

# SISTERMENTORS

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

Fall/Winter 2010 Newsletter

A Newsletter for Donors and Friends of SisterMentors

## Girls' 4-Day College Visit to Princeton University

Our visit to Princeton University was one of the best we have had so far. There are very few universities where young girls of color can be in the company of both a woman president and a world-renowned black professor who is both a scholar and public intellectual. The girls were very grateful for this experience and were enormously impressed with the campus.

Twenty-two girls, ages 11 to 17, in elementary, middle and high school, spent four days on the Princeton campus during their spring break in late March and early April.

Located in Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University is one of the most selective schools in the United States. Its renowned faculty includes Professor Cornel West, one of the



At Princeton University with Professor Cornel West

most provocative public intellectuals in the United States, and Paul Krugman, a well-respected economist and winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics. Princeton is the fourth oldest college in the United States with 5,000 undergraduates and 2,500 graduate students.

The highlight of the trip for the girls was the visit with President Shirley Tilghman, the first woman president of Princeton, and Professor Cornel West, the Class of 1943 University Professor of Religion. The girls also sat in on a Sociology class with Professor Bonnie Thornton Dill; met with some of the black faculty from the Center for African American Studies (CAAS), including the director Eddie Glaude and the associate director Noliwe Rooks; met with black women undergraduates of the Princeton Association of Black Women; attended a session with staff from the Office of Admissions; met with the Vice President of Student Affairs, Janet Dickerson; and ate meals in one of the dining halls.

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## 35 Women of Color Doctorates

SisterMentors has helped two more women of color to complete their dissertations and earn their doctorates. As we were finalizing this newsletter, Joelle Davis Carter successfully defended her dissertation and earned her doctorate in Education Leadership, Higher Education and International Studies from the University of Maryland, College Park. Joelle's dissertation is titled, *Factors Influencing the Engagement of White Undergraduates Attending Public Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. Last December, Jennifer N. Bacon earned her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland, College Park. Jennifer's dissertation is titled, *Culturally Responsive Poetry: The Lived Experiences of African American Adolescents*. Jennifer is a published poet and the recipient of the 2010 Book-in-a-Day writing fellowship in Florence, Italy, and the 2008 recipient of the Pursue the Dream: Chris Mazza Award for Poetry Therapy.

# From the Executive Director

Dear Donors and Friends:

Thank you for your strong support of SisterMentors. We are grateful to have donors and friends like you who continue to support us even when times are tough. Thank you so much!

Something good happens at SisterMentors every day and I am always happy to share the good news with you.

As some of you may know, we are on the road to our fifteenth anniversary in 2012 and we are so excited! We cannot wait for the occasion and have started thinking about goals we would like to accomplish by 2012. We will certainly keep you informed and welcome any ideas you may have, particularly about funding opportunities.

In the meantime, this fall we are celebrating SisterMentors' thirteenth anniversary. In the thirteen years we have been in existence, we have helped 35 women of color to complete their dissertation and earn their doctorates. In 2001, four years after we started the program, we began mentoring girls of color in seventh and eighth grade. Today, those first groups of girls are in college, including Duke University, Goucher College, Bates College, Northern Virginia Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Our success is due, in large part, to donors like you since each year we raise the highest single amount of funds from individual donors.

We are very excited about Azeb Legesse who started college this fall. Azeb has been in SisterMentors since eighth grade. She is now an undergraduate at Virginia Commonwealth University and is loving college life.

This year, we have seven twelfth graders who are taking the SAT Test and preparing their college applications. One of them, Margie Obeng, just received a full four-year scholarship toward the college of her choice from the Community Organizing for Education and Democracy (COED) program. The program is run by Tenants and Workers United in Alexandria, Virginia. Margie was an intern with COED in eleventh grade and spoke at the Immigration Reform Rally in front of the White House on May Day. Margie's family immigrated to the United States from Ghana when she was two years old. After visiting Columbia University with SisterMentors in 2006, Margie fell in love with Columbia and it is now her number one choice for college.

We are happy to report that the girls we helped send to college in 2007 are now in their fourth year. We are very excited about the many possibilities before them after they earn their undergraduate degrees. Megan Tuck, a senior at Duke University, is spending this fall in New York with the Duke in New York program. She is considering pursuing a master's degree in business administration after getting some work experience.



