

# SISTERMENTORS

Promoting Education Among Women and Girls of Color  
A Project of EduSeed

*15th Anniversary Issue*

Fall/Winter 2012 Newsletter

A Newsletter for Donors and Friends of SisterMentors

## Our Visit to Harvard University and Wellesley College

As we walked into Harvard Yard on the morning of April 3rd, one of the girls shouted, "My God, we are at Harvard!" Her exclamation expressed the level of excitement all of them felt about being on Harvard's campus. They had heard so much about Harvard but none of them had visited the university. We at SisterMentors wanted to celebrate the lead-up to the program's fifteenth anniversary this fall with a visit to Harvard --- the oldest and most prestigious institution of higher learning in the United States, and to Wellesley,



At Wellesley College with President Kim Bottomly

one of the most prestigious American women's colleges with distinguished women graduates, including Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton.

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Nineteen girls in middle and high school, ages 12 to 18, went on a five-day trip to the Boston area. To date, the girls in SisterMentors have visited fifteen institutions of higher education, including liberal arts colleges and research universities. Our visit to Harvard and Wellesley was the farthest the girls have travelled since we began our annual college visits. Our trip lasted five days including two days of travel. Similar to when we visited Virginia Commonwealth University and Goucher College, the girls were able to compare the differences between a big university in an urban community and a small college in the suburbs.

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## 42 Women of Color Doctorates

On October 18, 2012, SisterMentors celebrated another wonderful success: our first woman of color to earn a Ph.D. in Economics! SisterMentors has now helped 42 women of color to earn doctorates in fifteen years.

Susan Ozawa earned her doctorate in Economics from the New School for Social Research (the New School) located primarily in Greenwich Village, New York City. There are few women Ph.D.s in Economics and fewer of those are women of color. Susan spent close to five years in SisterMentors and made substantial contributions to our program. She was deeply committed to mentoring her peers and our young girls. Susan's achievement is a demonstration of the resiliency and determination of the women SisterMentors has helped and their special place as role models for young girls of color.

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# From the Executive Director

Dear Donors and Friends:

We have kicked off a year-long celebration of SisterMentors' 15th Anniversary and we are so excited!!! We are celebrating from Fall 2012 to Fall 2013!

Our 15 years of mentoring, promoting education and transforming communities are, in large part, due to your continued generous support. I founded SisterMentors in the fall of 1997 and we began fundraising in 2001 after SisterMentors became a program under the nonprofit organization, EduSeed. Some of you have been supporters since 2001 and others are more recent supporters. We are privileged to have donors like you and we thank you all for your continued support, especially during these challenging times. Thank you so much!

As I write to you after the elections, we are full of hope about the future. We have come a long way since 1997 in terms of our success in changing the lives of the women and girls who participate in our program. We have helped 19 young women to go to college --- three of whom recently graduated --- and 42 women to earn doctorates. The young women have been admitted to schools such as Duke, Goucher, Bates, Virginia Commonwealth University and Northern Virginia Community College. The women have earned doctorates in diverse disciplines, including in Math, Science and Economics.

As you turn the pages of this newsletter, you will get an update on some of our young women in college --- four of whom are scheduled to graduate in May 2013. You will also get an update on some of the women we have helped to earn their doctorates, some of whom are now tenured faculty at their universities or working with nonprofits that are committed to social good. We are seeing the ripple effects of our work and the positive change it is having on lives beyond those of the women and girls that we serve.

There are many stories about how our work has impacted the lives of the women and girls we have served these past fifteen years and the lives of their families. I remember snippets of a few of those stories: the mother who wept when she saw her daughter walk across the stage at her high school graduation; the grandmother who set foot on a college campus for the first time in her life to see her granddaughter graduate --- the first person in their immediate and extended family to receive a college



**Margie Obeng, Pennsylvania State University**

degree; the woman who, instead of submitting her letter quitting her doctoral program, joined SisterMentors and earned her doctorate; the twelve-year-old girl who was shy and struggling in school who is now a twenty-one-year-old woman whose high self-esteem has propelled her to the Dean's list because of her excellent academic record; and the young woman who ran a successful campaign for a leadership role as soon as she arrived on her college campus.

It is a privilege to witness the transformation of so many lives. One of the most exciting developments for us over the years is that we started out serving only middle school girls and women doctoral students, and then evolved into serving women and girls on almost all educational levels --- elementary, middle, and high school, college and graduate school. We are a part of many of the girls' lives, from elementary school through college graduation, and we build strong relationships with the women doctoral students who spend between three to five years in our program working on their dissertations and mentoring our girls.

I am humbled by your generosity and grateful for your support these past years. We know that times are tough for many due to the economy, but I kindly request that you put SisterMentors on your list of priorities for giving as the year draws to a close. We thank you for the huge role you play, through your donations, in helping the women and girls in SisterMentors to pursue their dream of higher education. We simply cannot do this work without your support.

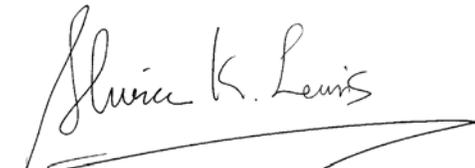
Please continue to support us. This year, we invite you to do something special in honor of SisterMentors' 15th anniversary. We invite you to make a pledge to help

sustain our work for the next five years, culminating in SisterMentors' twentieth anniversary in 2017. This is an exciting time for us! Join us in our goal to raise \$30,000 in cash and pledges by December 31, 2012. You can pledge \$1,000 each year for the next five years, \$500 each year for the next five years, or \$250 each year for the next five years. Or, you can pledge any amount over any period. Or, you can send us a one-time gift --- we are grateful for whatever you can give. You can make your donation by check, credit card, or you can make a donation online at [www.sistermentors.org](http://www.sistermentors.org) by clicking on the **DONATE NOW** link and following the instructions. Please make your first payment on your pledge, or send your one-time gift before the end of 2012.

