Get Your Grad on the Jumbotron at Yankee Stadium

Use your social media account to post celebratory messages with #CongratagradNYU. A collection of these messages will be featured throughout Yankee Stadium before and after commencement in the Great Hall, on concourse monitors, and on the center field jumbotron.

HIGHLIGHTS

5
Consecutive years as a trending topic on Twitter

2,700
Participating social media posts

3,800,000
Impressions across all social media platforms

On the Cover
A student representative celebrates her degree on behalf of her classmates in front of a packed Yankee Stadium.

Student Profiles
Get to know some of the outstanding graduates from NYU’s schools and global campuses.

Alumni Advice
Violets share what they wish they had known when they graduated.

Honorary Degree Recipients
Seven distinguished individuals will receive an honorary degree for outstanding achievement or leadership in their field.

Awards and Honors
A number of students, faculty, and noteworthy community members garnered major recognition this year.

Pop Quiz
NYU alumni abound on stage, film, and television. See if you can match these stars with their prime-time roles.

Editorial Team
Renée Alfuso, Editor
Valerie Sauers, Art Director
Jason Hollander, Senior Director of Communications

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Email: nyutoday@nyu.edu
Yankee Stadium is no stranger to packed seats, joyous crowds, and feelings of pride. But each May, mortarboards replace baseball caps, bagpipers march across the field, and the stands transform into a sea of flowing violet robes.

NYU has held its commencement exercises in the home of the Yankees each year since 2008, and today more than 17,000 members of the Class of 2018 celebrate the completion of their degrees. President Andrew Hamilton and William R. Berkley (STERN ’66), board of trustees chair, preside over the ceremony as these new graduates join an alumni community of more than 500,000 worldwide.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will receive a Doctor of Laws degree, *honoris causa*, at the ceremony. He will also deliver the response on behalf of the honorary degree recipients.

This year’s other recipients of honorary doctorates are Jean Liu—president of Didi Chuxing, the world’s leading mobile transportation platform based in China—who receives a Doctor of Commercial Science *honoris causa*; Martine Rothblatt—chair and CEO of United Therapeutics, which strives to create novel therapies for rare diseases—who receives a Doctor of Commercial Science *honoris causa*; Bryan A. Stevenson—NYU School of Law professor and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative—who receives a Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*; and John Richard Casani, Suzanne Rosik Dodd, and Edward Carroll Stone—key members of NASA’s pathbreaking Voyager team—who receive a joint Doctor of Science *honoris causa*.

Today’s student speaker is Christopher Hearn, who receives a bachelor’s degree from the Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. Finalists for the student speaker role were RJ Khalaf from Liberal Studies, Aditi Shankar from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, and Lauren Tiffen from the College of Dentistry.

At a dinner last night, the Albert Gallatin Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Society was presented to philanthropist and chairman of Quexco Incorporated Howard M. Meyers (STERN ’64). The Lewis Rudin Award for Exemplary Service to New York City was presented to Alan H. Fishman, chairman of Ladder Capital and chairman emeritus of the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

In keeping with NYU tradition, today’s commencement proceedings include the Ceremony of the Torch. The university torch—designed and fashioned by Tiffany & Co. in sterling silver and donated to NYU in 1911—is once again passed from a senior member of the faculty to the youngest undergraduate degree recipient. Today the torch is passed from Laura Slatkin, a professor at the Gallatin School of Individualized Study, to Salah Eldein Elkattaway, 19, who earns a Bachelor of Arts from the College of Arts and Science.
Christopher Hearn
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

While earning a baccalaureate in music business, Christopher Hearn served as the director of diversity for Student Government, vice president of the Gentleman of Quality group, and cochair of the NYU Diversity Committee.

Did you receive any scholarships?
The Martin Luther King Jr. scholarship is the reason I was able to attend NYU. It gave me purpose before I even came to campus. To be thought of in the same light as Martin Luther King Jr. and be part of his legacy is an honor that means so much to me. It’s in my mind and in my heart as I make decisions, and it helps me remember what legacy I’m trying to leave.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
It was in my first year when my friends and I attended the Violet 100 concert and got to see Chance the Rapper perform. It was one of the most entertaining and inspiring shows I have seen. It meant a lot to me as a music artist to be so young and see someone who would go on to become one of the biggest hip-hop artists today. It’s come full circle because now I’ll be the opening act for the Violet 100 performance this year.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
I’m most proud of getting into NYU and the person I’ve become throughout this experience. I never expected to get in. And when I first arrived, there were times I seriously considered whether NYU was too challenging or above my capabilities. I decided to stay and not only found a way to survive, but I thrived here. I took on leadership positions that are impactful for this university over the long term. I’m proud because I know what that means for people like me, who came from environments where people were never encouraged to strive for top-tier universities. My greatest accomplishment is showing that not only is a person like me beneficial in this space, but I’m providing a perspective and a presence that’s necessary here. I hope that functions as a beacon of light for people who might have been hesitant to jump into spaces like this.
Chen Mengzhu
NYU Shanghai

A native of Daqing, Heilongjiang province, China, Chen Mengzhu embodies a pioneering spirit by taking full advantage of her experiences both in and out of the classroom to ensure that she leaves NYU Shanghai stronger than when she started.

What was your major?
Interactive media arts (IMA). I had a feeling that I would probably want to major in something multidisciplinary, and I was looking for something that could nest or incorporate my interests in arts, technology, business, and humanities. In IMA, I was given the freedom to explore and implement, advocating for social causes or transforming existing fields using art and technology.

Did you participate in any clubs?
I served as class representative of this year’s Student Government, chair of the Student Commencement Committee, and a peer mentor for new students at NYU Shanghai. I also cofounded the Pre-Law Society at NYU Shanghai and was a British Parliament debater for the Collective Voice Debate Club.

What was your favorite course?
I spent my junior year studying at NYU’s New York campus and my favorite course was Strategic Analysis at Stern. And at NYU Shanghai, it was International Business and Investment Transactions with Developing Countries: The Impact of China.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
Sunday brunch at Palladium Hall, and visiting Bobst Library.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
Let curiosity be the drive for a lifelong learning journey, for the more one learns, the better one understands, and the more one appreciates the world we live in.

