

Board of Trustees

Mara Burnett
Former President, CAP
Charitable Services, Inc.

Gavin McFarland
J.L. McGregor Capital
Management LLC

Anthony M. Pilaro
Chairman, CAP Foundation,
CAP Advisors Limited of Dublin

Andrew C. Pilaro
CAP Advisors Limited of Dublin

Christopher A. Pilaro
CAP Charitable Foundation

Michael B.S. Treisman
Tiger Management LLC

R. Kenly Webster
Attorney at Law

RBSP Advisory Board

Regina M. Benjamin, MD, MBA
Founder and CEO,
Bayou La Batre Rural Health Clinic

Terri Dean
Senior VP of Global
Communications, Verizon Business
(retired)

Ambassador Diana Lady Dougan
CEO, Dougan and Associates

Earl G. Graves, Sr.
Chairman and CEO,
Earl G. Graves, Ltd.
Founder and Publisher,
Black Enterprise Magazine

Jonathan D. Mariner
Executive VP and CFO,
Major League Baseball

Dr. Toni Morrison
Robert F. Goheen Professor
Emeritus, Council of the
Humanities at Princeton University

Anthony M. Pilaro
Chairman, CAP Foundation,
CAP Advisors Limited of Dublin

Rodney E. Slater
Partner, Patton Boggs LLP

Marva Smalls
Executive VP, Public Affairs
& Chief of Staff, Nickelodeon,
Nick of Nite, TV Land, Noggin

Tom Werner
Chairman, Boston Red Sox
Partner – Executive Producer,
Carsey-Werner

Aaron S. Williams
Vice President, RTI International

Message From the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

What an exciting year and we are only half-way to the finish line! We are thrilled to announce several new initiatives, including the redesign of the Read to Lead curriculum which targets 8th and 9th graders. This web-based project for teachers focuses on leadership and service learning and includes dynamic lesson plans, video clips, and three interviews of Ron Brown Scholars conducted by Julian Bond in collaboration with Professor Bond's *Explorations in Black Leadership* series at the University of Virginia.

In this issue, you will note our good fortune to have secured Mr. Don Peebles to engage our Scholars at our August conference in NYC. We have added new Board members: Rodney Slater, the former secretary of transportation in the Clinton Administration, Geraldine Barber-Hale, educator and the mother of the Barber twins, and Ginger Mcknight-Chavers, who is featured in this newsletter.

I hope you will visit our website (www.ronbrown.org) to review the executive summary of the independent evaluation of the Program conducted this spring; we had a 92-percent Scholar response rate. Finally, we are pleased to announce that we have received 501(c)3 status as a public charity. Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. We welcome your reactions, input and suggestions.

Warm regards,

Michael A. Mallory



Ron Brown Scholars Host First Entrepreneurship Conference

R. Donahue Peebles to Serve as Keynote

By: Donielle Newell Buie, RBS 00



R. Donahue Peebles
CEO & Chairman

As you know, it was during tough economic times, that great companies, including Hyatt, FedEx, the Acumen Fund, Microsoft and Aspire Public Schools, were founded. The challenge of such times can be a unique opportunity for those with the right skills and commitment to address the unmet needs in the marketplace.

Through a generous gift from the Reginald F. Lewis Foundation and the support the Ron Brown Scholar Program, the Ron Brown Scholar Alumni Association is pleased to announce the first-ever Business and Social Entrepreneurship Conference. Ron Brown Scholars and Alumni, who see the power of entrepreneurship for themselves and their communities, will gather in New York City from August 7-9th for a dynamic, two-day business planning and development conference. On the agenda

(Continued on Page 2)

Steering Committee

Michele Ballantyne

Recording Industry
of America (RIAA)

Lance Blanks

Cleveland Cavaliers, NBA

Pamela Blechman

Foundation Source, Inc.

Ginger L. McKnight-Chavers

Author and Attorney

Matthew Cutts

Patton Boggs LLP

Guy Flynn

DLA Piper US LLP

Geraldine Barber-Hale

Financial Manager

Dawn Kinard

Viacom

Calvin C. LaRoche

DC Ventures & Associates LLC

Sharon Brickhouse-Martin

Brickhouse Martin
Healthcare Engineering

Emmit J. McHenry

Entrepreneur

Elsie Thompson

Attorney

Jason W. Young

Ron Brown Scholar 2000

Ron Brown Scholar Program Announces New Leadership Initiative

Imagine being able to reach hundreds of students through a comprehensive standards-based leadership curriculum that incorporates social technologies such as Ning, Twitter, and Youtube. Imagine engaging youth in actively learning more about the skills, characteristics, and habits of leaders and the notion that leaders serve through social entrepreneurship and giving back to their communities. Imagine also the potential to link participants with Ron Brown Scholars in a web-based mentoring program. Through the new Ron Brown Scholar Leadership Initiative (formerly Read to Lead), not only will participants actively learn about leaders, but they will also have the opportunity to engage with industry leaders who are making tremendous differences in their own worlds and positively impacting those around them.



Marquise McGraw (RBS 2002) works with students during a Read to Lead workshop in Richmond, VA.

The collection of Ron Brown Scholar application essays entitled, *I Have Risen*, has proven a powerful and evocative method for spreading the word about the Program and Scholars. This book has also been distributed and utilized as the cornerstone in the curriculum for the Read to Lead Program, designed to teach young people about the ways in which leaders set and achieve goals,

(Continued on Page 14)

Ron Brown Scholars Host First Entrepreneurship Conference

(Continued from Page 1)

will be topics such as: creating a business plan, finding investors, marketing in a web 2.0 world, and much more.