As always, I encourage you to contact me for any reason. I am always delighted to hear from you. I can be reached at [director@sistermentors.org](mailto:director@sistermentors.org) or at 202-778-6424. I look forward to talking with you.

Thank you for your support of SisterMentors!

Sincerely,



Shireen K. Lewis, Ph.D.



**SisterMentors Girls**

## 42 Women of Color Doctorates

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**Susan Ozawa**

Susan is a mixed-race, fourth generation Japanese-American. Her family's history of fleeing from and negotiating various regimes, including her grandfather's experience as a Russian Jew and her father's internment in the United States for being of Japanese descent during World War II, led her to find an intellectual home of critical thought at the graduate school of the New School, formerly named the University in Exile. Susan has worked at several think-tanks and non-governmental organizations and is currently a researcher with the national labor union for registered nurses, National Nurses United, in Oakland, California.

"What SisterMentors has done is grounded me and given my work tremendous meaning. I have made a commitment to these amazing women and the mentees to achieve in order to give back and that commitment kept me going when all hope seemed to be lost. The degree was much larger than me or my life goals, but was part of a history of all those overcoming marginalization. SisterMentors reminded me of our collective noble calling to develop our talents and expand our knowledge in order to give back. There is nothing more important or rewarding than answering that call and SisterMentors kept my eyes on *that* prize."

— Susan Ozawa, Ph.D.

# News from Our Young Women in College

## Fourth Year

### **Rudy Abate, Mary Washington University**

I knew from the start of my junior year that it wasn't going to be easy. I knew that I had to work twice as hard. As a senior, I didn't expect my classes to get easier but rather I expected the way I would handle my time and work load of my courses to be easier than freshman year. This fall, I am taking the GRE, the graduate record examinations, and applying to graduate school for Athletic Training and possibly Neuropsychology. I am sad that I only have one more year left of college but excited about moving on to bigger and greater things.

### **Kedest Firdaweke, Virginia Commonwealth University**

My junior year went by so quickly it felt like I finished it in a week. It was quite stressful, but since I was taking upper level classes and going deeper into my major, I understood that things had to get harder. My senior year so far has been stressful because I am living off campus for the first time and must have a job. I am majoring in Advertising and so I am taking classes in my major. Although I am very busy, I still find time to volunteer, including as a mentor in an elementary school. I am not sure what I want to do when I graduate next May but I am considering taking a year off to work or go back home to Ethiopia to consider my next steps.

### **Ruhama Yared, Goucher College**

My junior year at Goucher, I went abroad during the fall semester to study in Barbados. In the spring, I was back at Goucher taking Education and Math classes. I also taught a fifth grade Language Arts class. I learned a lot about what I would like to do after graduation which is to teach Math to underprivileged children so that they will grow to love Math as much as I do. This summer, SisterMentors helped me to get an internship with the American Institutes for Research. I wrote quizzes and reviewed lesson plans for teachers in elementary, middle, and high school grades. I gained a lot of experience through this internship that I can use when I start teaching after graduation next May.

## Third Year

### **Cindy Ayala, George Mason University**

I transferred from a community college to George Mason University. I am now in my junior year. The transfer process was a bit hectic but I survived and now I am happy. I declared my major as New Media Arts (Animation) with a minor in Game Design. After



**Cindy Ayala**

only one semester, I made the Dean's list with a GPA of 3.61 and I was so excited! This is the first time in my life that I have achieved outstanding academic success. My hard work paid off and I intend to maintain my GPA. I love GMU. I must thank SisterMentors for all the help I received during the transfer.

### **Alinah Mphofe, Northern Virginia Community College**

Currently, I have one semester left at Northern Virginia Community College. I plan on transferring to Longwood University or the University of Virginia College at Wise in the spring and major in Education. It took one bad grade in Statistics to figure out that Business Administration was not for me and that I should pursue my lifelong dream of teaching. Right now, I juggle work and classes every day. Even though sometimes I feel tired, I know that eventually my perseverance will pay off.

### **Azeb Legesse, Virginia Commonwealth University**

My sophomore year at Virginia Commonwealth University was very challenging but quite rewarding. I took difficult classes while balancing extracurricular activities such as working with elementary school students. I was accepted into the Honors program so I took a couple of honors classes. This fall, I began the clinical laboratory science program. This program is a two year program taken at VCU's medical campus which will help me to graduate with a bachelor's degree in clinical laboratory science. After graduation, I will continue with my goal of going to pharmacy school to earn my Ph.D. in Pharmacy.

### **Maya Simpkins, Virginia Commonwealth University**

My sophomore year was difficult. But it all ended well and I achieved my goal of making the Dean's list for the second time and keeping up with my extracurricular



**Maya Simpkins**

activities. Before my junior year, I found out I would not be receiving as much financial aid as I did in previous years and I was unable to afford to return to school. SisterMentors gave me advice about how to help fix my financial situation and because of their help, I was able to find a way to pay for school. As a junior this school year, I am finally able to take most of my classes that fall under my major and I plan on staying on the Dean's list.