*Recent Doctorates: Jennifer N. Bacon and Lynda C. Jackson*

Our six girls we sent off to college last year are now in their second year. It was a hard year for some of them as they struggled with adjusting to living away from their families. Some of them were surprised to discover this summer that they were very much looking forward to returning to college life this fall.

As we were wrapping up this newsletter we received wonderful news. Joelle Davis Carter, one of the women in SisterMentors, successfully defended her dissertation and earned her doctorate. We jumped for joy!!!

Our graduates, including Tisha Y. Lewis and Koritha Mitchell, continue to make great strides after earning their doctorate. Tisha, who was born and raised in Washington, D.C., recently began a tenure track position as an Assistant Professor of Reading Education at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. Koritha, who is an Assistant Professor of English at Ohio State University, just received an overwhelming faculty vote in support of her bid for tenure, and her book, [Living with Lynching: African American Drama, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930](#), is due out in September 2011 from the University of Illinois Press.

We always knew that we would see second generations in SisterMentors if we stayed around long enough and we laughed out loud when it happened recently. Kia Hall, who is pursuing a doctorate in International Relations at American University, recently joined SisterMentors. Kia is the daughter of Paula Quick Hall, who SisterMentors helped in 1998 to earn her doctorate from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Paula is currently an Assistant Professor of Political Science at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. Kia was in high school when Paula was in SisterMentors.

We are humbled by the resilience and perseverance we see in the women and girls in SisterMentors as they pursue their education. As we celebrate our thirteenth anniversary, we would like to thank you for the huge role you play, through your donations, in helping these women and girls pursue their dream. We simply cannot do this work without your support.

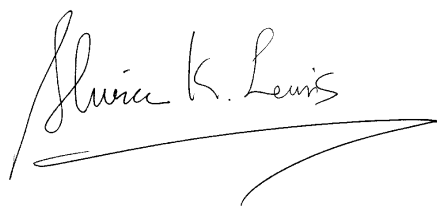


We know that times are tough due to the economy, but I kindly request that you put SisterMentors on your list of priorities for giving as the year draws to a close.

Please continue to support us. You can send us a check in the mail, make a donation online at [sistermentors.org](http://sistermentors.org) by clicking on the **DONATE NOW** link, or donate to us through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). We are listed under our umbrella nonprofit organization, EduSeed, and our CFC number is 90398.

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!



Shireen K. Lewis, Ph.D.



SisterMentors Girls with Professor Cornel West

## Our Twelfth Grader Started College this Fall



Azeb Legesse

Azeb Legesse, who has been in SisterMentors since eighth grade, started college this fall at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond, Virginia. She received a generous financial aid package based on her hard work, including many International Baccalaureate (IB) classes and a 3.7 GPA in her twelfth grade year. Azeb has been on almost all of our college visits. She is joining other SisterMentors young women already at VCU, including Kedest Firdaweke who just became the Resident Assistant for the dormitory where Azeb is living on campus.

*"I remember when I first joined SisterMentors five years ago. I joined only because my friends were in it. It never crossed my mind as to what direction I was heading in life. SisterMentors was like a wake-up call since I quickly learned that I should start preparing for college now, not only mentally, but academically. SisterMentors helped me understand that I cannot just show up to school and just learn. They insisted that I challenge myself intellectually by taking rigorous classes. SisterMentors talked me into taking advantage of everything school had to offer. Within that first year of the program, I became highly active as I juggled pre-IB classes and extracurricular activities, such as basketball and softball. Not only did SisterMentors tell me to stay active, they also encouraged me to be a leader and show my leadership skills. I did exactly that as I was elected the president of the Ethiopian club by my peers. Looking back over these past five years, I would say it was worth the ride. SisterMentors guided me to a smarter path in high school where I was able to stand out in my college application. Though I regret some choices I made, I know being in SisterMentors was the best choice I made."*

Azeb Legesse  
Began Virginia Commonwealth University in Fall 2010

## News from Our Girls in their Second Year of College



**CINDY AYALA**

My first year in college passed by right before my eyes. My very first semester, I was a nervous wreck. Sure, I am still staying at home with my parents, but I was in a new environment, with new people, and new expectations of me. As I began to familiarize myself with the campus, the anxiety slowly went away.

There were issues in my first semester in a specific class. The conflict had gotten so bad that the Dean of Students had to come in. I called Dr. Lewis and asked for advice about what I should do. She suggested that I speak up, so that's what I did. My friends and I spoke up and explained what had happened. The conflict was quickly resolved and class was running smoothly again without wasting any more class time.

