

Shameka Brown Barbosa
4As/MAIP Graduation Speech
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Thank you so much.

This is such an incredible, full-circle moment for me and I just wanted to thank MAIP for inviting of me.

Fourteen years ago this week, I was in your shoes. And as I prepared to speak with you today, I had to stop and think: Why am I still here when so many that I started with are not?

And the truth is: I am here because I still love the art of advertising.

So today, I'm going to share my journey within this industry as if it were a love story, because to me, it is. You see, I met advertising in high school. And back then, it was just a crush. I'd write our names together in my notebook: Shameka Brown, Creative Director. And I really liked the way that sounded.

So I took the relationship to the next level. And I went to Syracuse University as an ad major and despite the fact that it was young love, it grew. But our budding relationship reached a crossroads early on: I was graduating without a portfolio. And I couldn't get a job without one. I was heartbroken.

So I sought some advice from one of my professors, and she told me about this internship program called MAIP. She told to me apply and if I got accepted, I could decide if this was what I really wanted to do. So I did and I interned in the creative department at NW Ayer & Partners.

It took about two weeks for them to realize that they could actually give me work. But when they did, I fell head over heels. This was no longer puppy love. This was the sky-is-so-blue-and-I-need-to-be-with-you kind of love.

So I decided to go to grad school at the VCU Adcenter (now Brandcenter). And the relationship matured and became even more passionate and intense. We'd stay up all night together and just couldn't get enough of each other. Oh yes, it was definitely the sky-is-so-blue kind of love.

But after two whirlwind years, it was time to settle down and get a job. So I did. And the first few months were tough. We were finally in a committed relationship. But now I had mixed emotions. This wasn't what I had expected. But I persevered. And soon I was feeling the love. And these are two of the first few spots in Chapter 1 of my love story. *[show Chocolate Crème Oreo, General Foods International Coffees TV]*

Finally, everybody I knew understood what I do for a living! I was on a roll and soon we started traveling the world together: Miami; Toronto twice; LA six times – the Four Seasons is fabulous – Hawaii, Paris, Singapore and Sydney, Australia.

We were six years in and things were going great. But as a relationship grows, you're bound to hit a few bumps in the road like politics, envy and a little bad luck. And suddenly the sky-wasn't-so-blue anymore. Plus, I now had a life. How dare I? I was married and having my first baby. And I thought: Maybe we shouldn't be together anymore.

So I took some time off. But almost a year later, I really missed it. So we started seeing each other again. Nothing serious, just freelancing. And within six months, I had a spot back on the air. *[show Yoplait TV]*

There's just something about having a spot on the air. It gets me every time. So despite having just had another baby and opening a new business with my husband, I jumped in again. This time on the multicultural side. And the relationship changed again. I learned to do more with less, I created a super successful integrated campaign for the agency and earned the title of Creative Director with this work. *[show Time Warner Cable TV]*

So here I am. Now at Y&R. I'm shooting spots. I'll have a few more stamps in my passport soon and I get to meet Chaka Khan next month. But this is just my story.

You have to write your own. So whether your story has already been years in the making or if this internship was your first date, I need you to be mindful of few things: This career isn't for everyone. But those who stay know that it will take a village for you to succeed – you will need the tireless support of your family and friends in all things – as I wave to my husband and parents and nieces and godsister seated over there – who still support me in all things.

Remember that this is a business of highs and lows. As you now know. So there will be days when the sky is-not-so-blue and there will also be moments when you shine.

So as you decide right now, if this is for you, all I can advise is that you ask yourself this: Is it love? Because if it is, your heart just might make yours one of the greatest love stories ever told.

Thank you so much. Congratulations to you all. And welcome to the Alumni Association.

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