The Alumni Association is excited to have received commitments for participation from several notable speakers. The keynote speaker will be **R. Donahue Peebles**, Chairman and CEO of The Peebles Corporation. Mr. Peebles has been recognized as one of the most successful entrepreneurs in the nation. He is the owner of The Peebles Corporation, the country's largest African American real estate development company with a \$4 billion development portfolio of luxury hotels, high-rise residential and Class A commercial properties and developments in Washington, D.C., New York, San Francisco, Las Vegas

and Miami Beach. Additionally, the Scholars will hear from **Charles Best**, founder and CEO of DonorsChoose.org, an online charity which makes it easy for anyone to help students in need, recently recognized by President Barack Obama; **Kaleil Tuzman**, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board at Kit Digital, Incorporated (Dubai) and **Greg Fairchild**, Professor at the Darden School of Business.

The goal of the conference is to educate and empower Scholars to take control of their financial futures and start both for-profit and non-profit enterprises that will build a lasting legacy. The conference will help Scholars learn the fundamentals of starting and successfully growing a business or social enterprise. But beyond just creating profits, they

will explore how to impact communities and create a triple bottom line—profits, people, and the planet. Scholars are also invited to participate in a business plan competition and receive feedback from a distinguished panel of guests.

This will be the first Scholar lead and developed conference and we anticipate the impact to be long lasting. The Ron Brown Scholar Program and Alumni Association are committed to helping Scholars connect with one another and with the resources that will help their ideas become successful realities. This conference is the starting point for building a collaborative and entrepreneurial culture among Scholars and Alumni. These efforts will continue long after the conference day ends. ■

Congratulations
To Our Ron Brown Scholars
Who Have Successfully Completed PhD Programs!



Traci Burch (RBS 1998)
Harvard University
Government and Social Policy



Yolanda Covington-Ward (RBS 1998)
University of Michigan—Ann Arbor
Anthropology



Sean Nolan (RBS 1999)
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Aeronautics and Astronautics

A Foundation Upon Which to Build
*Student extols the virtues of a scholarship program
based on genuinely giving back.*

By: Geraldine Pierre, RBS 2004
Featured In: *Flavour Magazine*, Spring 2009



Geraldine Pierre graduated from the University of Virginia in 2008.

I can remember as a child peering out of the windows of my Miami home, watching planes fly by. My mind would often be so far up in the clouds that I would not hear my grandmother calling my name in the next room. I would use my imagination to make up a story about each airplane.

The point of origin would always be Miami International Airport. The fun came in selecting exotic and far-away final destinations. The large 747s were definitely headed to New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, while the smaller planes would be going to the Caribbean or to lavish condominiums on the coast. Sometimes I would think about European or Asian destinations, but I figured an aircraft would never fly north over my house just to go east over the Atlantic.

I had never been on a plane in my life and used this activity to live vicariously through those in the sky. Plane tickets had to be thousands and thousands of dollars, so my chances of ever getting one were slim to none. I lived with my mom, grandmother, great-grandmother, uncle, and three siblings. My family had migrated from countries in the Caribbean

(Continued on Page 15)

Innovation in Education

By: Ryan Stewart, RBS '99

Working in education is truly an education in itself. For the past six years, I have had the incredible opportunity to work with students, teachers, and administrators in the Ravenswood City School District in East Palo Alto, CA. My work in the school district has been an eye-opening journey into the inner workings of schools and school districts, replete with all of the successes, challenges, needs and idiosyncrasies of educational institutions.

I began my work in the district as an eighth grade algebra and physical science teacher. In my work as a teacher, I quickly realized just how much I didn't know. The learning curve for new teachers is huge, and I found myself on a constant search for new knowledge and ideas.

After my time in the classroom, I transitioned into new teacher mentoring, where I currently serve as an advisor for new teachers. I regularly go into my teachers' classrooms to observe their instruction, offer them feedback, and help them locate resources. In this role, I've gotten a first-hand view of the needs of teachers and schools to accelerate teacher growth and school effectiveness.

It is based on my work as both a teacher and a mentor that I've undertaken the exciting task of launching a new venture that will serve the

needs of schools and teachers. The driving force behind this venture is to fill the pressing need to share best practices in education across classrooms and school sites, opening up the isolated practices of excellent teachers so that others may emulate effective teaching strategies and build upon their established expertise. The website will also offer an advanced suite of tools to make the process of sharing information, collaborating with peers, and managing the myriad non-teaching and administrative responsibilities more easy and efficient. When launched, this new venture will be the most comprehensive needs-based education technology platform available to educators. The most exciting aspect of this venture for me has been its direct connection to an area that I am passionate about, and its potential to positively impact the



Ryan Stewart is a Stanford University graduate with a degree in Economics.

learning opportunities for underserved student populations.

The help from the Ron Brown Scholar Community in helping to bring this vision closer to reality

(Continued on Page 14)

Ron Brown Scholar Fund Tax Status Update

On April 9th 2009, the Ron Brown Scholar Fund received an advance ruling by the IRS which allows it to operate as a public 501(c)3 charity.

To make a donation, please visit www.ronbrown.org.

Mental Health Awareness in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

By: Shirley Delaleu, RBS 98

In Ethiopia, a typical conversation may be regularly punctuated with sudden intakes of breath. Gasping, the sounds startled me at first. I always had to resist the urge to look over my shoulder. This was just one of the quandaries I faced during my time there. According to the Ethiopian calendar, the year is now 2001, the new millennium having just been celebrated last year. The Ethiopian clock differed 6 hours from the rest of its time zone. The calendar had 13 months per year. And Christmas was in January.

I arrived in Addis Ababa after a night and day of travel. The task I had ahead of me was to start a mental health system for a community. The idea seemed simple, and yet monumental in scale. This was where the differences between Ethiopian and American culture would really present an obstacle for me.