Magdalena Sawicka
Tandon School of Engineering

Poland native Magdalena Sawicka serves as a role model to other young women in STEM through her leadership in entrepreneurial competitions and her work as a teaching assistant at Tandon’s new MakerSpace.

Did you participate in any extracurricular activities?
I captained Tandon’s Hyperloop Team, which takes part in the SpaceX Hyperloop competition, designing and racing high-speed pods in the world’s second-largest vacuum chamber. I am very proud that I was the first and only woman to represent NYU at the inaugural SpaceX competition. Additionally, I helped cofound Rogue Aerospace, which is a student-led initiative to build rockets, and FOLT, a start-up dedicated to sustainable, reusable drinkware.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
My favorite NYU moments have occurred as I’ve walked out of Bobst Library at midnight. Even if I’m tired from studying so late or worried about an upcoming assignment, I look up at the arch, take in the lights of the city, and think to myself: “My life is so much bigger and filled with potential than I could have ever imagined. I can amount to anything.”

What would your future dream job be?
My future dream job is to be the CEO of SpaceX. Sorry, Elon Musk!

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
I would urge my fellow graduates to practice kindness in everything they do. I believe that the kindness we contribute to the world can be just as valuable as our engineering innovations and technical skills, especially when we contribute kindness through that very medium. With that said, I am so proud to be graduating with the class of thesmartest and most dedicated trailblazers I have ever met. If given the opportunity, I would thank each and every one of the classmates who encouraged me and helped me get to this point. Thank you for the memories. Now let’s go out and change the world.
Jesus Miguel Casado  
School of Professional Studies  

Diagnosed with leukemia at age 21, Jesus Miguel Casado has coped with its recurrence while pursuing a master’s in global affairs with a concentration in global gender studies and a specialization in peace building and conflict resolution.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
One of my professors took our class to an event at MoMA for the #HeforShe Campaign, which was initiated by UN Women to involve men in discussions about gender rights. There were a lot of high-profile people there, such as actress Emma Watson, and heads of state, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. That gave me a perspective of what my career could evolve into.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
The profound discussions. The faculty members were able to provoke very deep discussions on important issues that I had not explored as an undergraduate. They gave me a clear understanding of the global issues at stake.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
A huge achievement was just being accepted to NYU. I thought there was no way I could be as successful as other students. But as I started taking courses, I realized that there was a lot I could offer. My experience here has made me believe in myself much more and has prepared me for a professional career.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
I would tell them to take all the experience that they were exposed to at NYU and create something meaningful out there in the world. Now more than ever before, we have to be unapologetic about the issues we feel strongly about. I also want to let people know that I went through a chronic disease that would have stopped my plans, my life, my career—but I didn’t let that stop me. So I believe that if you truly work hard at something, you can achieve it no matter what.

Sheri Holt  
Leonard N. Stern School of Business  

While earning an MBA in finance and management, Los Angeles native Sheri Holt displayed a contagious optimism, an entrepreneurial spirit, and an ability to recognize the good in people and translate their stories to a global audience as cofounder and host of the Stern Chats podcast. She also served as vice president of professional development for Stern Women in Business and vice president of career development for the Stern Student Council. Plus, she landed an internship at the NFL.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
The feeling that anything and everything is possible at school, and learning for the sake of learning! I’ll also miss running into people on campus. You hear a lot these days about offices physically breaking down walls and creating open floor plans for people to interact. School is one giant floorplan in which students are constantly colliding, sharing ideas, laughing, asking one another to grab lunch, and learning—always.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
Launching the student-run podcast Stern Chats, which allowed me to explore an artistic venture and fulfill a personal entrepreneurial goal of starting something from the ground up. It’s now a self-sustaining organization, but along the way, I learned an enormous amount about myself—not only my strengths but also my blind spots. I hope that finding and hearing people’s stories is always a part of my life as well as my career in the future.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I’ll be returning to Citigroup, where I interned over the summer as a human resources management associate. I’m excited to participate in their two-year rotational program.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
Let people surprise you, don’t be afraid to change your mind, and give your time generously.
Khalil Hall  
College of Arts and Science

A native of Detroit, Khalil Hall has balanced advocacy and academics while pursuing his educational interests and career aims. At NYU, he served on the executive board of the Black Student Union and took the initiative to create a new organization on campus called Men Against Rape and Sexual Misconduct.

What was your favorite course?
Concepts in Social and Cultural Analysis—I changed my major after taking that course. That was one of the first courses I took where I felt that all the kinds of academic questions I had were being asked in a constructive academic space, such as gentrification, responding to climate change, and urban education disparities.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
I feel as though I am leaving NYU a little better than I found it four years ago. I suppose the most specific example of this would be the creation of MARS (Men Against Rape and Sexual Misconduct). It’s not a light topic, but I think it’s opening the door for men to be engaged in a conversation that they have been absent from. And it’s long overdue.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I want to stay in New York. I will most likely continue working in real estate—and ideally, would like to work with and consult students who are looking for housing in the city. I plan on going to law school at some point and utilizing that education to make the law more accessible to those who don’t have it, specifically as it relates to tenants’ rights.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
Don’t waste your gift—that’s one of the best pieces of advice I ever got, way back in middle school. Of course, everyone has something to offer. But being too preoccupied with what you should do as opposed to what you want to do is a disservice to everyone. I don’t think there is anything that could be more fulfilling than utilizing whatever your strengths are to try to make the world a little bit of a better place—big or small.

Griselda Bautista Ceja  
Rory Meyers College of Nursing

The first in her family to graduate from college, Griselda Bautista Ceja served as president of NYU’s Undergraduate Nursing Student Organization, where she oversaw 16 different groups, including the Women’s Health Student Nursing Association, Men in Nursing, and the LGBTQ Nursing Student Association.