My second semester felt like my first week of college, except that I was taking classes at a different campus, since one of the classes I needed was full at my home campus. I was also taking American Sign Language (ASL) 101 to complete my general electives requirement.

I want what every student wants, to do something that I am passionate about, but I was unsure of what I wanted to do in life. When I took ASL 101, I thought 'This is it!' I felt excited and would never even dream of missing one class. I am going to take ASL 102 to make sure that I really like interpreting.

I recently declared Liberal Arts as my major so I can have more options as I apply to transfer to a four-year university. I still have more classes to take and I am working hard to get good grades so I can get a good financial aid package when I transfer. My counselor and my mentor Dr. Lewis both have been very helpful

to me this past year, and I want to thank them for helping to make my first year run smoothly.

*Cindy Ayala is at Northern Virginia Community College in the Pathways Program. She will transfer to a four-year university next fall.*

### **NATHALIE NAVARRETE**

My first year at Bates was extraordinary. Not only did I become involved in my community by volunteering with the local Somali population, but I also realized that I could tie my interest in politics to my volunteering. I am a rising sophomore double majoring in French and Politics with a concentration in Political Economy. I am also concentrating in Class, Inequity, Poverty and Justice. Not only did I take classes with professors who are leading scholars, but I also had the opportunity to study abroad. I went to France for three weeks and took an intermediate level French class. This past summer I couldn't wait to get back on campus.

*Nathalie Navarrete is at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.*

### **KEDEST FIRDAWEKE**

My first year at Virginia Commonwealth University was wonderful! Most of my time went into finding my classes, meeting new people, and figuring out which study habits work best for me. Like many things in life, I have my moments when I think "if I knew then what I know now." My experiences have me really wondering what I want to do with my life. I plan on exploring my options as much as possible my sophomore year so that I am able to declare my major by the end of the first semester. I have to say I felt well prepared for the academic aspect of college but the social aspect was a bit unexpected. Friends in high school are there so we have fun together. Study parties are completely unheard of in high school, but my floor mates and I regularly got together to do homework. My friends became my second family and were there for me when I was sick and needed someone to wake me up for an early morning exam.

Regarding leadership positions, during my first year I was Vice President for my Residence Hall Council. I won that position after running a hard campaign with the help of my friends and roommates. My second year is going to be great because I am going to be a Resident Assistant for the same dormitory I lived in last year.

*Kedest Firdaweke is at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. She spent most of her summer in her native country of Ethiopia.*





### **RUHAMA YARED**

My first year at Goucher taught me a lot about myself. When I was first dropped off, I felt really lonely. However, I quickly got over that feeling and started making friends and adjusting to life at college.

I love the fact that I choose the classes I want to take while keeping in mind that there are some requirements I must meet. My favorite class was Peace Studies. While it is called Peace Studies, we actually learn a lot about conflict and why it happens so that we can work on preventing it. One thing I was very surprised about was the ample amount of papers I was given to write.

While working on my academics, I did a work study where I tutored elementary school students after school. I also did field work for my education classes where I went to a school once a week and was assigned to a class where I would teach under supervision.

I have already declared my major as Education and I am still deciding on a minor. I plan on starting a club when I go back for my second year as well as working a lot harder to get better grades.

I think Goucher is very exciting and different because everybody is allowed to be weird and try different things without being judged one bit. We also have a lot of great speakers like Michael Pollan, the author of The Omnivore's Dilemma, and Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager who housed over a thousand Tutsi and Hutu refugees during Rwanda's genocide.

I got used to college life, both the academic and social aspects of it, once I realized that it is going to be like this until I graduate. I was also semi-surprised to find out that I really like college and this summer I couldn't wait to get back.

*Ruhama Yared is at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland and cannot wait for her junior year to travel abroad.*

### **REDIET ABATE**

Time flies. That's exactly what I learned my freshman year of college. From the work load I got from every

class to the peer pressure to hang out, time was the only thing on my mind. "Do I have time to finish this assignment?" "Do I have time to hang out with friends?" "Do I have time to get a job?" These were the questions that ran around in my head the first semester. As soon as I found out how to manage this precious thing called time, then my job as a student athletic trainer at the athletic office and hanging out with friends became easy. Time became my new best friend. I realized that I am not going to college and paying all that money to just goof around. I have to set the bar high to achieve my goal of becoming a fully paid female athletic trainer in the National Football League.

