Bill Gates names Tulane student a 'hero in the field'

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In 2016, the Tulane community was introduced to Dr. Adaora Okoli, a graduate student in the Tulane School of Public Health who contracted the Ebola virus while treating patients in Nigeria.

On Thursday, Jan. 4, philanthropist Bill Gates recognized Okoli on his website as one of his "Heroes in the Field," a list that identifies little-known individuals helping to save the world.

"This is such a great honor for me to be recognized in this way," said Okoli, after a day of fielding calls from media, family and friends who had seen the article. "I never imagined being called a hero."

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>
> *Dr. Adaora Okoli*

Okoli's parents, who live in Nigeria, were made aware of the honor when she was asked to tape a video interview (above) back in September. But Okoli said that seeing the article and video published online this week made them feel exceptionally proud.

"Some people find out their purpose early in life, like Beyonce' who knew she could sing at 5 years old," said Okoli. "Others find their purpose a little later, but everyone should understand that no person's purpose is greater than another person's."

Gates, who recognized Okoli alongside four other heroes, said in his post:

"I wanted to call attention to some heroes among us. They are just a few of the many people using their talents to fight poverty, hunger, and disease and provide opportunities for the next generation. To all of them, wherever they are, let me say thank you. The world is a better place because of what you do."

After completing her graduate studies in May, Okoli plans to form a career in which she combines clinical medicine with epidemiology. Her ultimate goal is to return to Nigeria to help prevent future infectious disease outbreaks.

Okoli's story and video interview, which is partially narrated by Gates, is also featured in the Jan. 15, 2018, issue of *Time* magazine for which Gates served as guest editor.