger men.

"These young brothers need to see this," LeAnthony said passionately. "You're doing well not just for you and your daughter but for these young men too because not a lot of young men see representation like that."

It touched him more because he couldn't talk to his daughter and he "missed [his] baby" which led to more tears from LeAnthony as he reflected on how he felt. Even though he can't see her, he still knows he has to be that example for her. From trudging through the snow to get her medicine to seeing her take her first steps, the relationship he has with his daughter is one he can't let go.

"It's my obligation [to be an example] regardless of what's going on right now because it's gonna come a day where she can make her own decisions. It's gonna come a day where she's gonna see that I still have her pictures and that I'm holding onto them," LeAnthony said while fighting back tears. "It's my job. I'm the only dad she knows. I want her to be proud of me."

After we dried our eyes, we talked about how he

was planning to take a trip to Isreal and reflected on his religion. He grew up Baptist but later on started to identify with being Muslim.

"I separated from Christianity at 21, and when I did it, I was trying to disprove everything," LeAnthony said. "But as I matriculated throughout my life, I realized that your truth is truth and that should be perfectly okay."

It took him two years to graduate with his two year degree from Erie Community College because of what was going on in his life. He had a 2.4 GPA and wrote his life into the entry essay and would call everyday to make sure that he was going to get in. The decision to apply came after interning at New York City Hall his mentor, Rashied McDuffie, suggested that he apply to some schools.

"The day I received [admissions into] Morehouse it was like a movie... because it was a struggle," LeAnthony said. "I'm a first-generation college student. I didn't see no way out because a lot of people from my city don't get out."

When he first got to Morehouse, he stayed in Athens, GA, so he had to commute for an hour and a half every day. He would be on campus at eight in the morning and wouldn't be home until two in the morning because he would be at the library since he didn't have a laptop. At a certain point of his matriculation at Morehouse, he was homeless because he couldn't afford a place to stay, so he would explain his time at Morehouse as an uphill journey.

"I think you gotta fall in love with the process," LeAnthony said. "I feel as though I've overstayed my welcome. Obviously, there's something here I haven't received yet. Who am I to say my time here is up?"

While he'll still be at school because he'll be graduating in December 2019, he will be holding onto his faith once his time at Morehouse is over.

"Sometimes you don't know what's in front of you, but you have to trust the process and walk," he said.

When asked how it felt to be nominated for Man of the Year, he said that it was humbling and honoring.

"Coming from where I've come from any accolades is big," LeAnthony said. "Let the world tell you, I wasn't even supposed to be here, so now to get recognized for some things that I've been doing. I'm grateful because that attests to the work that I've been doing and something that somebody has seen in me that I didn't see in myself."

"I may not see the greatness in myself, but other people do."

After being given some context to the theme of the magazine, LeAnthony decided to give some of his own. He was a part of an African rights of passage journey

in the summer.

He had to restart after failing to abstain from particular vices. When asked how he felt after restarting, he realized something.

"If my life was a book, would I want it to read any other way," LeAnthony asked. "Would I want the champion to have it easy? If these is the champion that we have - the

leader of the people, I wouldn't want him to have it easy; he's not strong enough to do such task to lead the people. When you say to me 'What does it mean to be an Olympian?' here goes my life.

"It's about the times in which I thought I was going to jump off the cliff or I was pushed off the cliff and somehow I flew or sometimes I rolled and still got back up."

When it's all said and done, he feels as though he is an Olympian, but his journey has only just begun.

"I definitely feel like my story's not done. I feel like this is just preparation to more struggles, more trials, more tribulations, but more successes." LeAnthony said. "I think the majority of my story to come will reflect [that I am an Olympian.]"

"Trust the process, trust
yourself more than
anything else, trust your
intuition, [and] follow
your heart."

OLYMPIAN



MT