

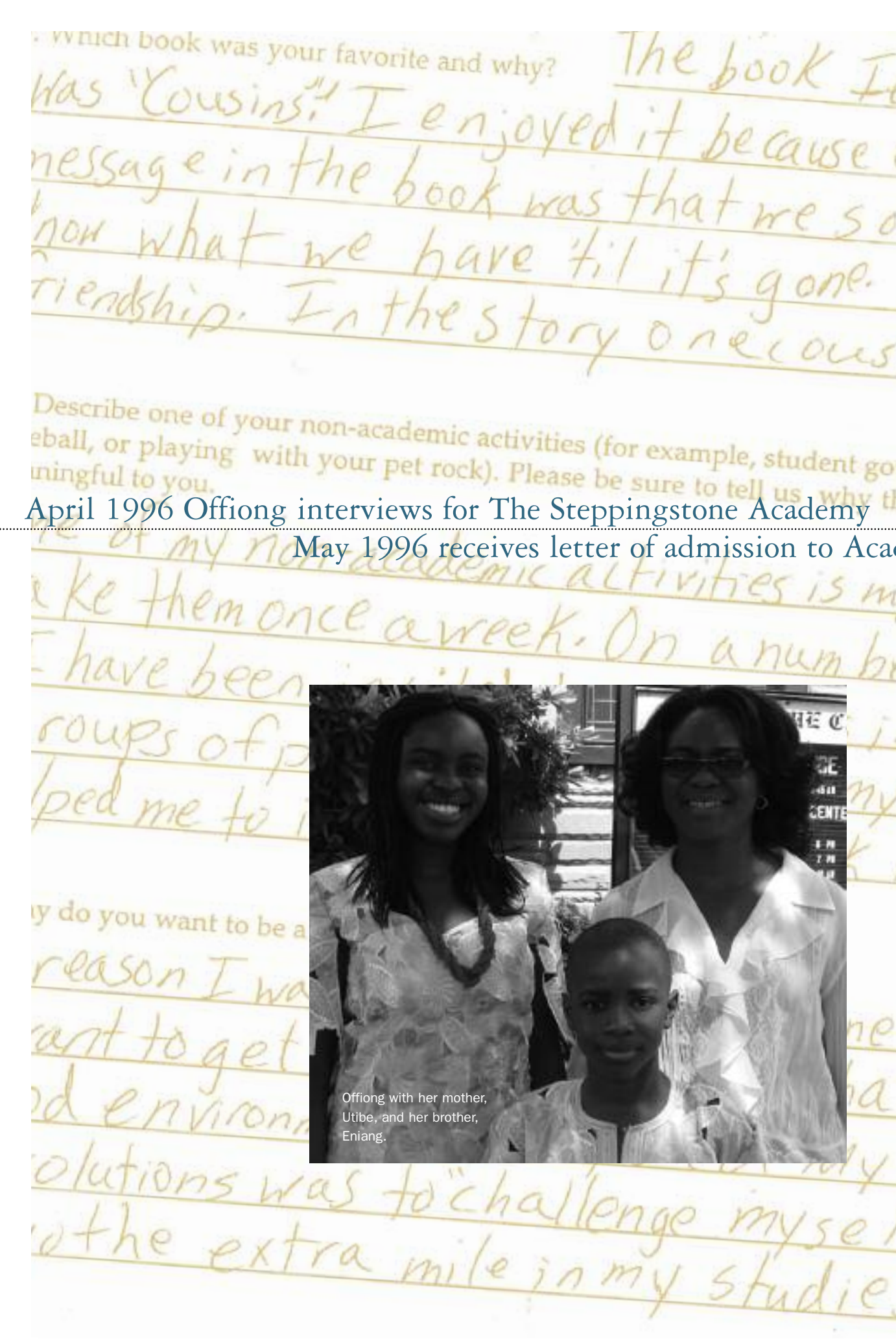


TWELVE YEARS IN THE LIFE OF A SCHOLAR OFFIONG BASSEY



The reason I want to be a Steppingstone Scholar is because I want to get the best education that I can in a good environment. Actually, one of my New Year's resolutions was "to challenge myself and be sure to go the extra mile in my studies."