What was the most thought-provoking subject you studied?
One of the electives I took was Science of Happiness. That was such an amazing course. It made me think about happiness in a “science” way. Mindfulness, self-care, and depletion were some of my favorite topics covered in class.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
I’ll miss the diversity here. The first question I often ask people at NYU is, “Where are you from?” Because I love hearing their stories and learning about different cultures and ways of living.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
Being the first one in my family to graduate from college. I’m first generation, the oldest of four. Every time I talk to my mom, she says, “I’m so proud of you, I’m so proud of you.” Hearing that from her motivates me.

What are your plans for after graduation?
After I graduate, I want to first study, study, study so that I can take the NCLEX [the National Council Licensure Exam]. That’s the first thing, getting the NCLEX out of the way! Then I want to get two years of experience working as a nurse, build up my foundation, and then go into a specialized area.

What would your future dream job be?
Pediatric oncology nurse at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.
Kevin Wilson Jr.
Tisch School of the Arts

A native of Durham, North Carolina, Kevin Wilson Jr. today receives a master’s in graduate film. His short film My Nephew Emmett—about Emmett Till’s abduction and murder in 1955—was nominated for an Academy Award this year.

Did you receive any scholarships?
After my second year, I wasn’t sure I was going to be able to finish my degree because I couldn’t afford it. I have two kids and a wife to support. But receiving the Ang Lee Scholarship and the BAFTA New York Scholarship was instrumental in helping me complete my degree. Professors Barbara Schock and Kasi Lemmons were both looking out for me since walking through the door—they made sure I had the resources I needed to finish.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
My first meeting with Spike Lee is my favorite NYU moment. He was the reason I came to NYU. When I finally made it into the grad program, I found out he would do advisement appointments for second- and third-year students. I was only a first-year, first-semester student, and somehow, I found a way to get on a list to meet with Spike Lee one-on-one.

I remember being so nervous that morning. I went in, he read my script and threw it in the trash! He told me, “You need to go back and write something else.” It was really the first time anyone had challenged me like that. So I went back and rewrote another script, and it ended up being much better. I kept going back to him for advisement sessions. I ended up writing My Nephew Emmett, so he really helped me reach my goal as a filmmaker. I can say without hesitation, Spike Lee is the reason I wanted to make movies. So to be able to sit across from your hero—to have him give me advice and give me script notes—it’s a dream come true.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
Find a goal and keep pushing forward toward it. Never give up and go after it relentlessly. A lot of people may tell you it is unattainable but ignore that noise. Keep pushing or keep fighting for what you want.

Ilona Zbirun Nockles
College of Dentistry

A Navy dentist, Ukrainian immigrant, and mother of two, Ilona Zbirun Nockles will bring her dental skills and passion for patient care to sailors and their families.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
My patients. I’ve built some amazing relationships here. I like that dentistry is one of the few fields where you can really take someone from sickness to health in one or two visits. We tend to have a longer-term relationship with our patients, and there’s a lot more medicine than people realize. We do a lot of screening for diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease—in part because they have oral manifestations, but also because people go to their dentist more often than their physician. In just two years of clinical practice, I’ve already identified undiagnosed hypertension and gotten those patients on track and to their doctors—and that’s a really cool feeling!

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
Running the New York City Marathon last year. I think running the marathon while in dental school—with two kids—that’s a new level of juggling things for me! I couldn’t have done it without my amazing supportive husband. Running through every single borough of the city was a really amazing way to say goodbye to New York.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I’m in the Navy, so I will be going to officer school in Rhode Island for five weeks, and then I start residency in San Diego at the Naval Medical Center. I will be a Navy dentist, treating sailors and their families. I’m really looking forward to what I’ll be able to do—it’s a broader experience than what you’d necessarily get to do in civilian life.

What would your future dream job be?
I intend to pursue a global public health career. And I’d really love to work for the World Health Organization, which has been a dream of mine as far back as high school when I took part in Model UN and was on the WHO Committee.
Abda Kazemi  
NYU Abu Dhabi

Born in Afghanistan and raised in the United Kingdom, Abda Kazemi is well known at NYU Abu Dhabi for being involved in the community. Kazemi dreams big and encourages others to do the same. Someday, she hopes to run her own business—or even become the president of Afghanistan.

**What was your favorite course?**
Creativity and Innovation. I carried out a project to dispel the myths of vulnerability through a multimedia exhibition that explores human connection at NYU Abu Dhabi.

**Where did you travel while at NYU?**
I studied with the Middlebury Arabic Language Program in Amman, Jordan. I spent my first January term in Washington, DC, for the Nation Building course, then studied in Shanghai for the Children and Childhood course. And I spent my third January term in Al-Ain learning the Arabic Emirati dialect.

**What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?**
Writing and performing in the NYU Abu Dhabi Reality Show. We produced skits and songs that addressed issues of adjusting to college life in Abu Dhabi. The show was important in connecting with fellow students to convey the message that there is always help from the NYU community and mental health professionals.

**What would your future dream job be?**
I don’t want to work for someone else. I want to start my own businesses around the world focusing on providing social good, without compromising quality and aesthetics. In the distant future, I dream of being the first female president of Afghanistan.

Christie Cunningham  
Silver School of Social Work

A member of the Student Leadership Council and Phi Alpha Honor Society, Christie Cunningham discovered her voice at NYU as a therapist assisting those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system.

**What was your favorite NYU moment?**
I gave a guest presentation in a Social Work Practice II class earlier this semester on working with individuals exposed to the criminal justice system. That was a great moment. At a personal level, I was doing something that a few years ago I never would have imagined I would be doing: public speaking in a class, more or less extemporaneous. Professionally, it was the level of engagement by the class that was also really exciting.

My fellow students have been incredibly supportive, which is really important. I came to Silver to develop the skills necessary for a career as a therapist, and being here helped me gain this important training. My first year, for example, I got a field placement, learning the important lesson that I could sit with a person and listen to them basically share some of the worst parts of their life. An important first lesson for social workers is to know that you can do that, and you can do something to support that individual.