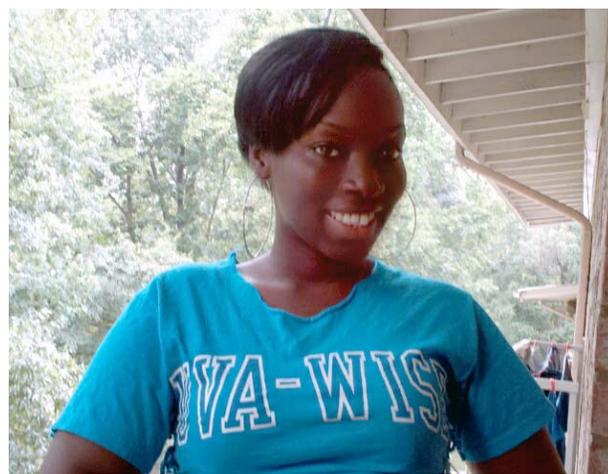
### **Second Year**

#### **Margie Obeng, Pennsylvania State University**

When I began my journey at Pennsylvania State University, I had an idea about what to expect after many college visits with SisterMentors, but the experience of your first year at school is where you really gain knowledge. During my first semester, I was quite overwhelmed with school. I felt lost and helpless at times due to the size of my campus. For the first time in my life I began to question myself. Luckily, after a discussion with upper level students and the support of my fellow first years, I understood that college is a struggle and nothing in this life comes easy. In the spring, things took a turn for the better. I realized that if I wanted to be a good example, I needed to do everything in my power to strive for excellence. I worked hard and made the Dean's list with a 3.51 GPA. I am excited to continue my second year at Penn State.

#### **Binta Bayoh, University of Virginia College at Wise**

My first year of college had its ups and downs. When I first started school, I had a pretty good idea of what I was stepping into mainly because of the many college visits I did with SisterMentors. When I moved into my college dorm to start my college experience, I had a hard time adjusting because of the new environment. One of the things that made my transition easier was the fact that my college roommate Sherifa, who is also part of SisterMentors, is a longtime friend, so in a way I had a



**Binta Bayoh**

piece of home with me. So after the first year of college I started feeling more comfortable and did what I had to do for the second semester to get the grades I wanted. By the end of my first year, I was proud of my success. Now that I am in my second year of college, I am participating in extracurricular activities and am more involved on campus. Knowing what to expect and how to tackle any challenges I face makes me know that the next 3 years of school will be successful.

#### **Sherifa Idris, University of Virginia College at Wise**

My freshman year in college was interesting and different. Being in college, I was able to learn new things which helped me grow and become independent. By going to a college that was far from home, I was able to adapt to the educational environment by using helpful resources such as my advisor, financial aid office, tutors, and professors. These things helped me with my college experience. I took on leadership roles and was nominated by my peers as the treasurer of the freshman dorm. As treasurer, I was in charge of budgeting the funds. I am now in my sophomore year and staying on track with my education. I am also getting more involved by joining different organizations.

### **First Year**

#### **Ledia Yirgu, University of Virginia College at Wise**

I began my first semester at the University of Virginia College at Wise this fall. The courses I am taking include Personal Finance, Public Speaking and Social Problems (which includes recent history and current events, including the presidential election). I have already declared my major as Business since I plan to have my own business. I am very happy to have Binta and Sherifa here at UVA Wise since they are helping me a lot to get through my first year of college. I don't know what I would have done without them. We spend a lot of time together, including studying at the library.

## Social Skills and Leadership Workshop



“An awesome experience that I would never forget,” said one of the girls. On May 26, 2012, SisterMentors girls participated in our annual social skills and leadership workshop. Held in partnership with the Jefferson Hotel, located a few blocks away from the White House, the workshop was taught by Ms. Fannie Allen of the prestigious Allen Etiquette Institute. The focus of this year’s workshop was dealing with peer pressure and what it takes to become a good leader.

“I learned not to succumb to negative peer pressure and to do what’s right,” one of the girls said. The girls were first asked to define peer pressure and discuss what it

means. Mrs. Allen explained that peer pressure could be either positive or negative, and the focus of discussion was on negative peer pressure, including when one is pressured to use illegal drugs or to dress and behave in a certain way. Ms. Allen warned the girls to avoid drugs at all cost and advised them to dress appropriately for the particular occasion and to avoid micro miniskirts, tops that expose their bosoms and stilettos. Girls were told to wear skirts at or below the knee, especially for job interviews. Ms. Allen told girls that she would like them to have their own identity and to be comfortable in their skin. She expressed the hope that they would be strong and confident enough to resist peer pressure.

“I learned that, as a leader, you have to set a good example,” a girl said. Girls learned that they should not engage in negative talk. Ms. Allen gave each girl a brown bag and told them that when they feel inclined to say something negative about someone else that they should find a private place, open the bag and say all the negative things about the person into it, crush the bag and then put it in File 13, the trash can. Ms. Allen reminded girls that how they speak will determine if they get respect and advised girls to pronounce their words properly and clearly. The girls also received a list of workplace dos and don’ts, which included not using Facebook while at work, attending all meetings with pen and paper in hand, and taking responsibility for their mistakes.

As they do every year, the girls raved about the workshop and parents expressed their gratitude for the skills their daughters learn and put into practice.

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## Update On Our Young Women Who Graduated From College

### **Megan Tuck, Duke University, Class of 2011**

Megan Tuck graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology with a Certificate in Markets and Management. Today, she is an Account Executive with Bliss Integrated Communications (Bliss). Bliss is a “business to business marketing communication agency” serving clients in health care and financial and professional services. Megan is primarily involved in working with financial services and is responsible for media relations and content strategy as well as larger marketing and program planning.

### **Shannon Scott, Virginia Commonwealth University, Class of 2011**

Shannon Scott graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration and Business

Management with a concentration in Small Business and Entrepreneurship. Shannon recently worked as a Legal Assistant for a law firm in the Washington, D.C. area where she drafted legal documents and prepared and maintained clients’ files. Prior to that, she was an Academic Scholar for Legal Ethics at Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies where she facilitated study sessions for paralegal students and prepared study guides to aid classroom instruction.