For my second year, I plan on continuing to manage my time better by refusing to procrastinate on my school work. Trying to figure all this out was painful but I needed to suffer so I could wake up from the fantasy world I was living in and see how the real world works. I had a great year and I wouldn't take back anything about it.... since at the end I learned a great lesson.

*Rediet Abate is at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia.*

### **ALINAH MPHOFE**

My first year of college felt just like high school, except I got to pick the times and days of my classes. The books I needed for class were, in a word, EXPENSIVE! In college you pay to learn, so missing class is wasting your money unlike in high school. Even though people see college as the hardest adjustment, for me college was sort of easy to fall into. Of course I needed to plan out better study methods and try my best NOT to miss test days because some of my professors do not believe in make-ups. Now that I have figured out what I want to do in life, I will need just a few more years of school. I think the best advice I can give you is: do not be afraid, if you think you are failing ask for help, never say never, and remember people are always there to help.

*Alinah Mphofe is at Northern Virginia Community College in the Pathways Program. She plans to transfer to George Mason University next fall.*

*"My daughter, Ashley, joined SisterMentors last spring. Although she is a great student, she has become an even better one because of the camaraderie, inspiration and support of SisterMentors. She is inspired by the mentoring program which offers her different opportunities and by the examples of her mentors to believe in her greatest dreams. Thank you, Dr. Lewis, for your phenomenal program."*

*Mary Martin  
Mother of SisterMentors 8th Grader*

# Girls' 4-Day College Visit to Princeton University

*Continued from page 1*



*SisterMentors 7th Grader with  
President Shirley Tilghman*

When we returned home, one of the girls told her mother that she felt as though she was “in a castle.” Indeed, the campus is quite beautiful with buildings that are castle-like.

## **Girls Attend Sociology Class**

We started our visit by attending Professor Bonnie Thornton Dill's Sociology class which had an enrollment of 120 students. Professor Dill was visiting from her home university, the University of Maryland, College Park, where she is Chair of the Women's Studies Department. As the girls struggled to find a seat in the packed auditorium where the class was held, Professor Dill introduced them and asked students to greet them if they saw them on campus over the next few days. For the girls, one of the most exciting things about the lecture was the use of technology. Professor Dill's lecture was accompanied by a huge screen with a PowerPoint presentation and most of the students took notes on their Mac laptops, so the background sound was that of rapid-fire typing by the students. It was a magnificent display of the effective use of technology in the classroom.

## **Meeting with Princeton President Shirley Tilghman**

“Her confidence and success are very inspiring,” said one of the girls after meeting with Princeton President Shirley Tilghman. President Tilghman is Princeton's first woman president. Originally from Canada, she is a scientist and a Professor of Molecular Biology, a field in which she has made groundbreaking discoveries. President Tilghman took office as president in 2001 after serving on Princeton's faculty for fifteen years.

President Tilghman welcomed the girls to Princeton and mentioned that the building in which they were meeting, Nassau Hall, has been designated a historic landmark. It was the home of the Continental Congress for six months when the United States was still a British colony and it was from there that the Congress learned that the British had signed a treaty granting the colonies independence.

Nassau Hall's Faculty Room, where we met with the president, is considered the symbolic center of the university and is decorated with portraits of Princeton's presidents, founders and distinguished alumni.

The president graciously spent an hour with the girls who had lots of questions. Her talk was an empowering one about being the first woman president of Princeton and being a woman scientist. She also shared details about her job as president. She was warm and funny which immediately put the girls at ease.

President Tilghman asked the girls to look at the portraits on the wall of all the former presidents and tell her what was missing. One of the girls answered, “A girl!” The president said that is correct and when she leaves, there will finally be a portrait of “a girl” and perhaps in the future there will be more portraits of women on the wall. She said that her portrait was painted during her first year as president and that it will be hung alongside the others when she leaves office. She then pointed out that it was only in 1969 that Princeton began admitting women students.

The girls started firing lots of very good questions at President Tilghman, a few minutes into the president's talk. One girl asked how one becomes president and President Tilghman told the story of her path to the presidency: from being a professor at Princeton, sitting on the search committee for a new president and eventually being invited to apply for the position herself.

Another girl asked the president how she goes about making decisions and the president answered that she is a consensus builder. Another inquired about the president's proudest accomplishment and she responded that she is proud of the Center for African American Studies and its influence on campus.

