

To the Michael Colby Scholarship Committee, from Maximin Clement, NHS '21

Filmmaking, music, and street fashion are my passions, which is why I am headed to the Film and Television Production program at DePaul University in Chicago. For the past five years, I have worked at PortMedia TV station as a videographer and film editor, creating scripts, filming local events (from football games to city council meetings) and teaching in the summer camps, helping kids produce short movies. I now film landscape scenes for the local access channel, juxtaposing footage of classic Newburyport outdoors scenes with hip hop and other contemporary music that appeals to people my age. My work at the TV station has given me the opportunity to create broadcast material that shows my generation's perspective on Newburyport. All the film equipment I use is mine, bought with the money I made from working as a background actor on the movie "Daddy's Home 2."

I am the president of Film Production at NHS, and have been very active producing the Broadcast News segments. I've also been very active in the Theater and Improv programs, performing in lead and supporting roles in dramas, comedies, and musicals, including Twelfth Night, Les Miserables, Metamorphosis and other classic plays, but also contemporary shows, including "The Gen Z Project," which a group of us co-wrote and performed at the Firehouse Center for the Arts to document the challenges my generation faces. The reason I am going to DePaul is that not only do they have a top-ranked film production program, but a highly ranked theater program as well, so I know I will have opportunities to work behind and in front of the camera.

I founded the Next Generation Preservationists of the Newburyport Preservation Trust, a group of high school students who are interested in the relationship between gentrification and neighborhood culture. I first learned about gentrification from hip hop music, and thought of it as something to do with Brooklyn or San Francisco, but then I realized it's here in Newburyport. I helped organize a rock concert called "The Music of the Future Meets the Architecture of the Past," and I am currently working on a short documentary film showing my generation's view of Newburyport. The film will be screened during Yankee Homecoming. Finally, I was a panelist at the Inaugural William Lloyd Garrison Lecture at the library. The Next Generation Preservationists donated the profits from the rock concert to pay for a speaker to connect Garrison's work for racial justice to the concerns of the present day.

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What sets me apart: Although in the past, filmmakers would hand over a film and ask a musician to score the film, for me, the music is what makes the visual content come into existence. I hear the soundtrack of a scene or event first, then I create a storyboard. Music plays a profound role in generating thoughts and creativity, and so instead of picturing actors, sets, and scenes, I first hear what is going to happen. I hear the music first, and then I start to hear the dialogue, and finally, I sit down and design the set or shot sequences. Because I love clothing and footwear, I like to imagine the characters visually first, figuring out what they would be wearing and then how their clothing would convey personality and motive or plot. This is probably backwards, since usually

the film writer would have the scene written, then turn it over to the costume designer so that the wardrobe would reflect what has already been written. But I see the character's style and clothing first, then go back to imagine them speaking.

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I am proudest of the innovation in the way I film landscapes for the local access TV station. The station used to show still images of the beach at sunset, farm landscapes, and boats on the Merrimack River in the summer, with light classical music. This landscape montage was aimed at older viewers, with scenery identical to images on the tourist postcards at Richdale's. I have created full segments of landscape material that runs between regular programming so that my peers can see images of places where we grew up, from Indian Rock (where we always jumped in the Merrimack) to Plum Island, where we had beach fires, and the Pink House. Students my age are used to the film and video game aerial shots with a dynamic soundtrack, so I wanted to make landscape material more catchy by using drone shots. The first clip in my portfolio gives you an idea of my point of view. I am interested in environmental sustainability, so there's a shot of solar panels on the Audubon Center, and of the Pink House, every Newburyport kid's idea of a landmark, and the scenes I filmed show the places my peers know and go. The music presents a contrast to the generic beach narrative that tourists know. Most summer tourists buy the "I'd Rather Be at the Beach" signs, and most adults go to the Island to relax. People my age know the mystery spots and the private stories, and this film hints at their stories while keeping their secrets. It is easier to push creativity when there is a script and human characters, but when the landscape is a character, you have to bring out the subtext and the drama through camera work, editing, and the soundtrack.

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One of the things I find very interesting and helps me relate is that Michael graduated from NHS in 2001 and went out into the world to study at Northern Essex Community College just as 9/11 happened and the country had to live with that trauma. It must have been very hard to be a college freshman ready to celebrate your birthday and then go through that national tragedy. Graduating during the pandemic has been depressing and painful, but it helps me to look at Michael's life and understand that each group of graduates have their own historical shocks and challenges to deal with. When our classmate Caleb died two months before the pandemic, we were all depressed and felt so helpless. But I think that Michael would be so proud that his family made a video showing him from childhood through high school at NHS and adulthood, because it answers a question he must have asked himself: What do you do with pain? And the answer is: You make art. So that's what I'm going to do.

I am so excited to be going into DePaul's College of Computing and Digital Media, where the Film and Television Production major is housed, because there is an animation and design program, too, and some opportunities to learn about the business side of the

industry. I know I will meet faculty who are talented at animation and design, just as Michael was, and that I can learn from them. My degree will be similar to the one he earned in Digital Art and Design. But I'm not sure I can be the valedictorian. I just know I will work very hard.

I really admire that Michael designed his own clothing line, Enthused, because I am fairly obsessed with fashion, especially street fashion brands that come from independent designers. I am also crazy about collecting shoes, so I'm amazed that he created a Nike ad. He looks like he was ambitious, smart, creative, and chill. I love the prank in the grocery store, because my friends and I used to always do things like that in Market Basket and Shaw's. It seemed like he had a great sense of humor. My sister often tells me I should do stand-up comedy, based on my performances in Improv at NHS. I love impersonating people and playing jokes.

Like Michael, I love photography and music, but most of my drawing is not artistic but practical, when I am plotting out a scene in a play (right now I'm directing a show at NHS). Reading about Michael, I really feel inspired to think that I can put my creativity into multiple areas and still focus on having great friends and fun experiences. Thank you for sharing information with us at NHS about Michael. Sometimes I feel like we don't have role models of creativity. But after reading about him, I hope that in my future, I can be as down-to-earth as he was, and still "Cause an Uproar."