### **Sara Estefanos, Old Dominion University, Class of 2012**

Sara Estefanos earned her Bachelor’s degree in Political Science and International Relations. She started her college education at Tidewater Community College and then transferred to Old Dominion University. Sara is currently exploring her career options.

# Our Visit to Harvard University and Wellesley College

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**Ninth Grader and Professor Charles Ogletree**

At both schools, the girls sat in classes, attended a session on admissions and financial aid, and ate meals in the dining halls. The highlight of the trip was our visit with Professor Charles Ogletree, Harvard Law School Jesse Climenko Professor of Law and Director of the Criminal Justice Institute, and our meeting with President Kim Bottomly of Wellesley College.

## Our Visit to Harvard Law School

"I was honored to meet President Obama's professor," said one of the girls. Professor Charles Ogletree graciously hosted us at the law school on the first day of our visit. The girls had asked to visit the law school since many of them want to become lawyers. Professor Ogletree taught both President Barack Obama and Mrs. Obama at Harvard and has remained close to President Obama throughout the president's political career. Professor Ogletree invited the girls to sit in on his law school class with guest lecturer, Stephen Bright, one of the nation's leading anti-death penalty attorneys. Before class began, Professor Ogletree spent time with the girls talking about his life and responding to questions.

Professor Ogletree shared with the girls that he grew up in a poor family but had great teachers at his high school, and went on to graduate from Stanford and Harvard universities. In response to a question from one of the girls, Professor Ogletree explained how he became a lawyer. He said that he was not sure about what he wanted to do when he was in college and decided to become a lawyer when he met Angela Davis' attorneys during her trial. Angela Davis is an American political activist and scholar whose trial is one of the most famous trials in U.S. history. Professor Ogletree said that he started his career as a public defender in Washington, D.C., a job he described as "the best job I ever had."

One of the girls asked how he feels knowing that he taught the President of the United States. Professor Ogletree said that President Obama was a remarkable student but that Mrs. Obama was even better. He explained that he met Mrs. Obama the first year he started teaching at Harvard and was impressed by her court appearances helping people on public assistance and with housing problems. One of the girls described the meeting with Professor Ogletree as "very informative." "It helped me figure out what I want to do with my future."

## Our Visit to Wellesley College

"I loved it! I really felt welcomed and free here. I hope that I will come to Wellesley some day," said one of the girls. Thanks to the efforts of Professor Anjali Punjab, Professor of French at Wellesley, the college hosted the girls for a day during our trip. The girls met with President H. Kim Bottomly, a renowned immunobiologist and Wellesley's 13th president.

"Smart, strong, successful, and warm" were some of the words the girls used to describe President Bottomly. The president was very welcoming and generous with her time. She welcomed the girls to Wellesley and talked with them about the college and her presidency. The president described Wellesley as the top liberal arts college in the world for women. Wellesley educates women for leadership, she explained. Regarding training students for leadership, the president said that one of the most important things students learn is how to communicate well in the world. This is the purpose of the Wellesley student debates, modeled on the Oxford Debates where students present their arguments, their rebuttal, and then the audience votes and decides the winner.

"An all-women's college isn't a bad choice," one of the girls said after a very lively and engaging session with first and second year students of color at Wellesley. The girls were surprised to find students from the Washington, D.C. area, including five women who graduated from a public high school in Prince George's County, Maryland.

The students shared with the girls how they came to Wellesley, including their initial dismissal of the college simply because it is a women's college. This helped the girls to rethink their knee-jerk reaction to women's colleges. One of the students explained that she came to an all-women's college because she wants to find herself as a human being and as a woman. "I love Wellesley. The students were amazingly super nice," said one of the girls.

## SisterMentors' Doctorates and Where They Are Today



**Melissa B. Littlefield**

### **Melissa B. Littlefield, Ph.D., 1998**

Melissa Littlefield is currently a tenured associate professor of Social Work at Morgan State University. She earned her doctorate in Social Work from Howard University. Melissa's article titled, "The Womanist Perspective for Social Work," made a significant contribution to her field. It is the first scholarship in social work literature that specifically articulates Black or African American women's standpoint in social work, bringing together the intersection of race and gender. Melissa is the principal investigator of an initiative called MINDS eHealth, which aims to reduce selected health disparities — including HIV/AIDS, obesity, breast cancer, violence, and stress --- among African Americans.

### **Paula Quick-Hall, Ph.D., 1998**

Paula Quick-Hall was a divorced mother of two children when she earned her doctorate in Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is currently an assistant professor of Political Science at North Carolina Central University, a historically Black university in Durham, North Carolina. Paula also founded a nonprofit organization, the African American Education and Research Organization where she works to empower African American parents, children, and young adults to make well-informed choices about schooling, informal education, and learning at home.

### **Judi Moore Latta, Ph.D., 1999**

Judi Moore Latta has always been an accomplished woman. She earned her doctorate in American Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. Judi is a tenured professor of Radio, TV, and Film and a member of the graduate faculty of the Department of Mass Communications and Media Studies at Howard University (Howard). Most recently she served the President of Howard as a member of his cabinet primarily responsible for the university's strategic communications and marketing efforts. She co-chairs the Women's Studies graduate certificate program and



**Judi Moore Latta**

serves as a member of the steering committee of Women as Change Agents, a university-wide initiative under the leadership of the university's First Lady. Judi volunteers her time with young women in a girls rites of passage program. She has published several book chapters.

### **Avis Jones-DeWeever, Ph.D., 2000**

Avis Jones-DeWeever earned her doctorate in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is currently executive director of the National Council of Negro Women, the nation's oldest organization dedicated to the advancement of both civil rights and women's rights. Avis is a highly sought-after political commentator and her policy perspectives have been shared with media outlets, including CNN, PBS, BET, Essence Magazine, the New York Times, and the Washington Post.