Offiong Bassey at 10 years old, February 1996



April 1996 Offiong interviews for The Steppingstone Academy

May 1996 receives letter of admission to Academy



Offiong with her mother, Utibe, and her brother, Eniang.

July 1996 begins 14-month academic component

August 1997 receives letter of admission to Noble & Greenough



Offiong at age eleven.

1996-2003 BOSTON, MA

"As I stood on stage, I was overcome by a sense of confidence that would have been uncharacteristic for me 14 months earlier, when I was much more timid and much less driven. My Steppingstone experience gave me the self-assurance and self-confidence to stand in front of my fellow Scholars and deliver the graduation speech at the Steppingstone commencement."



Offiong and Nobles classmates during a ninth grade field trip to New Hampshire. "At Nobles, I developed a sense of adventure and independence. To spend my junior year abroad in Spain was a big step for me. However, I stepped out of my comfort zone and it turned out to be one of the best things I ever did during high school."

enthusiasm for the program never waned once during their time in the office,” one interviewer wrote. “It sounds like Offiong likes being surrounded by other children who like learning and take school seriously.” After her interview, Offiong sent her interviewer a thank-you note: “I am very excited about being in your program. If I get accepted, I will be very happy because I think that I can accomplish and learn a lot.”

Offiong started the first six-week summer session of the 14-month academic component before her sixth-grade year, joining the 39 other Scholars in the Class of 1997. The Scholars attended Steppingstone classes five days a week, studying math, English, writing, social studies, and science (her science teacher was pleased to note at the end of the 14 months that Offiong’s attitude toward science showed noticeable improvement!). During the school year, the Scholars continued taking Steppingstone classes after school and on Saturdays, while also applying to placement schools.

In March, Offiong received an acceptance letter from Noble & Greenough School, her first choice.

When asked about the application process, Offiong laughed: “I’ll never forget my interview at Nobles because it was on my birthday!” Getting into Nobles didn’t mean that Offiong’s connection to Steppingstone was over; in fact, classes continued after school and on Saturdays through May, and the second six-week summer session started in July. “Since I had already been accepted to Nobles for seventh grade, I thought they’d take it easy on us during the second summer. Not so! The classes were even more advanced and the assignments longer. The bar was raised because it wasn’t just about getting into a placement school, but also about succeeding at that school.”

Even though the bar was raised, “the second summer was fun,” Offiong remembers. “This time I was the older Scholar welcoming the new Scholars in the Class of 1998. Some of them felt overwhelmed by the demands of the program and the commitment it required. I remembered feeling the same way a year earlier, and I was happy that I pushed through and worked hard.” At the end of the summer, 35 of the 40 Scholars admitted to the Class of 1997 graduated from the 14-month component, and Offiong gave the commencement speech.

In September, Offiong started seventh grade at Noble & Greenough. “Having gone through 14 months of rigorous work at Steppingstone, and having balanced it with regular coursework during the school year, I definitely felt prepared to handle life at Nobles.” Offiong worked hard at Nobles, doing her best to take advantage of all the opportunities available at the school. In addition to her studies, she was a member of the middle and high school singing groups, joined the Multicultural Students Association, performed in the play “Pippin,” was a senior prefect, and went on a community service trip to Panama in 10th grade and a high school literature trip to Ghana the summer before 11th grade. Her junior year was spent in an immersion program, living with a family in Zaragoza, Spain. In her spare time, she founded the Youth Wing of the Efik National Association, a cultural affinity group for members of her Nigerian tribe (and for this accomplishment, she was awarded the Toyota Community Scholarship, given to 100 seniors nationwide).