As the president's time with the girls was drawing to a close, one of the girls looked around the room and asked where on the wall the president would like to have her portrait hung. President Tilghman responded by asking the girls for their recommendation. One of the girls pointed to a large portrait prominently displayed and suggested that it should be moved and replaced with the president's portrait. Everyone erupted in laughter and the president chuckled.

Here is feedback from some of the girls regarding their meeting with the president:

“She was intelligent, interesting and amazing.”

“I have learned that women can achieve many things and they should not limit themselves.”

“The meeting with the president was exciting and a once-in-a-lifetime chance.”

“Our meeting was fun yet serious and an excellent learning experience. I feel lucky to have met her.”

## Meeting with Professor Cornel West

"Wow! He is a life changing man. I have never met anyone that fully understands life like he does," said one of the girls after meeting with Professor Cornel West on the second day of the visit to Princeton. Professor West teaches both classical and contemporary philosophical writing and literature, including Plato, St. Augustine, Socrates, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Baldwin and Toni Morrison. He is known for his bestseller, *Race Matters*, an analysis of racism in America which has sold over half a million copies to date. The girls know Professor West from seeing him on television, including CNN, his rap album, and his appearances in the movie series, *The Matrix*.

Professor West was wonderfully gracious and very generous with his time. The girls were scheduled to meet with him for thirty minutes but the meeting ended up lasting an hour and a half. Professor West started his talk by telling the girls that he wants them to remember this from Socrates: "The unexamined life is not worth living." He told girls that they must have the courage to find out who they are because they are precious. He emphasized that the girls should find their voice and not be an echo. He told the girls that he wants them to "be an original and not a copy" since there are too many copies out there and not enough originals.

Professor West's talk ranged from Toni Morrison, Beyonce, Jay Z, Curtis Mayfield, and Michael Jackson to Socrates, Dostoevsky and Jesus Christ. He rapped and sang and at one point pulled out his afro pick (one of those old-fashioned ones with the steel spikes and the clenched fist which are rarely seen nowadays) and began combing his afro --- it was hilarious and everyone burst out laughing.

Professor West then opened the floor to questions and at first the girls were so star struck that none of them raised their hand. But soon the questions began. One of the girls asked his advice on how to deal with the fact that a lot of girls in their high school are pregnant and that the school has recently been designated as "failing" by the federal government. Professor West advised her to focus on the positive, not the negative, because the negative makes you begin to doubt yourself. Another girl asked him how he got the role in *The Matrix*, and he told that story and said that he will be in a new movie that's coming out next year.

Then the most extraordinary thing happened — one of the girls gave Professor West a poem from one of her friends who is a big Cornel West fan. He read the poem and then invited all of the girls into his office to call the poet. All the girls piled into his office where he read the poem aloud on the phone. It was quite an experience. His office is like a museum with lots of displayed books and photos of him with celebrities.



*SisterMentors 12th Grader with Professor Cornel West*

The girls got so caught up with everything they were seeing that it was hard to get them to leave so that Professor West could go to his class where his students were waiting.

Here is some of what the girls had to say after their meeting with Professor West:

"He was the highlight of the whole trip. WOW!!!!"

"It was just too real to be true. I felt like he was talking directly to me!!!"

"He understands young people."

"Professor West speaks from the soul."

"He made me see more about life. He opened up my horizon."

"I am very lucky to have met him."

"AMAZING!!!"

"Wise, deep, funny — he's real."

"I loved meeting with him. It really made me start thinking about my life."

"I would love to have a chance to talk with him again."

"He has given me a whole new perspective on life — shallowness and hatred isn't going to take you anywhere. I am also going to take my religion more seriously now because I didn't really think that being a Christian was doing anything for me...now I see."

*"Shireen Lewis's precious young Sisters blew my mind! They are so brilliant, kind, mature and eager for greatness. They have consecrated Princeton University with their presence!"*

*Dr. Cornel West*



# Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop



"Very elegant and very beautiful," said one of the girls who participated in this year's Social Skills and Etiquette Workshop. In May 2010, twenty-two girls attended the workshop which, as in the past, was taught by Ms. Fannie Allen of the prestigious Allen Etiquette Institute. This workshop continues to receive high ratings from the girls who not only praised the workshop itself but also gushed about the location, the Jefferson Hotel, where the workshop was held. Located a few blocks away from the White House, the newly renovated Jefferson Hotel is exquisite with excellent staff that warmly welcomed the girls and praised SisterMentors for teaching young people social skills and etiquette.