### **Randi Gray Kristensen, Ph.D., 2000**

Randi Gray Kristensen earned her doctorate in English from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is currently deputy director of "Writing in the Disciplines" at the University Writing Program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. There, she also teaches service-learning writing classes. She edits the "Pedagogy/Activism/Cultural Studies" series at Lexington Books, which also published her book titled, *Writing Against the Curriculum: Anti-Disciplinarity in the Writing and Cultural Studies Classroom*.

### **Desmonique Bonet, Ph.D., 2000**

Desmonique Bonet earned her doctorate in Political Science from American University in Washington, D.C. She is currently the head of Industry, B2B at Google Inc. She has created cross platform online campaigns for Johnson & Johnson, Revlon, Avon and Schick. Desmonique launched the Johnson's Baby Channel on YouTube, making Johnson & Johnson the first company to create a community for mothers of all backgrounds to learn from each other through the power of video.

Her key focus is enhancing digital education and activation across Google platforms in the Search, Mobile, Display and YouTube arenas. Desmonique is the founder of the New York Hispanic Googler Network.

**Adrienne M. Smith (formerly Adrienne M. Porter), Ph.D., 2001**

Adrienne M. Smith earned her doctorate in Public and Community Health (Minority/Women's Health) from the University of Maryland, College Park's School of Public Health, Department of Public and Community Health. She is currently a Public Health Advisor with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health. Within the Division of Outreach and Collaboration, she manages programs and outreach activities focused on minority women's health, and girl/adolescent health promotion. Adrienne also mentors young public health students and professionals, and works with young women and girls.

**Kangbai Konaté, Ph.D., 2002**

Born and raised in France to parents from Mali and Guinea, West Africa, Kangbai Konaté earned her doctorate with highest honors in Sociology from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, France. She also earned a degree in Economics from the Sorbonne. Kangbai has been working in the area of education for over 16 years, specializing in women's and girls' education, first as an educational supervisor and advisor in Paris, then as an international consultant in human development.

**Danielle Prendergast (formerly Danielle White), Ph.D., 2003**

Danielle Prendergast earned her doctorate in Political Science from American University in Washington, D.C. Today, Danielle works on social justice advocacy, including reproductive justice for women and girls of color and voting rights for ex-felons. She was the policy director for the ACLU in Florida. She has been a consultant on government relations and has lobbied for companies, including a Fortune 500 energy company. She has also worked on issues of climate change and cybersecurity.

**Codou Diaw, Ph.D., 2003**

Born and raised in Senegal, Codou Diaw lived in the United States for almost sixteen years. She earned her doctorate from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County in the Education Department's interdisciplinary program. Codou currently resides in Geneva, Switzerland. Until recently, she was executive director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists, the leading Pan-African NGO that promotes girls' education and advocates for gender equity in Africa. Codou was on the Advisory Board of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Education Track in 2009 and 2010 where she advised



**Codou Diaw**

President Clinton on key issues to feature regarding education and gender during the CGI Annual Meetings. Codou has published a number of articles and book chapters on gender education and has presented widely on the topic.

**Genevieve Gaisie (formerly Genevieve Yirenkyi), Ph.D., 2004**

Genevieve Gaisie has always been a woman on a mission. Born in Ghana, West Africa, Genevieve migrated to the United States at the age of five and obtained her doctorate when she was twenty-seven years old. Genevieve earned her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology in Palo Alto, California. Today, she is a Clinical Psychologist in private practice focusing on children, adolescents and their families, and she is also a staff psychologist at Baltimore Medical System Community Health Clinics where she provides mental health services to underserved residents.

**Laura G. Daughtery, Ph.D., 2004**

Laura G. Daughtery is an associate professor at Catholic University in Washington, D.C. where she received tenure in 2011 and from where she had earned her doctorate in Social Work. Laura teaches foundation level courses in the baccalaureate and masters programs. Her research interests include understanding the experience and meaning of child welfare within the context of families and public child welfare services, and African American families and gerontology. She is co-author of two book chapters and her work has been published in several journals, including *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research*.

**Carolyn Peoples Veiga, Ph.D., 2004**

Carolyn Peoples Veiga earned her doctorate from the University of Maryland, College Park, College of Education, Department of Human Development. Today, Carolyn is in private practice as an Educational Consultant. In this capacity, she serves as a dissertation editor, evaluates and analyzes college-level curricula, and presents seminars to college faculty on alternative strategies for educating adult learners returning to college. Carolyn is also an adjunct professor.

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# SisterMentors' Doctorates and Where They Are Today

## **Najat Asaad, DSW, 2004**

Born in Egypt, Najat Asaad was the mother of two adult children when she earned her doctorate in Social Work from Howard University. She currently lives in Saudi Arabia.

## **Koritha Mitchell, Ph.D., 2005**

Koritha Mitchell is the first in her family to go to college. She earned her doctorate in English from the University of Maryland, College Park. Today, she is a tenured associate professor of English at Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. Among her awards is a post-doctoral fellowship from the American Association of University Women. Koritha's recent book, *Living with Lynching*, has received awards from the Society for the Study of American Women Writers and the American Theatre and Drama Society. Koritha grew up in Sugar Land, Texas.

## **Shona N. Jackson, Ph.D., 2005**

Born in Guyana, South America, Shona N. Jackson recently earned tenure at Texas A&M University where she is an associate professor of English and co-associate director of Graduate Studies in English. She earned her doctorate from the Interdisciplinary Program in Modern Thought & Literature from Stanford University. Shona is founding co-editor of the book series in Caribbean Studies at University Press of Mississippi and an advisory and contributing editor for *Callaloo*. Her new book, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean*, was recently released by the University of Minnesota Press.