Several months earlier, I had gone to a fundraising event. The keynote speaker was a pediatrician known as the orphan doctor. She had made a name for herself by treating children that had recently been adopted from abroad by American families. Among these illnesses are behavioral and emotional disorders more likely to afflict children that were institutionalized. Eventually this doctor expanded her efforts to providing health-care in many of these countries, including Ethiopia, through a NGO called Worldwide Orphans Foundation. They serve not only children, but also HIV-positive adults at their clinic.

I approached the pediatrician at the end of the fundraiser. I told her that I admired her work and was interested in volunteering with her organization. A few weeks later, she asked me if I would be willing to go to Ethiopia to start a mental health program for the orphans and for HIV-positive adults in Addis Ababa. Fortunately, the RBS Community Service Foundation offered me a grant for my work, and a few months later, I was on my way.

Originally, I planned to focus my efforts on community education in Ethiopia, to try to reduce the stigma toward mental illness. But when I came to Addis Ababa, and saw the clinic, the schools and the orphanages, I felt that there could be a cost-effective way to provide actual

interventions that would be sustainable after I left, as well as culturally sensitive. The first several weeks that I was in Ethiopia, I spent meeting with different people around the city, from various governmental and non-governmental organizations, schools, and hospitals, to see if other people had already done what I was trying to do. There was some mental health work being done, but not much.

When I visited the clinic where I would be planning most of my interventions, I noticed that there were nurse counselors there, who did the pre- and post-test counseling for anyone that has HIV tests. This gave me the idea that the nurse counselors could be trained to lead support groups for the HIV-positive adults. Studies have shown that people living with HIV/AIDS that attend group therapy can have lower morbidity and mortality, lower viral loads and higher CD4 counts. So patients would likely benefit from group participation, and it would cost the clinic almost nothing.

Group therapy usually is not as well-suited for children, so I needed to think of a different intervention for the orphans and other school children. Eventually, I decided to focus on working with outside organizations to provide individual therapy to those kids that needed it (many of them had been traumatized through the deaths of their parents, poverty, their own illnesses, and ostracization from other people due to their HIV status). I also started a program in emotional literacy, teaching the children to feel more comfortable identifying their feelings. I also provided education for the staffs of the schools



Shirley Delaleu is a student at Mount Sinai Medical School in New York city.

and the clinic, on counseling skills, on how HIV affects mental health, and on the behavioral and emotional problems of children that live in orphanages.

Studies have shown that people living with HIV/AIDS that attend group therapy can have lower morbidity and mortality, lower viral loads and higher CD4 counts.

Still, I was nervous. It's not ideal for Westerners to go to different countries and try to do mental health work. The cultural differences could mean that

(Continued on Page 11)

Friends of Ron Brown Scholars Spotlight: Ginger McKnight-Chavers

By: Dorothy Smith, RBS 1999

We are excited to welcome Ginger McKnight-Chavers as a new member of the Ron Brown Scholar Steering Committee. Steering Committee members serve a dual role for the Program, helping guide the responsible growth of the Program while providing important mentorship for Ron Brown Scholars. Ms. McKnight-Chavers has not only built a successful career in the practice of corporate and entertainment law but she also embodies the Ron Brown Scholar Program's commitment to service through her involvement in arts philanthropy and politics.

Ms. McKnight-Chavers is a native of Dallas, Texas. She is a graduate of Harvard Law School and received her undergraduate degree in International Economics at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. She has practiced law for sixteen years in New York City and Washington, D.C. in the areas of arts/entertainment, corporate transactions and nonprofit law with organizations including Simpson, Thacher & Bartlett; Weil, Gotshal, and Manges, LLP; Black Entertainment Television, Inc., and Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts. Even while employed as a lawyer, Ms. McKnight-Chavers maintained a passion for fiction writing. McKnight-Chavers entered a writing competition at Sarah Lawrence College and became the 2008 recipient of the Kathryn Gurfein Writing Fellowship. She recently completed her first novel.

In addition to her legal and writing work, Ms. McKnight-Chavers is actively involved in a wide range of philanthropic and charitable activities, particularly in the areas of arts and politics. She has engaged in fundraising activities on behalf of the Museum of Modern Art, Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Neuberger Museum, Horace Mann School, the Studio Museum in Harlem and Jack and Jill of America, Westchester Chapter. She has been an active volunteer and fundraiser in a number of political campaigns, and was a member of President Obama's Women's Leadership Initiative and New York Women



Ginger McKnight-Chavers is involved in a wide range of philanthropic and charitable activities in the areas of arts and politics.

for Obama. She is also an active member of a number of organizations, including the Friends of Education of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, the Women's Leadership Forum of the Democratic National Committee, the Junior League of New York City, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, the advisory board of Latino Playwrights, Jack and Jill of America, the American Bar Association, the City Bar of New York and the Parents Association of Horace Mann School.

When asked about her decision to become part of the Steering Committee, Ms. McKnight-Chavers discussed how she hoped to give back in the same way that others have done for her in her own life and career. "I was fortunate to have mentors who took an interest in me when they did not have to. These people were critical in helping me to discover and access opportunities and to

expand my horizons. It's rewarding to have the opportunity to do the same for others." Ms. McKnight-Chavers looks forward to building relationships with the Scholars. I imagine I will get as much if not more from the Scholars as they would from me. Young people should never underestimate their impact, their ability to reenergize and inspire others.

We look forward to having Ms. McKnight-Chavers as a member of the RBSP family. ■

Ron Brown Scholar Program Participates in External Review

In February 2009, the Ron Brown Scholar Program began participating in an independent external review conducted by Wilder Research. Wilder Research of Saint Paul, Minnesota, set out to measure the activities and accomplishments of the Scholars, the influence and impact of the Program on the Scholars' success, the effectiveness of program elements, and to identify areas for improvement.