**What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?**
Being part of the Know Your Rights project at the law school. They train students to give presentations in various areas of individual rights, and my group focused on knowing your rights in encounters with law enforcement.

**What are your plans for after graduation?**
I’ve applied to the nonprofit Training Institute for Mental Health here in New York City to get further education in psychodynamic therapy. That’s what I’m hoping to do long term—psychodynamic therapy, more specifically with people impacted by the criminal justice system. The institute offers low-cost therapy to individuals as part of training people to become therapists.
A dual citizen who was born in Arizona and raised in Nigeria, Deborah Onakomaiya is passionate about improving health outcomes for women and children in sub-Saharan Africa.

**What was your favorite NYU moment?**
My favorite experience was going to Ghana for my MPH capstone, where my group was in charge of our own public health research project. Our project was a rapid assessment of the health system in Northern Ghana to assess the reporting of adverse events after immunization. I was so proud of my heritage on this trip because Ghana and Nigeria have a lot of similarities. The trip provided an opportunity to introduce my colleagues to West African culture, which was very exciting for me.

I also studied abroad at NYU Florence, looking at health in the Mediterranean among migrant refugees. While there, we were able to meet with migrants who made the journey across the ocean from Libya. They were from all over the world. A lot of the migrants I met at the camps were Nigerian, and it was quite jarring to see my fellow countrymen. I asked myself what the difference was between me and them—I just happened to have an opportunity. My parents just happened to give birth to me here in the United States. I came to understand through this experience that everyone, including my parents, were just looking for a better life.

**What was your favorite course?**
Intermediate Epidemiology was an awesome course. Before class, the professor would make us Zumba! It was the most spectacular thing. It got us pumped to learn about intermediate epi. And the content alone was great. She always brought real-life examples to class, not just textbook examples.

**What will you miss most about your time at NYU?**
The community. Because the College of Global Public Health is growing, it’s a very tight-knit community. Another thing I’ll miss is the library—Bobst is like my second home. I’ll also miss getting tickets at NYU Skirball for Broadway shows.

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Born in Mumbai, India, and raised in Muscat, Oman, Komal Lodaria is focused on change management and organizational development. Currently an intern at the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, she is supporting the organization’s transition to one that is more technology-driven in healthcare delivery.

**What was the most thought-provoking subject you studied?**
Performance Measurements and Rewards. I think it taught me a lot about the challenges any organization faces in trying to measure the performance of employees; there’s no one-size-fits-all answer to this. The course shaped how I think about any problem, which is to be more critical and skeptical about the status quo because there is always room for improvement.

**What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?**
I think my biggest one was that I was able to participate in a lot of extracurricular activities and meet new people. For the GSAS Program Board, I was chosen to be the treasurer, which allowed me to get involved in student programming. Through my internships, I have had the opportunity to work at the United Nations in the Office of Human Resources Management.

On a more personal note, I’ve always shied away from public speaking opportunities—it has been a challenge that I have gradually been able to overcome through internships and courses I have taken [since] almost all of them have required this in some form. But I can see a visible difference in myself over the past two years, and every experience I have had has only led me to break out of my shell!

**What would your future dream job be?**
I would love to work, at some point, with the United Nations again. I had such a unique experience there, working on the Assessment Services Team that designed personnel selection tests for various departments of the UN. I also had the opportunity to connect with people from around the world—I don’t think I have seen such a diversity of people elsewhere.

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**Deborah Onakomaiya**
College of Global Public Health

**Komal Lodaria**
Graduate School of Arts and Science
Ignacio Calles
School of Medicine

A native of Houston, Ignacio Calles earned his MD while serving as co-president of both the Student Diversity Initiative and the Black and Latino Student Association at NYU.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
Opening the letter telling me I had matched to UCLA for residency surrounded by mentors, friends, and family. The energy in that room was so positive and triumphant. We work at this for years, sometimes even decades. That moment of success, relief, and happiness will stick with me forever.

What was the most thought-provoking subject you studied?
Anatomy. It’s the first time in medical school that you feel the weight and responsibility of the profession. It’s humbling to think that individuals and families would make such precious donations for the sake of our learning.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
My classmates. I moved here from Texas without really knowing anyone. I’m leaving with a network and a family that I’ll be in touch with for the rest of my life.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
Our minority medical student mentorship program. We’ve created an amazing and supportive community where participants can truly grow and learn together. You can’t get through medical school alone, and I hope I’ve helped make it a little easier for people traditionally marginalized to feel like this is their home, too.

What would your future dream job be?
Working with underserved patients and underrepresented minority students to improve diversity and inclusion in medicine.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
Education is a privilege. We are fortunate to have been given the opportunity to learn and train here. Never forget the sacrifices families and friends made to give us the chance to make it so far. Be grateful and pay it forward.

Victoria Yee
School of Law

Victoria Yee is an immigrant rights and labor rights advocate who won deportation relief and asylum for a single mother from El Salvador. The proud daughter of a Vietnam War boat refugee and a Taiwanese immigrant, Yee is a first-generation college student.

What is your proudest NYU accomplishment?
I think it would be the work I did in the Immigrant Rights Clinic. Last year my clinic partner and I won deportation relief in immigration court for one of our clients, a single mom from El Salvador with three children. She had a criminal conviction and had been in the United States for a very long time, so a lot of factors were stacked up against her. But we were able to get asylum for her, which is huge—especially given this time when there is a lot of anti-immigrant sentiment.

One of the biggest moments for me was when I was able to give her the piece of paper from court that said she was able to remain in the United States with her family. She then told me about how, for the first time in years, things were looking up—that because of the asylum she won, she was able to find a steady job; that her daughter was doing a lot better in school because she knew her mom was able to stay here. The family had gone through so much anguish, and hearing her, I just felt so privileged to be able to use the legal tools I learned at NYU to help keep families together. It made me feel like this is what I came to law school for.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I’ll be moving back to California after graduation. I won a Skadden Fellowship and my host organization is the Wage Justice Center, a nonprofit in Los Angeles. My project will be to help low-wage immigrant Chinese workers in the San Gabriel Valley—which has a large population of Chinese immigrants—recover their stolen wages.
Tsering Bista
Gallatin School of Individualized Study

Born in Nepal and raised in New Jersey, Tsering Bista today becomes the first in her family to graduate from college. A school scholarship made it all possible, and she rolled two of her passions—visual journalism and ethnography—into a concentration. In turn, the Dean’s Award for Summer Research enabled Bista to document and record her family history across continents.