This year, two of our young women currently in college joined their younger sisters at the workshop. Cindy Ayala, who is at Northern Virginia Community College, joined her younger sister, Diana, and Ruhama Yared, who is at Goucher College, joined her younger sister, Ruth. Cindy and Ruhama talked about their first year in college and urged the younger girls to take their education seriously because knowledge is power.

The theme of the workshop this year was "Confidence and Skills for all Occasions." In the Social Skills part of the workshop, the girls were reminded about telephone etiquette and appropriate attire for interviews and urged to always be on time.

Ms. Allen told the girls that attitude is everything and that a genuinely positive and respectful attitude will open doors of opportunity which may be closed to others. Girls also learned the essential components of a thank you note and were given thank you cards to compose.

The highlight of the Social Skills part of the workshop was the discussion of teen dating and violence. This discussion was timely and pertinent given the then-recent murder of the woman lacrosse player at the University of Virginia. Girls listened intently as they were advised to have zero tolerance for verbal or

physical violence, including from people they are dating. They were encouraged to discuss the situation with friends or family rather than keep it to themselves.

"Fancy and educational. I loved everything about the workshop," said one of the girls. In the Etiquette part of the workshop which consisted of a four course meal, girls were instructed in the art of making small talk while dining. They were told to avoid such topics as politics, religion, finances and health. The girls were advised to look polished, stylish, and sophisticated and to avoid looking bored when dining with others.

The girls were instructed that, when drinking their beverage, they should look into the glass and not above it and should cover their mouths when yawning. They were also reminded to open out their napkins fully on their lap at lunch and to fold it in half on their lap for dinner.

For job interviews conducted during a meal, girls were told to avoid ordering spaghetti or other potentially messy dishes and to be gracious to their host and not order the most expensive items on the menu. As in the past, the girls learned both the American and Continental styles of dining.

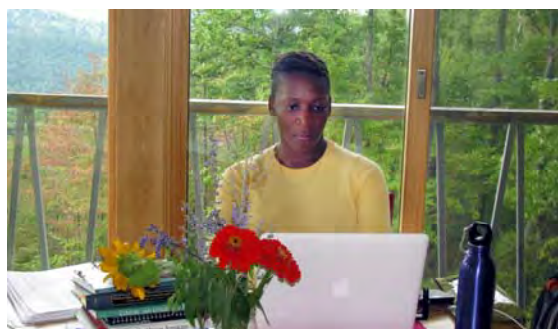
"Awesome." "Informative." "So Cool." These were some of the words the girls used to describe the workshop.

*"My daughter Gifty joined SisterMentors two years ago and it has been a blessing to both of us. Her mentoring sessions once a month on Saturdays are very productive for her and help to keep her out of trouble. Academically she is striving high. With SisterMentors, she has the opportunity to go on college visits and to take SAT Prep classes. As a single mother, I cannot afford any of this so I am so grateful. Thank you to all who donate to SisterMentors for giving Gifty this opportunity."*

*Patience Boakye  
Mother of SisterMentors 12th Grader*



# Women's Dissertation Writing Retreats



This year, SisterMentors had four writing retreats for women, including a 7-day writing retreat in June. The retreat site in the mountains of West Virginia is graciously donated by one of our long-time donors and new board member, Kris Miller. Eight women participated in the retreats and made substantial progress on their dissertations.

These retreats are important since they take women away from the hustle and bustle of their daily lives and allow them to slow down and focus on their dissertations for several consecutive days. The retreats show women how much they can accomplish in a focused environment with few distractions. The only distractions on the retreat were the rabbits hopping along on the paths and the deer scampering around in the nearby woods.

Although the focus of the retreat was quiet uninterrupted writing — for no less than eight hours a

day — the women also went on long walks and ate healthy meals. One of the goals of these retreats is to encourage women, on returning home, to plan long weekends of uninterrupted time for writing the dissertation and to encourage regular exercise and healthy eating.

Here is what one of the current women in SisterMentors had to say about her experience:

"I arrived at the SisterMentors writing retreat at a critical point in my dissertation writing process. Until then, I had only been reading, researching and discussing ideas with my advisor. But I needed to commit these ideas to paper. I started writing on the first day of the retreat. I created a short outline for my writing and used it as my guide. At the end of that day, I had written three pages. I gained the confidence that I needed. By the end of the retreat, I had completed three out of the six sections of my outline and had written a total of eleven single-spaced pages. In addition to the pages that I wrote, I was able to develop a comprehensive outline for my qualifying paper. I now have a clear and concise vision for the main ideas to be developed. Furthermore, under the guidance of Dr. Shireen Lewis, I was able to be reflective about my writing process. She helped me to identify flaws in my writing and develop strategies for writing succinctly. She also gave me constructive feedback on how to develop a critique of the literature. As such, I am extremely grateful for this retreat experience. It helped tremendously and I am truly looking forward to the next one."