The primary method used in the evaluation was a web-based survey of all 241 current and alumni Ron Brown Scholars. Scholar participation in the survey was 92%. Specifically, the evaluation focused on Scholar academic performance, graduation rates, community service involvement, study abroad, scholarship impact, leadership activities, mentorships and mentoring, commitment to the Program and each other, employment, and graduate and professional school education.

For more about the survey results, visit www.ronbrown.org.

Selection Weekend 2009

By: Alexandra Sailsman, RBS 2009

As many of you know, the creed of this program is *The Value of One, The Power of All*. It sums up in eight simple words the mighty power of the mission. Together, as a fellowship and as a family, Ron Brown Scholars will blaze trails in Art, Science, Politics, Business, and Law. We chart a path together and we walk it together. That experience, our collective experience, will yield untold dividends. And along the way, it becomes obvious that the least valuable part of the scholarship is the money it gives you for college.

But what is equally apparent in this creed is what separates the Ron Brown Scholar Program from other scholarships. Other scholarships may be in recognition of what you have done: your academic achievement, your leadership. This program chooses you for what you will do: the lives you will touch, the example you will set. It is an honor to be enjoyed, but it is more importantly a responsibility to be assumed.

So, as you embark on your journeys, you are not alone. We rise or fall together; our success is collectively shared. Because of that, your individual mission will be to continue to thrive. But you will have help along the way. Scholars may be dotted across the country, but we are linked together like pearls on a string. That is *The Value of One and The Power of All*." - A. Damian Williams (RBS 1998) Selection Weekend 2009

My Selection Weekend started off a little differently than everyone else's and not at all how I wanted it to. When I arrived at Fort Lauderdale airport that morning I was informed that my flight had been delayed two hours, I would miss my connection in Atlanta and I would be late. I would be late and I would not be able to tour the Supreme Court building. I was upset, naturally, so I sat down, upset, and thought



Alexandra Sailsman (second from left) poses for a quick photo during the Selection Weekend opening reception.

to greet the other Ron Brown Scholar Finalists. I met them with a big smile, one of them already a dear friend, and the others soon to become them.

Chatting on our way back to the hotel, it was hard to believe that they had all met each other only a few hours ago; I

We chart a path together and we walk it together. That experience, our collective experience, will yield untold dividends. And along the way, it becomes obvious that the least valuable part of the scholarship is the money it gives you for college.

"why do these things happen to me?" until I arrived in Washington D.C..

When I set foot in our nation's capital for the first time, I was welcomed by a shuttle bus and got my own personal tour of the city. Amongst the legislative buildings, Smithsonian museums, round-a-bouts and newly blossoming trees, I waited

was already speaking with them all as if they were old classmates, not people I had just been introduced to a few minutes before. I don't know how it happened exactly. Maybe it was the fact that we were all nervous about the whole interview experience, or the mind-racking essays we had to write, or

(Continued on Page 11)

*Congrat
to
2009 Ron Br*



Amber Bailey
Hometown: Norfolk, VA
High School: Maury High School
College: University of Chicago



Jont Craighead
Hometown: Rocky Mount, VA
High School: Franklin County
High School
College: Massachusetts Institute
of Technology



Gabrielle Cole
Hometown: Oak Park, IL
High School: Oak Park and
River Forest High School
College: Princeton University



Camille Everhart
Hometown: Pataskala, OH
High School: Pickerington
High School North
College: Massachusetts Institute
of Technology



Brittany Coleman
Hometown: N. Las Vegas, NV
High School: Advanced
Technologies Academy
College: Duke University



Sebastian Flores
Hometown: San Lorenzo, CA
High School: Hayward High
School
College: Harvard University

tulations the own Scholars!



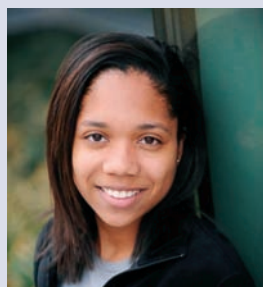
Aaron Gravely
Hometown: Yeadon, PA
High School: Penn Wood
High School
College: Harvard University



Alexandra Sailsman
Hometown: Pembroke Pines, FL
High School: Everglades
High School
College: Massachusetts Institute
of Technology



Michael Mekonnen
Hometown: Silver Spring, MD
High School: Paint Branch High
School
College: Massachusetts Institute
of Technology



Carolanne Sanders
Hometown: Plano, TX
High School: Plano Senior
High School
College: Vanderbilt University



Julius Mitchell
Hometown: Chicago, IL
High School: Walter Payton Col-
lege Preparatory High School
College: Yale University



Simone Watson
Hometown: Pensacola, FL
High School: Booker T. Washington
High School
College: Duke University

Leadership Scholars: Empowering Inner-City Youth to Reach Their Full Potential as Leaders

By: Tracy "Ty" Moore II, RBS '02

The Pivotal Question

"How do you most effectively ameliorate the dire condition of the African American population in the United States of America? This is a question that numerous other Black students and I pondered as we strolled through Harvard Yard, sat in Harvard's austere classrooms, or convened in its vibrant dining halls and houses. Nevertheless, I already knew the answer to this question.

Naturally, we could remedy most of the ills facing African Americans by addressing education (i.e., overhauling the school systems) and providing excellent role models and mentors for younger African Americans, who are continuously inundated and brainwashed with negative portrayals of Black people in the media.

Personal Motivation

At the end of my senior year, people constantly asked me about my plans after graduating. I responded that I would simply revolutionize society. Now, three years later, I am pursuing that goal.