Did you participate in any internships?
Yes, and I attribute a lot of my personal growth to the experiences I’ve had and the people I’ve met through those internships. I worked on video teams at NPR, CNN, and New York magazine. I also interned for nonprofits like Students for a Free Tibet and Charity: Water, which brings clean, safe drinking water to people in developing countries.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
Every year, Kimmel hosts a celebration to commemorate the publication of Gallatin’s Literacy Review, a journal of writing from adults in literacy programs throughout New York City. Many of the writers that are published are immigrants learning English as a second or third language. As a member of the editorial team, I spent a lot of time with the pieces and not the people behind them. So meeting the writers and listening to them read their works at the annual celebrations has been an absolute joy.

What will you miss most about your time at NYU?
I’ll miss having the opportunity to dabble in as many things as I wanted—the freedom, the time, and the experimentation.

Last summer, for example, I did an auto-ethnographic project where I traced my family’s linguistic migration through oral history and video documentation. I traveled to multiple continents in the process, starting in Nepal, then to Japan, then Switzerland, and back to New York.

What’s your message to fellow graduates?
My dad never had the chance to go to high school, and my mom never went to school a day in her life. So I am constantly thinking about how fortunate I am to be graduating from NYU having studied something I love. So to all my fellow students, my advice is to acknowledge the luck and the privilege that brought you here and pay that forward when you leave this university. Keep your curiosity alive—stay a student of life for as long as you can.

Anabel Perez
Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

During her time at NYU, Dominican Republic native Anabel Perez provided an impassioned voice for other first-generation students, coupling her story with her interest in policymaking, politics, and racial inclusion. While pursuing her master’s in public and nonprofit management and policy, she served as chair of the Wagner Food Policy Alliance and interned with the Mayor’s Office for Economic Opportunity.

What was your favorite NYU moment?
I participated in a panel discussion at Wagner with a couple of other first-generation students of color. I was able to share my story as a first-generation undocumented woman. I always push to get a seat at the table because it is crucial to put a face on issues affecting communities of color. Students of color battle against white-dominated spaces, so I told all of the people in the room that it is important for us to insert ourselves in policy discussions, build a village of support, and own it.

What was your favorite course?
Race and Class in American Cities. It allowed me to dive into the issue of food policy and immigrants—that is, food and security and how it affects immigrants in New York City. I picked an issue area and wrote op-eds and policy memos over the semester.

What is your proudest accomplishment?
Of course, graduating from Wagner and, more broadly, the sacrifices and choices that I’ve made. I’m a formerly undocumented immigrant—I was a DREAMer for 12 years. I gained legal immigrant status just recently and am now a green card holder.

What are your plans for after graduation?
I want to work within New York City government on racial equity and inclusion, with a focus on assisting marginalized communities and other issues that disproportionately affect people of color. I also want to run for office.
Congratulations, Class of 2018. You are now one of more than 500,000 NYU alumni from around the world.

Stay connected and receive your alumni benefits card by updating your contact information at nyualumni.com/class-of-2018
If I’d Known Then: Advice for the Graduating Class

We asked NYU alumni to share their insights and observations with the Class of 2018. Here’s what they wished someone had told them when they graduated college.

Jess Moore Matthews (STEINHARDT ’14)
Audience development analyst at the New York Times

“If you’re as awesome as I imagine you are, someone will likely write about you one day. My advice? Give them a good story to tell. I like to think of life as a developing Wikipedia page. The twists and turns are inevitable, but the triumphant arcs are yours for the taking.”

Karla Garcia (TISCH ’07)
Dancer and member of the Hamilton cast

“I wish I knew that everything was going to be AWESOME and EXCITING ahead and to just relax and enjoy the ride! But then again, it would be less fun and surprising if I knew everything that was going to happen. The most valuable advice I received was to truly LOVE what you are doing. Whatever that may be, the journey is so much more fun and worth it if approached with passion.”

Billy Crudup (TISCH ’94)
Tony Award–winning actor of stage and screen

“If you are ever given the opportunity to take something seriously, jump at it. Whether it’s a job, a pastime, a relationship, a thought, a feeling—when that tuning fork in you is struck and hits the right frequency and you are lit up by something, be aware of that and go toward it. If the world conspires to hide those opportunities from you, be relentless in your effort to broaden your worldview and your life experiences. Coming out of college can often be a clumsy and back-footed experience. The structure that has been given to you or imposed on you evaporates, but that is your opportunity to set your own curriculum! I think when we put our head down and work to build skill, knowledge, discipline, and appreciation for almost anything, we grow—and that is an investment that will pay dividends in your life.”
Clark Gregg  
(Tisch ’86)
Actor, writer, and director

“There were two simple life-altering concepts that I picked up while at NYU, which have sustained and defined my creative life to this day. The first was to avoid the sucking vortex of ‘chasing work’—an often futile and soul-deadening task for recent grads—by making, producing, and writing your own. That seems daunting and it was, but finding a way to do it and doing it again even when I failed taught me everything I know. The second idea was to make the kind of work you’d like to see. This provides a powerful compass because it teaches you what you care about.”

Heather Cannady  
(CAS ’04)
NYU Alumni Association president

“Today is your best day. Enjoy it. Social media now has the ability to capture every snapshot of every life moment, and apps are constantly directing us back to the past with photos and status messages of our former selves. I didn’t appreciate everything I had 10 years ago—the metabolism, the ability to travel the world unencumbered—but rather over-anticipated what was next. Sure, plan and prepare, but enjoy the life you are living while you are living it. Also, spend as little as you possibly can on rent.”