—Abigail Duchatelier-Jeudy

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## Thank You Very Much!

Very special thanks to the law firm of Schiff Hardin LLP including its Diversity Committee. Special thanks to Schiff Hardin Partner, Regina Speed-Bost.

Thanks to all of our wonderful donors and supporters, including Sherry Quirk, Keelin Quirk and Norma Scogin, Linda Orr, Tracy Gary, Richard A. Weibl and Terri Louise Nally, Laree Martin, Howard Bauleke, John Chilton, Barbara Burton, Glynn Key, Dawn Nelson, Thomas Ingoldsby, Ingrid and Andrew Crane, David and Gabriel Fitzgerald, Nigel and Denise Myers, Robbie and Dan Tish, Katherine and Lisa Cole, Chris Shirley, Paula Stern, Paula and Moses Boyd, Philip and Joan Stewart, Carol Kalyani Neuman, Esperanza Anderson, Ellen Fulton and Leigh Guthrie, Gloria Wiggan, Jill Karpf, Noy Davis, Claude Montgomery, Lora Moffatt, Jacquelyn Gluck, Dinah Griggsby, Reverend Sylvia Sumter of Unity of Washington, D.C., Marjorie Newman and River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, the Jerry Taylor and Nancy Bryant Foundation, the Meyer Foundation, the Crowell & Moring Foundation, the Women's Bar Association Foundation of the District of Columbia, the Stentzel Foundation, Whole Foods Market, P Street,

Seed IP Law Group, and everyone who donates to us through the Combined Federal Campaign. Many thanks to our wonderful volunteers, Dawn Nelson, Mary Helen Coleman, LaShoun Christian, John Teschner, Shannon Cobb, Dr. Koritha Mitchell, Dr. Shona Jackson, Nancy Jairels and Kimberley Hurley. Special thanks to Nancy Bryant, Renae Baird, Donya Douglas, Robert Nash, Kim Reed and Gloria Minott of WPFW 89.3 FM.

Thanks to everyone at Princeton University for making the girls' visit such a success, including President Shirley Tilghman, Christine Gage, Mary Ann Rodriguez, Professor Cornel West, Professor Bonnie T. Dill, Professors in the Center for African American Studies, Vice President Janet Dickerson, the Princeton Association of Black Women, and thanks to Margery Sullivan and Montina Cole for making it happen.

And as always, special thanks to the women and girls in SisterMentors who help fundraise, including Cindy and Diana Ayala, Helen Tariku, Helen Viera, Frahiwot Firdaweke, Beatrice Castaneda, Fanta Aw, Dora Oduor, Kenda Kittrell, Susan Ozawa, Renee Romero, Melanie Harrison, JaNay Queen and Patricia Kompare.

## News from Our Girls in their Fourth Year of College



**MEGAN TUCK**

I am extremely excited about my senior year at Duke University! This fall I am participating in the Duke in New York program, which places me in New York City for the semester. Through the program, I will be taking two Duke classes with professors who accompany us to New York, a class at New York University, and I am doing an internship with HL Group which specializes in marketing for global companies, mainly luxury goods. In the spring, I will be back on Duke's campus to complete my requirements for graduation. I will be graduating in May of 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a Certificate in Markets and Management.

Being at Duke has taught me so much. I have met some brilliant people who I plan on keeping in touch with and learned more about myself than ever before. After I graduate, I would like to go into Public Relations and Event Planning. Some time down the

road, I plan to attend business school, but for now I would like to gain some experience in the professional work force.

### **SHANNON SCOTT**

Now as a graduating senior at Virginia Commonwealth University, I cannot believe how time has flown by. It almost seems as if last year I was a freshman new to campus and now I am just a few months away from graduating with my Bachelor of Science from the Business School. This is my last chance to really enjoy and make the most of my college experience and to say goodbye. I am trying to tackle the stresses this final year will bring head on. Along with continuing to excel in my courses I now must combat "Senioritis," the work load of my Community Assistant position, plan for my future and prepare for graduation. Within a blink of the eye, college will be over, and I will be faced with the real world whether I am ready or not.