Origins of Leadership Scholars

In February of 2007, I teamed up with a few dynamic, insightful, and caring individuals to start up a revolutionary leadership development and mentoring program for African American and inner-city youth in Cincinnati, called Leadership Scholars. We empower our 200 students from 15 different schools with confidence, inspiration, and knowledge to reach their full potential as leaders. We match junior and senior high school students (leaders) with seventh and eighth-grade inner-city students (scholars) in mentoring teams, which meet one hour each week during the school year for sessions focused on leadership. In addition, we have a Leadership Development

Workshop every other month at a local university, quarterly field trips, and a four-week long Summer Program.

Program GOALS

The goals are to instill in the students confidence, competence, and commitment to improve their lives; develop leadership skills for the students; and provide



Tracy Moore, a Harvard graduate with a degree in Classics has been supporting young students in his hometown of Cincinnati since he graduated in 2006.

our students with exposure to the greater community; a support network in the form of the Leadership Scholars Family; additional educational opportunities; and an excellent mentoring relationship.

RON BROWN Comes to CINCINNATI

I have essentially attempted to transfer the Ron Brown Scholar Program (RBSP) to the inner city of Cincinnati. Leadership Scholars has already achieved remarkable success. We recently graduated our first class of leaders and scholars, who have

grown tremendously in leadership and formed authentic mentoring relationships with one another. They have also developed and executed outstanding projects within their schools and communities. Just like the directors of RBSP, I constantly field calls from the leaders, scholars, and their parents regarding issues ranging from job opportunities and advice about where to go to high school or college to finding ways to pay for school and the possible deportation of a parent who is not a United States citizen.

COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

By developing leaders in, and providing mentors to, the African American and inner-city communities, Leadership Scholars is addressing two of the most serious problems plaguing the African American community, the lack of education and positive role models. Within a few years, the young leaders will certainly recognize the various challenges facing their own communities and have the knowledge, skills, tools, and experience necessary to motivate and collaborate with others to effectively address them. While we are not directly fixing *all* of the problems facing the African American and inner city communities, we are training the youth to do so. We are inspiring and training innovative, creative individuals who will be the movers and shakers in these next few decades.

How Will YOU LEAD?

I cannot imagine doing anything right now other than continuing this revolution, which will expand to at least one other city by 2012. For more information visit www.leadershipscholars.org. I look forward to your joining me for this exciting mission.■

Mental Health Awareness in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

(Continued from Page 5)

American ideas of psychological well-being might not translate. What would the clinic staff think about me, my programs? Would I seem presumptuous, a Westerner coming to Africa to suggest that precious time and resources should be devoted to the improvement of mental health?

At the initial training session that I held for the clinic staff, I invited an American guest speaker to talk about counseling skills. One of the points that he was trying to make related to the importance of lis-

tening. To my surprise, he brought up the Ethiopian way of gasping in conversation. He said that the first step in talking with people about their problems was to make it clearer that they have been heard. The American speaker said that the Ethiopian habit of drawing in their breath while they are in conversation means that the listener is literally and figuratively taking in what the speaker is saying. Everyone sitting around the table took a moment to think about that, and then they all

started laughing. They loved it! He had seamlessly drawn a connection between Ethiopian culture and the needs of the program.

After that, my program ran fairly smoothly, and they continue to do so, even though I have returned to the US. Still, I remember that day with the guest speaker as sort of a turning point. Perhaps the cultural differences that I had focused on so much in the beginning would turn out to be a gift, after all. ■

Selection Weekend 2009 (Continued from Page 7)

the grueling rounds of selection we had to endure to get there that gave us some hidden bond, but it was clear that we were all going to get along.

And what better way to bond than to be thrust into a fancy dinner party with a bunch of fancy successful people. So as finalists we all stood around grinning as we heard stories or were asked questions, laughing in appropriate places, trying to draw the attention away from our own nerves. Our schmoozing attempts would go pretty well, and then someone would hand us a business card saying email me sometime and it turns out they're the CEO of Verizon Wireless. Quite scary.

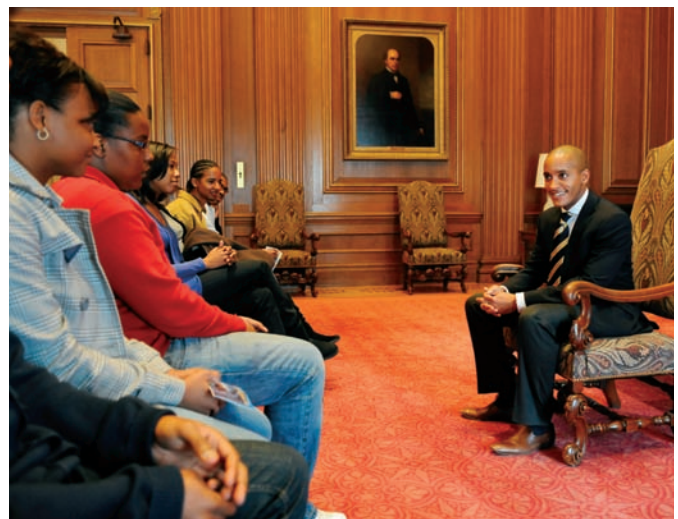
But as I settled down in my seat before dinner began, now comfortable between a CEO and a reporter, I wondered if all these people that I was looking up to as the demigods of the modern world had ever thought they could make it that far, or had it all planned out. I realized that they probably didn't. They were probably once just as terribly unsure as I was at that moment, hiding sweat stains under my blazer.