Ellen Langer  
(ARTS ’70)
Social psychologist and the first female professor to gain tenure in the Department of Psychology at Harvard University

“Frank Sinatra echoed a popular view that youth is wasted on the young. It doesn’t have to be if we pay attention to the decisions we make. When we’re in college, we tend to treat rules, routines, even objects as if they were handed down from the heavens. I wish I had realized sooner that instead, essentially everything in life was the result of a decision. The need for decisions requires that there be uncertainty about something, and uncertainty suggests that things are mutable. This realization opens up all sorts of possibilities for you if you make your own decisions.

Decisions are made by people who are fallible, and whether you own your decisions or cede them to others, you might win or lose. But the worst-case scenario is giving up what feels right and losing. If you make your own decisions, it’s always a win. Have the courage to do ‘it’ your own way, and you can make any outcome meaningful.

Life only consists of moments. If you make the moment matter by making decisions that are meaningful to you, your life will matter. More important, over time your life will have been fully lived.”

Alan Menken  
(ARTS ’72, HONORARY ’00)
Academy Award-winning Disney composer

“The best survival tool I can offer anyone going off into the world is the ability to move on in life. If you’ve had a disappointment or a failure, don’t hang around, licking your wounds. If you’ve had a great success, don’t strut around and marvel at yourself. Move on to what’s next. Your job is to put your work, your expression, your ideas, your commitment, and your love into the world. What happens from there is not yours to control or to judge. Just start something new.”

Photos: © Luke Fontana (Crudup); © Joseph DiGiovanna (Menken)
Honorary Degree Recipients

Today, President Andrew Hamilton will present honorary degrees to seven distinguished individuals. Following are the citations that will be read during the ceremony.

Justin Trudeau

Celebrated leader of your nation and citizen of the world, you have emerged as one of the most enlightened and progressive political leaders of our time. Elected as the 23rd prime minister of Canada in 2015, you moved swiftly and boldly to shape a government reflective of the power and promise of your people. An avowed feminist, you appointed women to half of the positions in your Cabinet, raised taxes on the wealthiest 1 percent of Canadians while cutting them for the middle class, created 300,000 new jobs, and signed the Paris climate agreement. At your core a committed teacher, you have confirmed that a great nation’s character is measured by how it treats the vulnerable—whether by lifting hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty; or welcoming into Canada many thousands of refugees and providing them housing, healthcare, food, and access to citizenship; or pledging billions of dollars for affordable housing. On the international scene, you have placed renewed emphasis on human rights, the environment, promotion of equality, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian aid. Compassion and tolerance are the hallmarks of your leadership.

Justin Trudeau—as we witness the political oppression, searing conflicts, and staggering inequity that plague much of humanity, you, prime minister, are a vital and valorous force on behalf of social justice and global engagement. By virtue of the authority vested in me, I am pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

Jean Liu

You rank among China’s most influential and powerful business leaders, as president of Didi Chuxing, the world’s leading mobile transportation platform. A computer scientist with degrees from Peking and Harvard Universities and one of the youngest managing directors in the history of Goldman Sachs Asia, you were named president of Didi in 2015 in your mid-30s. A consummate, collaborative dealmaker, you successfully merged Didi with its foremost taxi-hailing competitor, negotiated a $1 billion investment from Apple, and spearheaded the acquisition of Uber China. Your ride-sharing, artificial intelligence, and autonomous technology company is valued at over $50 billion and now offers more than 450 million users in over 400 Chinese cities affordable and efficient rides, whether by car, taxi, bike, or bus. Fueled by your spirited leadership, Didi is changing the world by investing its vast data-driven expertise in solving global environmental, transportation, and employment challenges.

Jean Liu—a resolute and creative leader of an innovative and inclusive company, 40 percent of whose employees are women, yours has been a clear and consistent voice for the wise use of technology in service to humankind. By virtue of the authority vested in me, I am pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Commercial Science honoris causa.

Martine Rothblatt

Engineer, lawyer, CEO, and medical ethicist, you are an intrepid entrepreneurial pioneer who has helped shape the future of communications, aviation, and medicine. You translated your vision of uniting the Earth through satellite communications into the global radio giant SiriusXM. When told there was no cure to save your youngest daughter from a rare and fatal disease, you pivoted from space to biology and built United Therapeutics, a $5 billion biotechnology company that produces the life-saving medicine you developed. Now engaged in creating the means to manufacture an unlimited supply of transplantable organs through modification of the pig genome, having already designed and piloted the world’s first electric helicopter for their swift transport, you have become an authority on ethical, legal, and spiritual challenges posed by the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence. Ever
focused on what unites us as humans, you have emerged as an exemplar and powerful advocate on behalf of the transgender community.

Martine Aliana Rothblatt—with unbounded curiosity, a healthy skepticism of authority, and a knack for transforming aspirations into practical realities, you have successfully harnessed “the transcendent touch of technology” to the needs of humanity. By virtue of the authority vested in me, I am pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Commercial Science honoris causa.

Bryan A. Stevenson

Public interest lawyer, professor, author, and lecturer, you have borne witness to the massive human cost of racial and economic injustice in our criminal justice system and society at large. Moved by faith embedded in good works, graced with spellbinding eloquence, and equipped with advanced degrees in law and government from Harvard University, you founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1989. For nearly three decades, you and a devoted staff have represented the wrongly convicted, the unfairly sentenced, and the abused in jails and prisons. You have won reversals, relief, or release for over 125 prisoners on death row and argued the landmark 2012 US Supreme Court decision holding unconstitutional the imposition of mandatory sentences of life without parole for children under 18. Recognizing this nation’s need for more places where its racial history can be honestly confronted, EJI recently opened the Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, built on the site of a former slave warehouse in downtown Montgomery; and its companion structure, commemorating America’s thousands of victims of lynching, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

Bryan A. Stevenson—our own longtime and beloved professor of clinical law, lauded as “America’s Mandela,” you have aroused our conscience and are helping repair the social fabric of our nation and our world. By virtue of the authority vested in me, I am pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Laws honoris causa.

