



TAYLOR JOHNSON '09

Knowing the Right Time to Pursue One's Dreams

"Come through the window," is Taylor Johnson's advice often to anyone approaching a new task, job or other opportunity. It also may be the key to her success as a poet. "Everyone expects you to come through the door," she says, "but if you come through the window it's unexpected and presents new prospects."

Taylor has been a voracious reader since the age of two, but it wasn't until starting Bullis in 7th grade in Mr. Andy Marusak's English class that Taylor fell in love with writing as well and learned the formula of how to write a five paragraph essay—a formula that the organized and methodical Taylor applies to many aspects of writing to keep everything neat and concise. At Bullis, Taylor developed both strong writing skills and self-confidence. Asked in English class by Ms. Molly Chehak to

lead a class discussion on Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Taylor remembers "that allowed me to discover I could have a voice and opinion that others might listen to." Taylor also appreciated the challenges Bullis provided, saying "I learned how fun it is to go through something that's new and scary, on the playing field, on the stage, or in the classroom and still today I look for new ways to challenge myself."

Taylor graduated from Oberlin College in 2013 with majors in creative writing and black studies and chose to move back to Washington, D.C. to give back to the community where she grew up. For the past two years, Taylor has been teaching with Critical Exposure, a nonprofit which promotes social and political advocacy through photography with D.C. public

Taylor as the nurse in the Upper School fall play, "Scapino" along with Jenni Cronin '09 and Jon Rice '09; Taylor's senior portrait from the 2009 *Roll Call*; and Taylor speaking to students upon her return to Bullis in May 2015.

high school students. Leaving this summer to pursue writing full time through a Brown University writing residency, Taylor will miss working with students. "They are hilarious! I will miss laughing with them, learning from them, connecting with them, and encouraging them to act as advocates for themselves and their work." Ready to commit to a focus on personal writing, Taylor plans to explore long expository works in the residency. "I'm looking forward to getting deeper with my writing and excited to reap the benefits of this prestigious writing fellowship."

Outside of the work with Critical Exposure, Taylor has continued to write and perform regularly, and recently had an essay published in "Outside the XY," an anthology about masculinity among people of color,

published by Magnus Books, as well as a poem in *The Minnesota Review*, a journal of creative and critical writing.

Taylor returned to Bullis during National Poetry Month to speak to students across all divisions about poetry, learning to be your own advocate and developing and demonstrating confidence. Teacher Amanda Lombardo said, "Taylor's visit was incredibly well received by students who were all clamoring to participate. They particularly loved seeing one of their own—a Bullis graduate—on stage sharing experiences, thoughts and dreams that all can relate to. It was also exciting for the staff to see a Bullis graduate living their dream and building a life from something they are so passionate about."