At the Selection Weekend dinner the speakers' words came to reassure me. Mona Sutphen's *Nine Career Rules* were like a saving grace. I particularly remember her advising us to always admit what we do not know. I was telling myself hey Alex you thought about that before so you can't be entirely crazy. Some advice, however, was very new to me, and crucial, like remembering to help others along the way. I know Ron Brown Scholars are able to pose some fierce competition, but we cannot accomplish what we undoubtedly will alone. And Damian Williams' speech (mentioned above) confirmed what I had discovered a few hours before; we were all individually precious, like pearls, but when bonded together we could become something even more beautiful, forever linked individually to affect change. My class has already formed that bond.

I am still astounded that I have befriended such an amazing group of people. Four of the 2009 Ron Brown Scholars will be at MIT, and six of us will be in Boston (all by their own choice; I threatened them in no way). Even with those who will be a little further away, we will all keep in touch. These people are

simply brilliant! Amidst all of their talents and triumphs though, it will be hardest for me to forget our interview day. Each of us decked out in our most professional attire, some of the smartest students in the country, we all still enjoyed playing charades and hangman in the middle of a law firm, sometimes a little too loudly. That, and our heated Taboo tournaments late into the night, abusing our good host's hospitality, will be my favorite memories of Selection Weekend.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, it's a shame that I only have that much to sum up an entire weekend full of mentors, friends, and family. Together we are legendary, and a legend deserves more time to be told than this. I began my Selection Weekend asking myself why do these things happen to me? but a minor setback like airplane maintenance could not tarnish it. My future has been set in a new direction, with new allies, and I thank God daily that these things happen to me. ■



A. Damian Williams (RBS 1998) gives the 2009 finalists a tour of the U.S. Supreme Court during his time clerking for Justice John Paul Stevens.

RBSWh at Are T

Ihotu Ali (2003) will be starting graduate school this fall in Public Health at Columbia University.

Danielle Allen (2005) a Harry S. Truman Scholar, is starting work in Washington DC at the Office of Chancellor of Washington DC Schools, Michelle Rhee.

Crystal Boyd (2006) has been living in Ghana the past four months and just returned to New York city. She will be performing in The Reality Show at Madison Square Garden this summer, interning with Abrams Talent Agency in Manhattan, and working at New York University.

Jordan Brewer (1997) will work at Northrop Grumman starting in June.

Robert Brutus (2001) will be teaching Latin I at Boston Preparatory Charter.

John Burton (1997) is working for the U.S. Treasury Department after completing tenure with the Obama Presidential Campaign.

Miya Cain (2004) just completed an internship in Vice President Biden's office and will be heading to Rwanda through the Global Health Corps Fellowship with Partners In Health in Rwanda as a Supply Chain Analyst.

Mena Cammett (2005) graduated from Yale College and will be starting at the Yale School of Management in the fall in a joint MBA/Master of International Relations Program.

Terence Carter (1997) took a new position as Co-Head of Drama Development at FOX Broadcasting Company.

Lowell Caulder (2005) has been accepted to Harvard Business School but will defer for two years as he takes a new position with JPMorgan Chase.

Jade Craig (2002) will be enrolling at Columbia Law School this fall.

Morgan Dooley (1999) is incredibly excited about

graduation from Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and moving to the Bay area for a 3 year residency in Anesthesiology at Stanford.

Kyla Dotson (1999) Namaste! She is back in Kathmandu after a trip to the tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, where she attended the dedication of a girls wing at the Choki Traditional Art School

Ghideon Ezaz (2002) just finished his 3rd year of medical school at Harvard. He is headed to Kennedy School in September for a year to do an MD/MPP.

Yann Le Gall (2003) won a summer research fellowship in computer science at the University of Pittsburgh. In the fall, he will be interning for ANSYS Inc. as a software engineer.

Lisa Ella Gordon (2002) is working as a Data Analyst for Achievement First, a non-profit charter school management organization.

Jennifer Green (2003) is finishing up with The Vanguard Group and will be participating in the Sponsors for Educational Opportunity Corporate Law internship program this summer before starting at Columbia Law School in the fall.

Katori Hall (1999) is fresh off a sold out workshop run, her play THE MOUNTAINTOP will have a full production at Theatre 503 in London starring David Harewood from Blood Diamond. She is featured in the June issue of SHAPE Magazine. She won a fitness makeover!

Antonia Henry (1998) will begin a research fellowship in Vascular Surgery as well as classes in the MPH program at the Harvard School of Public Health in July.

Leah Hodge (1998) Stanford Business School graduate, is launching a temp agency employing low- and middle-income older adults (age 70+). She is getting married in October.

Alvin Hough, Jr. (2002) just moved up to NYC, and is freelancing on piano and is working with a church on the Upper East Side to assist with the Youth Chorale. He

hey Up to NOW??

also joined an exciting new start-up test prep company called Knewton. They teach virtual GMAT and LSAT classes to students all over the world.

Amanda Johnson (2002) will attend Harvard Medical School this fall.

Kelly Lee (2003) is working as a human rights observer in Guatemala, accompanying witnesses in high-stakes court cases against the authors of the Guatemalan Genocide in the 1980s. Check out her blog <http://one-voz.blogspot.com>.

Marquise McGraw (2002) will prepare to move from Washington, DC to Berkeley, CA, where he will begin pursuing his Ph.D. in Economics at UC Berkeley.

Ku McMahan (1999) is headed to Vietnam for 3 months to do research on his H2S water quality test and 5 compartment MPN bag and diarrheal disease in rural village health study.

Ethan Monreal-Jackson (2008) is interning in Dallas with the Sting Soccer Foundation.

Brandon Nicholson (2001) is attempting to place all the necessary components of the train on the tracks to embark upon the journey that is his dissertation.

Kalonji Nzinga (2002) with his band is releasing *Twenty Twelve* its debut album, July 2009 (1200 days before the world ends). Check out their myspace at myspace.com/fearandfancy.

Angela Smedley (2000) made Law Review at Columbia University.