During her time at Nobles, Offiong remained connected to Steppingstone. Each Scholar has an advisor who monitors his or her academic and social/emotional progress through middle and high

school to ensure that the Scholars thrive in their new schools. Academic assistance and counseling services are available, and college guidance begins in ninth grade. Steppingstone also assists with summer job opportunities. The summer after her junior year, Offiong was a Steppingstone Teaching Assistant (TA) during the six-week session. Offiong was honored to be selected as a TA: “I felt like I had come full circle. I knew the Academy would be tough for the students, but now it was my turn to make the classes challenging, relevant, and interesting. I taught a number of subjects, but really enjoyed the ‘Leadership’ elective that I taught to a group of 10 Scholars in which we explored the art of public speaking and the importance of self awareness, perseverance, and humility.”

Offiong went from Nobles to Yale; she graduated in 2007 and returned to Boston to work as an associate consultant for Bain & Company. Officially an Alumna Scholar, Offiong receives Steppingstone newsletters and stays connected to the other Scholars in her class through emails and the Steppingstone Alumni Facebook page. Twelve years after her interview to get into Steppingstone, Offiong can definitely say that she has “accomplished and learned a lot.”

September 1997 begins seventh grade at Nobles    March 2001 travels to Panama on school-sponsored community service trip    July 2002 Teaching Assistant for The Steppingstone Academy    September 2003 starts freshman year at Yale College    May 2007 graduates from Yale  
 completes 14-month academic component    Summer 2001 takes literature trip to Ghana    Fall 2001- Spring 2002 spends junior year in Spain    May 2003 graduates from Noble & Greenough School    September 2007 starts job at Bain & Company

2003-2007 NEW HAVEN, CT

“I’ll never forget the friendships I made, the wonderful teachers who guided me, the singing opportunities, my initial sermon as a minister-in-training, my volunteer work, and various leadership roles during my four years at Yale.”



(Top and Right) While at Yale, Offiong was a member of Shades, a group that sings music rooted in African American tradition. “We toured Japan on two occasions, singing at schools, clubs, and private parties, and it was wonderful.”

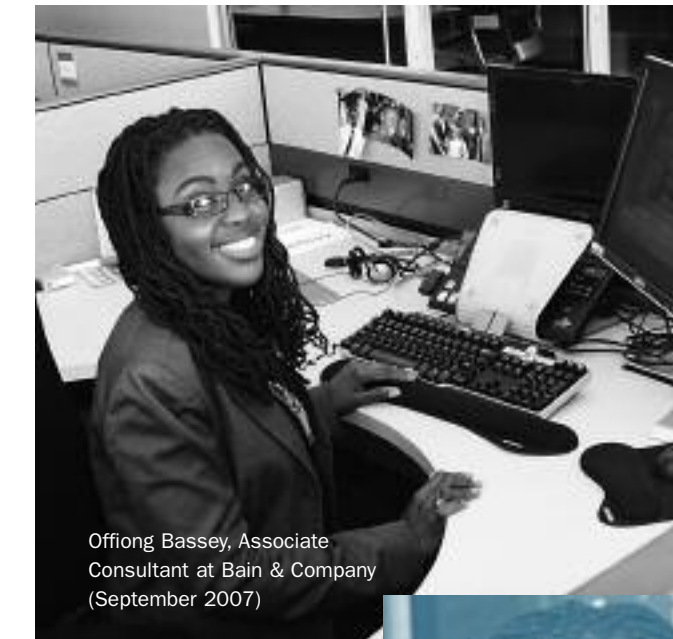
(Left) Offiong with friends during her freshman year at Yale.



Offiong earned a degree in African American Studies and Political Science from Yale College.

“During the Yale graduation, I thought of Steppingstone; how over a decade ago, college graduation was a distant dream. And now, I was living the dream.”

Offiong with extended family at a graduation celebration in her honor at her grandparents’ house in Lagos, Nigeria. She became an ordained minister earlier that same day (August 5, 2007).



Offiong Bassey, Associate Consultant at Bain & Company (September 2007)



2008 BOSTON

“Landing a position with Bain carried great significance for me. I would be performing research and analyses that would impact billion dollar companies. I was charting new territory, but I knew that although the work at Bain would be challenging, I had the skills needed to be successful.”