Edward Stone, Suzanne Dodd, and John Casani

Three of the world’s foremost authorities on space exploration, you are celebrated principals of NASA’s Voyager Mission, twin spacecraft launched in 1977, which gave the people of Earth their first close-up look at the planets in our outer solar system: Jupiter, Saturn, Neptune, Uranus. With a clarity no land-based telescope could equal, the mission revealed the dramatic dynamism of Jupiter’s atmosphere, the intricate beauty and complexity of Saturn’s rings, and the astonishing range of different worlds and moons that inhabit our own small neighborhood in the Milky Way. The Voyager spacecraft are the embodiment of humankind’s outstretched, exploring hand—one now leaving our solar system and the other already in the vast reaches of interstellar space—both still reporting to NASA daily and carrying a message from Earth as if in a bottle on the open sea of the cosmos.

John Richard Casani—manager upon launch and leading developer and manager of spacecraft systems for over half a century. Suzanne Rosik Dodd—manager today, having more than three decades of experience in spacecraft operations. Edward Carroll Stone—chief scientist, involved in every aspect of the Voyager Mission over the course of more than four decades. You are the human drivers of a magnificent leap of science, sending spacecraft farther into space than any other man-made object, and in the process allowing us to reimagine our own place in the cosmos. By virtue of the authority vested in me, I am pleased to confer upon you the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa.
Recipients of the Albert Gallatin Medal and the Lewis Rudin Award

Below are the citations that were read during a ceremony on May 15.

Howard M. Meyers
The Albert Gallatin Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Society

Howard M. Meyers, accomplished businessman, philanthropist, trustee of New York University, and overseer of the Rory Meyers College of Nursing and the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, through your generous spirit, you have given hope and opportunity to young people across the globe. A graduate of the New York University Stern School of Business, you served your country as a reservist in the United States Navy and returned to transform a regional smelting company into Quexco Incorporated, a global leader in the scrap metal industry. As the chairman and chief executive officer, you were instrumental in expanding its recycling operations and reducing the amount of waste materials sent to landfills. Your work ethic and resilience motivated you to support the aspirations of younger generations. Through your beneficence, you have empowered countless individuals to develop the critical skills and understanding required to lead productive and fulfilling lives. With your vision, the Paths for Peace Program brought emerging Palestinian and Israeli leaders to NYU for study, exchange, and discourse, fostering cross-cultural reconciliation and helping bridge the divide among fractured communities. With your wife, Rose-Marie, you sustain the dreams of low-income, first-generation students through your historic level of giving to the Rory Meyers College of Nursing, so named in recognition of your beloved wife’s own nursing legacy. With admiration for your steadfast devotion to New York University, your tireless work on its behalf, and your inspiring philanthropy in support of our mission, New York University is honored to present the Albert Gallatin Medal for Outstanding Contributions to Society.

Alan H. Fishman
The Lewis Rudin Award for Exemplary Service to New York City

Alan H. Fishman, a third-generation Brooklyn native from Crown Heights, you embody the qualities that make so many millions identify as devoted Brooklynites. First and foremost, you are an extraordinary achiever: chairman of Ladder Capital, recently CEO of Washington Mutual Incorporated, you led Sovereign Bank and its predecessor, Independence Community Bank. You also chaired that bank’s private charitable foundation and grew it into the Brooklyn Community Foundation, the first community foundation devoted to a single New York borough. Just as you drew upon your keen business acumen to invigorate Brooklyn’s cultural and commercial core—as board chairman of the Brooklyn Academy of Music for three decades, chair of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, chair of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, and cochair of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership—so you have been a critical link between Brooklyn’s needs and its philanthropic and civic community. Not only has NYU benefited indirectly from the vibrant and creative Brooklyn you helped nurture, you have been generous with your time and counsel in advising us over the last decade as we have expanded our presence in that borough. A graduate of Brown University with an MA in economics from Columbia University, you have blended professional and civic triumph. For your devoted stewardship and service to the town we all love, we proudly present you with the Lewis Rudin Award for Exemplary Service to New York City.
Faculty Awards and Recognitions

A number of NYU faculty have been honored with major international prizes, fellowships, and memberships this year. Here is just a partial roundup of those who received accolades.

**Professor Takes Home Grammy Award**

At this year’s Grammy Awards, the Recording Academy honored Jim Anderson, a professor at the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at the Tisch School of the Arts. The award for Best Surround Sound Album was presented to Anderson—a recording engineer and producer—and alumna Darcy Proper (STEINHARDT '90) for their work on Early Americans by soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom. This was Anderson’s 27th Grammy nomination and 11th win.

**Professors Named Guggenheim Fellows**

Three NYU faculty members were recently named 2018 Guggenheim Fellows by the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. These faculty members were among 173 recipients who were chosen from more than 3,000 applicants in the United States and Canada.

This year’s Guggenheim Fellows from NYU are Carol Dysinger (TSOA ‘77), an associate professor in the graduate film program at the Tisch School of the Arts; Ada Ferrer, Silver Professor of History and Latin American and Caribbean Studies; and Martha Hodes, a professor in the Department of History.

“These artists and writers, scholars and scientists, represent the best of the best,” says Edward Hirsch, president of the foundation. “Each year since 1925, the Guggenheim Foundation has bet everything on the individual, and we’re thrilled to continue to do so with this wonderfully talented and diverse group. It’s an honor to be able to support these individuals to do the work they were meant to do.”

**Faculty Members Win Sloan Foundation Research Fellowships**

Four professors were awarded fellowships from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation: Afonso Bandeira, an assistant professor of mathematics at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences; Joan Bruna Estrach, an assistant professor of computer science at the Courant Institute; Miranda Holmes-Cerfon, an assistant professor of mathematics at the Courant Institute; and Tianning Diao, an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. The fellowships are given to early-career scientists and scholars whose achievements and potential identify them as rising stars.