Dorothy Smith (1999) graduated from NYU Law in May and was recognized with the Vanderbilt Medal for outstanding contribution to the Law School. This honor is given to only 12 students (out of 450 students).

Tamika Bailey Smith (2002) is wrapping up her third year of med school at Northwestern University in Chicago and will be applying for a residency in internal medicine this fall.

Victoria Tate (2004) is working for the National Institutes for Health and applying to medical schools.

Ronnie Tisdale (2006) is breaking into the entertainment industry via music and acting and will be attending the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in NYC this summer.

David Williams (2003) will attend Harvard Law School in the fall.

Jay Williams (1999) will graduate from Union Theological Seminary (New York) with a Master of Divinity and return to Harvard (BA 03 in religion) in the fall to begin a PhD in religion/theology.

Briana Wong (2008) finished her first year at Columbia and will spend part of the summer interning with the New York City Urban Project, where she and ten other students will conduct research on current immigration, prostitution, and human trafficking laws in order to make suggestions for new legislation that will more effectively prevent human trafficking. She will also be interning at Restore NYC, an anti-trafficking organization that helps reintegrate trafficked victims into society.

Jamaal Young (1999) is editing reports and managing communications at a non-profit that works with the UN Security Council. He is also writing a political column for the New York Press (www.nypress.com).



Scholars gather in Washington, DC at the annual RBS Alumni Association meeting in March.

Ron Brown Scholar Program Announces New Leadership Initiative *(Continued from Page 2)*

overcome obstacles, graduate, and serve their communities. The new Ron Brown Scholar Leadership Initiative seeks to introduce 8th and 9th grade students across the United States through the use of online standards-based curriculum and mentoring partnerships to the integrated concepts of leadership and service.

The Leadership Initiative also builds upon the already established Read to Lead Program and will utilize *I Have Risen*, video clips from the *Explorations in Black Leadership* Scholar interviews with Julian Bond, and other primary sources and current events through the use of multi-media approaches. The goals of the newly designed curriculum based program will encourage self-awareness and reflection, instill concepts of goal-setting and attainment, examine leadership and the contexts of history and current events, and actively engage students in civic activity.

The curriculum will be available to teachers

free of charge online and, although we will incorporate technology such as discussion forums and video clips, it is important that

this project remain accessible to those teachers and students who may not have internet capabilities. To that end, we are working to ensure that our content and activities are not in any way restricted to those without internet access, but by utilizing the latest supplemental instructional technology, we will keep today's students fully engaged.

Upon completion of the curriculum, students will be empowered to design and implement a community service project

experience. The culminating project of the Leadership Initiative will find participants working with Ron Brown Scholar mentors to create community service projects relevant to their locality. The projects will be submitted to the Ron Brown Scholar Community Service Foundation and the winning project will be eligible to receive support and assistance for the implementation of the project.

The 19th century French historian Alexis de Tocqueville was possibly the

first to comment publicly on the American tendency to form associations and to act on the notion that it is the duty as well as the interest of men to make themselves useful to their fellow creatures. Some people have commented recently that this tendency is not as evident as it once was. In fact, President Obama stepped up the call for citizens to serve shortly after his election this year when he said, "We need your service right now at



Ron Brown Scholars Maria Velazquez (RBS 2000) and Michael Anderson (RBS 2000) (top center) work with Boys and Girls Club students at the 2008 RBS Leadership Conference.

which will provide them the opportunity to not only enrich their communities, but their own academic and extra-curricular

this moment in history. I'm not going to tell you what your role should be; that's for you to discover. But I am asking you to stand up and play your part. I am asking you to help change history's course.

Ultimately, this project will put the Ron Brown Scholars directly in touch with potentially thousands of young people across nation and will provide opportunities for young people to become more skilled at taking a stand about something that matters to them in a more innovative way.

This grassroots spreading of the characteristics of leadership and the skills of civic engagement will help strengthen the American propensity to take part in service in order for our democracy to thrive. ■

Innovation in Education

(Continued from Page 4)

has been invaluable. From the initial stages in which I started to refine the vision and learn the basics of a start-up (thanks Sam), to connecting me with advisors and potential funders (Mike Mallory is such an incredible resource), my connection with my RBS family has been absolutely essential to navigating this new adventure.

At this stage, I am very excited about the potential of this project for becoming an amazing business, and for impacting the quality of instruction that students receive every day in their classrooms. Just like when I first began as a teacher, the learning curve has been huge. But it has been a remarkably enjoyable process, as I find myself getting re-educated about education all over again. ■

A Foundation Upon Which to Build

Student extols the virtues of a scholarship program based on genuinely giving back.

(Continued from Page 3)

in the early 1980s, which made education, career options, and income quite limited for us.

At the age of 12, I finally became one with the sky. My first voyage was to visit family in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. I cannot remember much about the flight, but I'll never forget my excitement and awe at the sudden new reality of aviation. When I returned to Miami, I decided to start keeping a mental tally of my plane rides. To inflate the number, I would count round trips as two. I was 12 years old, and I had reached two plane rides. Surely this was an amazing accomplishment, and one that I dreamed of quadrupling over the next several years.

It would not be until March of 2004 at the age of 18 that I would be on a plane again. I was named as a finalist in the Ron Brown Scholarship competition and flown to Washington, D.C., to be interviewed. I was excited to add the trip to my tally as flights three and four, but had no idea that the plane ride north would turn out to be the pivotal moment of my life.