## **Losang Rabgey, Ph.D., 2006**

When Losang Rabgey earned her doctorate in Anthropology and Gender Studies from the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, she became one of the first Tibetan women in the West to earn a doctorate. She is currently the Executive Director of Machik, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. Under Losang's leadership, Machik built the first elementary and middle schools in a village in Tibet which educate the children of farmers and nomads. Losang was born in a refugee camp in northern India and grew up in Canada.

## **Carol Hedgspeth, Ph.D., 2007**

Carol Hedgspeth earned her doctorate in Educational Psychology from the Department of Human Development and Psycho-Educational Studies in the School of Education at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

Carol is currently a senior research associate at the Institute for the Study of Knowledge Management in Education in Half Moon Bay, California. Her research interests include doctoral student persistence in higher education, health literacy in minority communities, and the importance of culturally competent program evaluation in education.

## **Vivian H. Jackson, Ph.D., 2007**

Vivian H. Jackson is the kind of woman we all want to be when we grow up. At the age of 59, she earned her doctorate in Social Welfare at the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences at Case Western Reserve University while also serving as a wife and mother to two teenage sons, one of whom she was helping with college applications. She is currently assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at Georgetown University School of Medicine where she serves as Senior Policy Associate for the National Center for Cultural Competence at the university's Center for Child and Human Development. She has many publications, including an edited book titled, *Cultural Competence in Managed Behavioral Health Care*.

## **Calandra Tate Moore, Ph.D., 2007**

Calandra Tate Moore has always been a trailblazer. When she earned her doctorate in Applied Mathematics from the University of Maryland, College Park, she made history as one of the few women and even fewer women of color in the U.S. to earn a doctorate in Mathematics. She is also the first in her family to go to college. Today, Calandra is a tenure track assistant professor at the State University of New York, Staten Island.

## **Adriane Williams, Ph.D., 2008**

Adriane Williams earned her doctorate in Educational Policy Studies from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Until recently, she was an Assistant Professor at West Virginia University in the College of Human Resources and Education. Today, Adriane has left academia and returned home to Memphis, Tennessee to focus on her writing and to consult with schools, districts, nonprofits, and government agencies that serve low-income families.

## **Tisha Y. Lewis, Ph.D., 2009**

Like so many of the women in SisterMentors, Tisha Y. Lewis' successes are due in large part to her ability to persevere and thrive in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. After earning her doctorate in Reading at the University of Albany, SUNY, Tisha became a tenure track assistant professor in Language



**Tisha Y. Lewis**

and Literacy at Georgia State University. Tisha's research explores how agency, identity, and power among African American families are constructed as they use digital literacies as mediating tools to make sense of their lives. Her work has appeared in books such as *Artifactual Literacies: Every Object Tells a Story*.

**Jessica Floyd, Psy.D., 2009**

Born and raised in Montgomery County, Maryland, at the age of twenty-six, Jessica Floyd earned her doctorate in Psychology from the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. Today, she is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist working in private practice and a staff psychologist at the Reginald S. Lourie Center for Infants and Young Children in Rockville, Maryland. Her specialization includes racial and cultural identity development issues. She also has a special concentration in interracial adoption and foster care families.

**LaNitra Berger (formerly LaNitra Walker), Ph.D., 2009**

LaNitra Berger has always held key positions wherever she has worked. Soon after earning her doctorate in Art History from Duke University, she became Director of Fellowships in the Honors College at George Mason University in Virginia. LaNitra is a member of the British Council's Transatlantic Network 2020. She continues to contribute to journals such as *Journal of Jewish Identities*, *Southern California Quarterly*, and *Women's History Review*.

**Lynda C. Jackson, D. M., 2009**

Lynda C. Jackson earned her doctorate in Management from the University of Maryland University College. She is a retired Colonel who proudly served more than 28 years in the United States Air Force where she received many awards for her work, including "Best in the Air Force" and the Defense Superior Service Award. She is currently an Assistant Professor of Business at Trinity University in Washington D.C. One of her goals is to inspire young women to gain access to powerful success factors as they ascend to the top in their chosen careers.

**Jennifer N. Bacon, Ph.D., 2009**

An acclaimed poet, Jennifer N. Bacon is a tenure track assistant professor of special education at Iona College in New York. She earned her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland, College Park. She has received many awards for her work which focuses on therapeutic poetry or expressive/creative arts for adolescents and young adults, primarily girls and young women. Jennifer has published in *Journal of Poetry Therapy* and in *Teachers College Record*.

**Joelle Davis Carter, Ph.D., 2010**

Undoubtedly, one day soon, Joelle Davis Carter will join the ranks of the few women of color who are university presidents. Joelle recently assumed a new position as Assistant Vice President for Retention and Student Services at Western Kentucky University. She provides leadership and plays a significant role in developing retention programs to increase graduation rates for more than 18,000 undergraduates. She works closely with the academic affairs team within the Office of the Provost. She is the co-author of the upcoming book titled, *Black Males in Postsecondary Education*. Joelle earned her doctorate from the Department of Education Leadership, Higher Education and International Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park.

**Fanta Aw, Ph.D., 2010**

One of the most committed university administrators dedicated to students' quality of life, Fanta Aw has made significant contributions to students at American University (AU). Fanta is assistant vice president of Campus Life and director of International Students and Scholar Services. She earned her doctorate in Sociology from AU and is adjunct faculty at AU's School of International Service. Fanta's scholarship includes articles in *The Journal of College Admission* and a chapter in the book titled, *Institute for International Education*. Fanta was recently elected as chair and president of NAFSA.