### **ROXIE JAIRRELS**

After two quarters at Savannah College of Art and Design, I transferred to Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) in 2008. This fall semester marks my third year at NOVA and I am not through yet. I was almost finished with my Photography degree when I decided to become a double major with American Sign Language Interpretation, another two year degree. When I am finished with both, I plan to go to Wales to learn British Sign Language so I have a broader interpreting field. However, if the national standards for interpreting change before I complete the program, I will attend Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. first. I am extremely excited for what's ahead.

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## SisterMentors' Recent Accomplishments

- We now have girls in their fourth year of college.
- All of our girls who went to college in 2009 are now in their second year.
- Helped two more women of color to earn their doctorates with at least one more to receive her doctorate in 2010.
- Our writing retreats have helped women to make substantial progress on their dissertations, including helping one woman to complete the final writing of her dissertation.
- Took girls to Princeton University where they met with President Shirley Tilghman, the first woman president of Princeton University, and with Professor Cornel West, one of the most prominent intellectuals in the American academy.
- SisterMentors featured in ESSENCE magazine in the January 2010 issue.
- Dr. Lewis and SisterMentors featured in Rutgers Today, the online news center of Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey.
- Dr. Lewis and SisterMentors featured as the cover story in the Woman Magazine of the Trinidad Express newspaper in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. SisterMentors is described as changing "the destiny of girls who could have been left behind in life were it not for [this] brilliant intervention."

# PLEASE SUPPORT SISTERMENTORS

I would like to make a donation to SisterMentors. My donation will help SisterMentors to continue mentoring women and girls of color.

Choose this:

## DONATION BY CHECK

Please send your donation by December 5, 2010

- ☐ Here is my donation of \$250 or more
- ☐ I cannot give \$250 or more at this time but here is my donation of (please choose one):
- ☐ \$200
  - ☐ \$175
  - ☐ \$150
  - ☐ \$100
  - ☐ \$50
  - ☐ Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_



- ☐ Yes, my employer/company has a matching gift program and I have asked them to match my donation to SisterMentors.

Or choose this:

## ONLINE DONATION

Please make your donation today

- ☐ I am making a donation online at [www.sistermentors.org](http://www.sistermentors.org) by clicking on the **DONATE NOW** link and following the instructions.

Or choose this:

## DONATION THROUGH CFC

- ☐ My employer is a federal agency or otherwise participates in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) of the National Capital Area. I am making my donation through CFC by filling out my employer's pledge form and writing in EduSeed's CFC number which is 90398.

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

**EduSeed/SisterMentors  
1666 K Street N.W., Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20006**

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



## Who We Are

SisterMentors is a project of EduSeed, a nonprofit organization located 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 helps women of color to complete their dissertation and get the doctorate. The women in turn, while in our program, give back to their community by mentoring girls of color in elementary, middle and high schools, primarily from low income families, inspiring girls to go to college. The women and girls are African Americans, Latinas, Asian Americans, and immigrants.

Our goal is to help stop the high drop-out rate among girls of color and increase the number of women of color doctorates.

We believe that doctoral candidates and Ph.D.s of color are excellent role models — and a powerful yet untapped source of knowledge, motivation and inspiration — for children of color at risk of dropping out of school.

We exist because statistics show that more than 50 percent of doctoral candidates drop out of their programs. In 2008, out of 16,044 of all women doctorates, only 3,789 were women of color (Black or African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American combined). We also 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 have helped 35 women of color to complete their dissertations and earn their doctorates since September 1997. We helped send two groups of girls to college, including to Duke University, Goucher College, Bates College and Northern Virginia Community College.

## EduSeed's Board of Directors

Welcome to new board member Kris Miller and thanks to former board members Tim Boller, Selena Mendy Singleton and Michele A. Roberts for their service.

EduSeed's current board members are the following:

- Claudia Cantarella
- Montina M. Cole
- Shireen K. Lewis
- Kris Miller
- Margery Sullivan
- LaNitra Walker

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

## DONATE to Us Through CFC

Our umbrella nonprofit organization, EduSeed, was selected to participate in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) this year.

If you have friends who are federal employees in the Washington, D.C. area, please ask them to donate to us through CFC. We are listed in the CFC catalog under **EduSeed**, and our designation number is **90398**. Thanks for your support of our work!!!

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Promoting Education Among Women and Girls of Color

*Fall/Winter 2010 Newsletter*