It was at the D.C. weekend that I became a part of a family of like-minded thinkers and doers. I hadn't known they existed. With the aid of the Ron Brown Scholarship, I attended the University of Virginia for my undergraduate studies. I double-majored in economics and African and African-American Studies, and minored in Global Public Health. Coming from a high school that consistently ranked among the worst in the state of Florida, I realized that I was behind in academic preparation and preparation for a collegiate atmosphere. I tapped into the resources provided by my second family in Charlottesville, Va., located down the street at the Ron Brown Scholar Program office. The staff and Scholars remained in constant touch with me during my Charlottesville years and served as a shoulder to lean on in times of academic and social need. I had such times, such needs.

I quickly realized that the Ron Brown Program was more than a scholarship – it was a place where people wanted to see me grow and develop into a better student, community leader, and individual. Just walking in the door made me feel special.

The connections that I made through the Ron Brown Scholar Program have been invaluable to my successes thus far. I met Mr. Dave Wilkins, Chief Operating Officer at the Institute of Human Virology, during my Ron Brown Scholar interview weekend in Washington, D.C., in 2004. A year later, I would be working as an intern with the Community Education Department of the Institute of Human Virology in Baltimore, Md. where I drafted and edited brochures and newsletters, and attended community education events. A year following this, I would serve as a fellow with the Institute of Human Virology in Nigeria. I was able to conduct research on the costs of accessing anti-retroviral treatments, as well as studying HIV/AIDS in the country. Both experiences serve as the foundation of my passion and dedication to global public health issues, and have led me to meet many other students and researchers in this field.

When I started Project Youth Uplift, an organization at the University of Virginia aimed at mentoring middle school youth, I had no idea as to how it would be funded. Friends of the Ron Brown Program helped to make this project a reality through donations, feedback, and hands-on participation. Youth Uplift was able to impact the lives of children through the generous giving the RBSP guided me to, and I witnessed many lives change for the better. One of our participants went from having numerous suspensions, failing the 8th grade, and fighting others regularly on campus, to being the model student and receiving high honors at the graduation ceremony. This single experience

helped me feel that I made a genuine difference in a small defined community and had actually contributed to the world being a better place. I could not have done this without the endless support that I received from RBSP.

The Ron Brown Scholar Program does more than provide financial assistance – it builds a family. Through the diligent work of staff and friends, the Program enables and promotes friendships, builds business relationships, creates service connections, encourages spiritual connections, and serves as a motivational

(Continued on Page 16)



Geraldine Pierre (shown above) enjoys interaction with students during a Read to Lead Program event with Partnership for the Future in Richmond, VA.

A Foundation Upon Which to Build

Student extols the virtues of a scholarship program based on genuinely giving back.

(Continued from Page 15)

hub for individuals who strive on a daily basis to do more and be more, despite obstacles that stand in the way. We continuously mentor incoming Scholars, receive advice from those far older and more experienced, and keep each other involved in the Program and accountable for its success. Many of my best friends are Ron Brown Scholars. Located in different areas of the country, we often travel to meet with each other outside of RBSP official business events.

The best thing about this is that no matter where you may travel in the world, there is a Ron Brown Scholar who is there or can connect you to someone who can help. In a world with unbearable stresses and uncertainty, you never feel alone as a Ron Brown Scholar. I often try to imagine my life without the Ron Brown Scholar Program, but it is quite impossible. I would not be the person that I am today without the support of Program staff, friends of RBSP, and my fellow Scholars. I have never before taken the time to evaluate how much this Program has done for me, as well as other Scholars. A simple thank you could never express the extent of my appreciation to the CAP Charitable Foundation, the RBS Program staff, and friends of the Program. I am sure that current Scholars and Alumni, from the class of 1997 to the most recent class in 2009, share or have begun to know this feeling. All in all, my hope is that my experiences will motivate youth in discouraging circumstances to try harder and be more. It often hurts to return home to Miami and hear about the situations involving youth and death, prison, and drugs. The late Secretary Ron Brown once said, "Most importantly, when you reach that level of success, keep the door open and the ladder down for others to follow." It is through giving back to others that I feel most fulfilled — and it is through the

Ron Brown Scholar Program that I have been able to give back so genuinely and freely.

Today I am currently studying Health Policy and Management as a graduate student at the University of North-Carolina – Chapel Hill. I hope to continue my education in the years to come, and research economic and social issues that affect health policies, both domestic and international. I currently serve as the Chair of Communications on the Ron Brown Scholar Alumni Association Board, which keeps me actively involved in catching up with Scholars and keeping the group connected. I avoid missing the yearly RBSP Selection Weekends in March, RBSAA Family Reunions in August, and the motivational and exciting Program conferences that are held every three years. I can vouch that Ron Brown Scholars are truly forever connected once becoming a part of the Program.

These days, when I return to Miami for family visits and short breaks, I still stare into the sky from the exact spot that I did a decade ago. The origin of planes is still always Miami International Airport. The big planes like the 747s are probably headed to Orlando, Tampa, or Atlanta, where passengers will transfer to another flight. The smaller planes may be going to Fort Lauderdale or possibly just taking a leisurely trip. If I look far enough south, maybe one of those planes is headed over the Atlantic. Maybe to Haiti. Maybe to Europe. I have lost count of my plane rides. I did keep count until they numbered perhaps 40, but the trips back and forth to school in Virginia and North Carolina, the long voyages to learn and serve in Abuja, Lagos, Accra, New Orleans, and Biloxi, and the fun trips to San Diego, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Atlanta have all thrown me off count. In order to use the analytical skills I picked up in college, I now count my blessings: and I always remember to count the Ron Brown Scholar Program twice. ■



Alumni Scholars Kelly Cross, Carmelle Norice and John Burton enjoy dinner recently in Washington, DC to catch up with one another.

Ron Brown Scholar Program
1160 Pepsi Place, Suite 206
Charlottesville, VA 22901
Phone: (434) 964-1588
Fax: (434) 964-1589
email: info@ronbrown.org

Visit us at
www.ronbrown.org