**Fanta Aw**

*continued on next page*

## SisterMentors' Doctorates and Where They Are Today

### Melanie Harrison, Ph.D., 2011

Melanie Harrison is one of the few women of color in the U.S. with a doctorate in the sciences. Right after she earned her doctorate in Environmental Science from the University of Maryland Baltimore, she moved to San Diego to become an environmental scientist and water quality specialist with the National Oceanic Administration (NOAA). In 2011, her article, "Denitrification in Alluvial Wetlands in an Urban Landscape," was featured on the cover of *Journal of Environmental Quality*. Her passions include mentoring youth as a Big Sister in the San Francisco Bay Big Brothers Big Sisters Program.

### Kenda Kittrell, DScPT., 2011

Kenda Kittrell joined a unique group when she earned a Doctor of Science in Physical Therapy from the School of Medicine, University of Maryland Baltimore. Her advanced clinical doctorate is the highest level within the profession of physical therapy offered by only a few schools in the United States. After earning her doctorate, she became a clinical consultant and a clinical area expert to the Department of Disability Services of the District of Columbia and served as a clinical area expert for the government agency. She is currently the manager of clinical services and service delivery of the National Children's Center in Washington, D.C.

### Barbara Ceptus, Ph.D., 2011

Barbara Ceptus earned her doctorate in Cultural Studies from the University of California, Davis. Her dissertation is titled, *(Re)membering Revolution, Imagining Blackness: The Haitian Revolution in the Black Cultural Imaginary*. A dissertation fellowship from the American Association of University Women helped her to complete her doctorate. Barbara was awarded a Public Fellows fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies through which she is working as the Leadership Development Officer at the Council on Foundations in Arlington, Virginia.

### Dora Oduor, Ph.D., 2011

Dora Oduor is gifted with the sort of optimism and faith that most of us wish for. She was born in Kenya and earned her doctorate in Sociology from American University in Washington, D.C. Her research interests are in HIV/AIDS in Africa. After earning her doctorate, Dora was a consultant with DC CARES, a nonprofit organization that serves at-risk youth in Washington, D.C. Dora plans to pursue a career in gender and development, and in human rights and social justice, especially for marginalized groups.

### JaNay Queen, Ph.D., 2011

JaNay Queen earned a doctorate in Education from the University of Maryland, College Park. She is currently the Director of Client Services for Results Leadership Group in Bethesda, Maryland. She works with public and private sector leaders to implement results-based strategies that enable organizations to measure their community impact and program effectiveness. Prior to her current job, she served as a Project Manager for leaders in the United States Virgin Islands who work to improve the conditions of health and education for children. JaNay gives back to her community by mentoring youth.



JaNay Queen

# Thank You Very Much!

Very special thanks to the law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP, including its Diversity Committee. Special thanks to the Managing Partner of Schiff's D.C. office, Sherry Quirk, and Schiff Partner, Regina Speed-Bost.

Thanks to all of our wonderful donors and supporters, including everyone who supported us at our SisterMentors Discovered: Building the Dream fundraiser last November, including those who made five-year pledges and joined the Dream Builders Society --- Elizabeth Boris, Diane and Lyle Brennehan, Montana M. Cole, John Chilton, Glynn Key, Judi Moore Latta, Cheryl LaRoche, Shireen K. Lewis, Kris Miller, Claudia Morris, Christopher Shirley, Sherry Quirk, Norma Scogin and Keelin Quirk. Thanks to Marvourneen Dolor, Marcia Ellis, Tracy Gary and Sandra Jowers for their continued generosity.

Thanks also to Esperanza Anderson, Maria Jose Lopez Barragan, Edward Hayes, Thomas Jesulaitis, Susan Leverone, Laree Martin, Phillis Morgan, Leanne Nurse, Linda Orr, Winifred Quinn and Townsend Robinson.

Special thanks to Timothy Boller of Seed IP Law Group, Laura Possesky of Gura & Possesky PLLC, Karl Straub for the free guitar lessons for one of our girls, Christine Romero for yoga classes for our girls, and Kris Miller and Yogaville for writing retreats for the women.

Thanks to Professor Charles Ogletree for generously hosting the girls at Harvard Law School and to Gina Douglas and everyone at Harvard for helping to make our visit a success. And thanks to Spencer Overton and John Zentay for making it happen. Thanks to President Kim Bottomly of Wellesley College for meeting with the girls and to everyone at Wellesley who helped to make our visit a success. And thanks to Professor Anjali Prabhu for making it happen.

Special thanks to the Jerry Taylor and Nancy Bryant Foundation, The Meyer Foundation, Whole Foods Market P Street, Father Dave Bergner, Reverend Sylvia Sumter of Unity of Washington, D.C., and the Social Justice Council of River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers, including Tuedy Wilson, Mary Helen Coleman, LaShoun Christian, Mignonette Dooley, Hazel Edney, Saunji Fyffe, Carolivia Herron, Lee Hoffman, Ernestine Jones, Dawn Nelson, Wayne Richardson, Cherri Sinclair, John Teschner, Natalie Turner, and Wade Wallace.

Special thanks to Cindy Ayala and all her friends who generously volunteer their time, including Nancy Alvaro, Marvin Ayala, Vincenzo Caballero, Simon Conn, Madeleine Kish and Kevin Lu.

Very special thanks to Renae Baird and to Steve Johnson for going above and beyond in helping with our fundraiser last year and with this newsletter. A very special thanks to The Honorable Jeanne Fox, a sister alumna of Douglass College, Rutgers University.

Our deepest gratitude to Florrie (Flo) Walker, a strong supporter of SisterMentors who passed away in 2011 and Dr. Carroll F.S. Hardy who passed away in 2012.

And, as always, thanks to the women and girls of SisterMentors for their fortitude and grace.