**American Academy of Arts and Sciences Elects Four from NYU**

Each year some of the world’s most renowned individuals from academia, business, politics, the humanities, and the arts have been elected members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

NYU’s four elected faculty members for 2018 are Sylvain Cappell, Silver Professor of Mathematics at the Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences; Ta-Nehisi Coates, distinguished writer-in-residence at the Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute; David Pine, Silver Professor of Physics and chair of the Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at the Tandon School of Engineering; and Diana Taylor, University Professor of performance studies and Spanish.
Each year NYU students receive some of the most distinguished academic honors in the nation. Many are still waiting to hear from competitions, but the following is a list of awards won so far this year.

**Al Ghurair STEM Scholars**
Yousteena Bocktor (NYU Abu Dhabi) received this scholarship for Arab students pursuing a degree in science, technology, engineering, or math.

**Boren Fellowship**
Funded by the National Security Education Program, this fellowship was awarded to Sally Bucey (Wagner).

**Critical Language Scholarship**
Funded by the US Department of State, scholarships for intensive summer institutes in critical languages were given to Deshana Barua (CAS), Ilan Benattar (GSAS), Michelle Chow (Steinhardt), Egina Manachova (GSAS), Aleesa Mann (GSAS), Kristen Moreland (Steinhardt), Kelly Murphy (NYU Abu Dhabi), Ada Petiwala (GSAS), Brian Plungis (GSAS), Jessica Rohan (GSAS), and Branden Taylor (NYU Shanghai).

**Fulbright Grant**
Funded by the US Department of State, these grants fund an academic year abroad in research or teaching English. Thus far, the NYU recipients are Claire Callahan (Steinhardt), Anjali Krishnan (Steinhardt), Ethan Loewi (GSAS), Pamela Nogales (GSAS), John Raimo (GSAS), Yiliya Shyrokonis (CAS), Connor Smith (Tisch), Allison Stewart (Steinhardt), and Gabrielle Vitollo (Steinhardt).

**Future Global Leaders Fellowship**
Luna Schlor (NYU Abu Dhabi) was accepted to this four-year program for first-generation college students.

**German Academic Exchange Service**
Grants from the DAAD were awarded to John Raimo (GSAS) and Alicja Rak (CAS) to conduct research in Germany.

**Henry Luce Scholarship**
Andrew Maguire (Wagner) was named a Luce Scholar to enhance the understanding of Asia among potential leaders in American society.

**NSF Graduate Research Fellowship**
Funded by the National Science Foundation, these fellowships were given to Sarah DiMuccio (GSAS), Fiona Dunn (Tandon), Lorraine Hu (CAS), Sarah Iverson (GSAS), Jaclyn Schwartz (CAS), Tom Hindmarsh Sten (CAS), and Alex Wang (GSAS).

**Rhodes Scholarship**
Chaimaa Fadil (NYU Abu Dhabi) and Maitha Al Memari (NYU Abu Dhabi) were chosen to study at the University of Oxford, an honor received by only 80 undergraduates each year.

**Schwarzman Scholars**
Nofar Hamrany (NYU Shanghai), Alex Kamath (CAS), Fei Peng (Stern), Mandy Tan (NYU Abu Dhabi), and Anthony Wang (Stern) have received scholarships to study at the new Schwarzman College at Tsinghua University in Beijing.

**Truman Scholars**
Amanda Lawson (CAS) received a scholarship that provides tuition and expenses for individuals committed to careers in public service.

**Yenching Academy Scholarship**
Zoe Jordan (NYU Shanghai) was awarded a one-year master's in China studies at Peking University.
EACH YEAR
ON THE EVE OF COMMENCEMENT,
THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING SHINES
NYU VIOLET.

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## Prime-Time Pop Quiz

How well do you know the alumni on your television lineup? Test your knowledge of NYU grads on TV by matching these stars with their on-screen alter egos.

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<th>1. This actress played April Ludgate for seven seasons on the sitcom <em>Parks and Recreation</em>, but now takes a more dramatic turn on the FX sci-fi series <em>Legion</em>.</th>
<th>2. This former child star and <em>Twilight Saga</em> baddie was recently seen hunting down a 19th-century serial killer in the TBS miniseries <em>The Alienist</em>.</th>
<th>3. After winning a 2016 Emmy Award for his portrayal of prosecutor Christopher Darden on <em>American Crime Story</em>, this actor now stars on the NBC family drama <em>This Is Us</em>.</th>
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<td>4. This actor plays Jughead Jones on the CW series <em>Riverdale</em>, but he got his big break playing fellow NYU alumnus Adam Sandler’s son in the 1999 comedy <em>Big Daddy</em>.</td>
<td>5. This actor starred in the original Broadway cast of <em>Rent</em> and can now be seen playing science officer Paul Stamets on CBS’s <em>Star Trek: Discovery</em>.</td>
<td>6. Another star of the original production of <em>Rent</em> on Broadway, this actor now plays Detective Joe West on the CW series <em>The Flash</em>.</td>
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<td>7. This actor portrayed the Marvel villain Cottonmouth on Netflix’s <em>Luke Cage</em> before going on to win Best Supporting Actor at last year’s Academy Awards for <em>Moonlight</em>.</td>
<td>8. This actress took home a Golden Globe for playing the titular role on <em>Jane the Virgin</em> and will soon voice Carmen Sandiego in the upcoming animated series on Netflix.</td>
<td>9. A Broadway playwright and star of Marvel’s <em>Black Panther</em>, this actress is best known as the katana-wielding, fan-favorite Michonne on AMC’s <em>The Walking Dead</em>.</td>
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<td>10. Before creating the award-winning series <em>Atlanta</em>, in which he also stars, this actor got his start as a writer on <em>30 Rock</em> while he was still a student at NYU.</td>
<td>11. On <em>Grey’s Anatomy</em>, this actress plays Dr. Miranda Bailey, who has worked her way up from a resident to chief of surgery over the course of 14 seasons.</td>
<td>12. This actor appeared alongside Meryl Streep in the film <em>Florence Foster Jenkins</em>, but he is best known as aerospace engineer Howard Wolowitz on <em>The Big Bang Theory</em>.</td>
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#congratagradNYU
And see your message on the big screen at Yankee Stadium