"Chipo has always been impressed with SisterMentors from the very first day I told her about it. She was greatly impacted by the Social Skills and Leadership Workshop at the Jefferson Hotel where she really analyzed everything, from the people to the architecture. She talked incessantly about how she will never forget the proper way to present herself going forward. The recent trip to the National Museum of Women in the Arts was just as compelling, as she didn't even know there was a museum devoted exclusively to women. Since she is new, she is looking forward to building a relationship with her mentor. She has always relished the idea of having a sort of "big sister" to engage with. She can't wait until that happens. I am very happy that Chipo is a part of SisterMentors and we look forward to what's ahead."

---Vita Tucker  
Mother of a SisterMentors Girl

## Honorary Degree Recognizes SisterMentors



Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, awarded Dr. Shireen K. Lewis with an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters on May 13, 2012, in recognition of her work with SisterMentors. Dr. Lewis, the founder of SisterMentors, was honored at the University's Commencement exercises in New Brunswick, New Jersey, "to recognize [her] achievements and exemplary contributions to society," and to celebrate her "passionate commitment to higher education...in this fifteenth year of the founding" of SisterMentors. "The impetus for my work," says Dr. Lewis, "is my experience as a child attending the first school in my

village in Trinidad and Tobago. It was there that I was mentored by a young woman teacher when I was eight years old. That mentoring relationship profoundly changed my life and boosted my self-esteem to such an extent that I went on to excel in college, earn a law degree, and a Ph.D."

Dr. Lewis earned a Bachelor's degree from Rutgers University's Douglass College, a law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, and a Ph.D. from Duke University. She practiced law with a New York City law firm.

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## SisterMentors' Recent Accomplishments

- SisterMentors recognized with an Honorary Doctorate from Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.
- Helped 19 young women to go to college, including to Duke, Goucher, Bates, Northern Virginia Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University.
- Three of the young women we helped to send to college received their undergraduate degrees, and the others remain on track to graduate.
- Took girls to visit Harvard University where they met with Professor Charles Ogletree of Harvard Law School and to Wellesley College where they met with President Kim Bottomly.
- Helped 42 women to earn their doctorates, including in Math, Science and Economics.
- Three women we helped to earn their doctorates gained tenure at their universities.
- Celebrating 15 Years of SisterMentors.

## PLEASE SUPPORT SISTERMENTORS — Join us in celebrating 15 years

In honor of SisterMentors' 15th anniversary, I would like to support the fundraising campaign to raise \$30,000 in cash and pledges by December 31, 2012. My donation will help sustain SisterMentors for the next 5 years to help continue mentoring women and girls of color in their pursuit of higher education.

**I would like to help sustain SisterMentors for the next five years with the following pledge:**

\_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 per year for 5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ \$500 per year for 5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ \$250 per year for 5 years

\_\_\_\_\_ \$\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ years, for a total of \$\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot make a pledge at this time but would like to make a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Please make the first payment on your pledge or send your donation by December 31, 2012. Please remember that your donation is tax deductible.**

**Choose this:**

### DONATION BY CHECK

\_\_\_\_\_ My check is enclosed, made payable to **EduSeed**.\* Please include your phone number and email.

\_\_\_\_\_ My company will match my gift.

**Or choose this:**

### DONATION BY CREDIT CARD

\_\_\_\_\_ Please charge my credit card (**circle one**): VISA/Mastercard/Discover/American Express

Cardholders Name (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Or choose this:**

### ONLINE DONATION

\_\_\_\_\_ I am making a pledge or donation online at [www.sistermentors.org](http://www.sistermentors.org) by clicking the **DONATE NOW** link and following the instructions. I am including my phone number, email and address.

\_\_\_\_\_ My company will match my gift.

\*For donations by check, please use the enclosed envelope and make your check payable to EduSeed and mail to:

EduSeed/SisterMentors  
901 K Street N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20001

**Please remember your donation is tax deductible.**

## Who We Are

SisterMentors is a project of EduSeed, a nonprofit organization based in Washington, D.C. EduSeed's mission is to promote education among traditionally disadvantaged and underserved communities such as women and people of color. SisterMentors mentors girls of color from low income families in elementary, middle and high school, inspiring them to go to college. The girls are mentored by women of color doctoral students who SisterMentors helps to complete their dissertations and earn their doctorates. The women and girls are African Americans, Latinas, Asian Americans and immigrants.

EduSeed's goal is to help stop the high dropout rate of girls of color and increase the number of women of color doctorates. We believe that doctoral students and Ph.D.s of color are a powerful yet untapped source of inspiration, motivation and knowledge for children of color at risk of dropping out of school. We exist because girls of color are dropping out of school at an early age. Our message to girls is to stay in school, do well, and go to college. We also exist because statistics show that more than 50 percent of doctoral students drop out of their program. In 2010, out of 16,313 of all women doctorates, only 3,942 were women of color (Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian and Native American combined).

We have helped 19 young women to go to college, including to Duke, Goucher, Bates, Virginia Commonwealth University and Northern Virginia Community College and 42 women to earn doctorates, including in Math, Science and Economics.

## EduSeed's Board of Directors

Special thanks to Margery Sullivan for her hard work as Treasurer and for her strong support. Thanks also to Winifred Quinn for her service. We would like to welcome the following new board members: Thomas Jesulaitis, Ashley Scott and Marianne Tshihamba.

EduSeed's current board members are the following:

Montina M. Cole

Thomas Jesulaitis

Shireen K. Lewis

Kris Miller

Ashley Scott

Marianne Tshihamba

For more information on EduSeed's Board of Directors, please visit [www.eduseed.org](http://www.eduseed.org).

## Our New Address

Schiff Hardin LLP, the law firm that generously provides us with office and meeting space, has moved and we moved with them. Please note our new address: 901 K Street N.W., Suite 700, Washington, D.C. 20001. Our phone number and email address remain the same.

## EDUSEED/SISTERMENTORS

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