

SPELMAN Messenger



Sarah Thompson (left), WISDOM Center resident and Rev. Lisa Rhodes, Dean of Sisters Chapel and Director of the Sisters Center for WISDOM.



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The Spelman Messenger, founded in 1885, is dedicated to participating in the ongoing education of our readers through enlightening articles designed to promote lifelong learning. The Spelman Messenger is the alumnae magazine of Spelman College and is committed to educating, serving and empowering Black women.



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FROM MUSIC PRODIGY TO SPELMAN LEGEND

Dr. Joyce Finch Johnson

BY PATRICIA GRAHAM JOHNSON

Voices

DR. JOYCE FINCH JOHNSON HAS TAUGHT AT SPELMAN FOR 50 years. She has performed on hundreds of significant occasions. She has pioneered in her field and received so many awards they can't all be listed in a story of this length. So when I began my interview with her, what was still the mystery that I was most curious about? Her appearance, of course.

"Dr. Johnson, how long is your hair?" Generations of students have wondered about this since Dr. Johnson has always worn it in a bun.

"It's shoulder length, about the same as yours," she says.

"What keeps you so young-looking?" I came with photos taken over the years to prove my point. She doesn't seem to have aged at all.

But the answer to the second question began to reveal far more of Dr. Johnson than just her appearance. "I don't think a lot about myself. I don't fuss about me... I care about others – how they feel and think. I don't get upset about things. You must have a sense of humor at the workplace, with your relationships and family. I rarely get angry. I stay in a mode of prayer – God and prayer are central to my life. I don't exercise, but I don't have much rest because there is always more work to do. I strive for excellence. I love what I do. Spelman is not just my job but it is my vocation. It is joyful work and it's the place where I show my productivity." In a split second we had gone from a discussion of hair to the heart of Dr. Joyce Johnson.

For the alumnae, Dr. Johnson represents familiarity. No matter when we return, we can recognize Dr. Johnson because she looks the same, has the same calm demeanor and she is a constant... always there. She connected generations of Spelman alumnae to each other through a collective memory. She was the person who played the organ for Vespers, programs in Sisters Chapel, Founders Day and the Spelman-Morehouse Christmas Carol Concerts. We all knew Dr. Johnson, or so we thought.

The Joyce Finch Johnson that we thought we knew was a child prodigy who did not have formal piano classes until college. Dr. Johnson's mother taught music to neighborhood children and when little Joyce, thought too young for lessons herself, listened to her mother's instructions to her students, Joyce practiced the day's lessons. Her grandmother encouraged Joyce to practice hymns. By the time Joyce was seven, she played for her Sunday school. By nine, she was the church pianist for the Christian Science Church in Bowling Green, Kentucky. By 11, Joyce, who had been playing by ear, became the church pianist for a country Baptist Church. This experience helped her to increase her sight-reading skills.

When one looks at life, the path not taken may very well be as significant as the one taken. It was the "grace of God" in the form of her neighbors that caused Joyce to stay in Bowling Green rather than join a touring music group. Silas Green of New Orleans tried to get young Joyce to play jazz and be a draw for the group. Though the lure of money for her family – whom she describes as "poor" – and the excitement of travel were great temptations, her neighbors intervened, protecting her from a path like Billie Holiday's, leading to drugs and early death. "Jazz was considered sinful at the time," Dr. Johnson says. She wanted, however, to continue her journey of music.



Dr. Joyce Finch Johnson with Professor Kemper Harreld who was a member of the Spelman music faculty for 27 years. (circa 1953)

Though she could have gone to Juilliard, she decided to go to Fisk University as an early-entrance music major in 1949. “Fisk was closer to home but I did not have a scholarship, so my family paid for me to go to Fisk. I was a hard-working student, highly motivated.” She focused on her music but she did join Delta Sigma Theta sorority, as well as being active in the student government and the Student Christian Association.

After graduating from Fisk, Joyce was certified to teach in Nashville but a fateful telegram set in motion her life for the next 50 years. “There were three people who were foremost in the area of arranging spirituals at that time – William Dawson, Willis James and Dr. John Work.” Dr. Work was one of Joyce Johnson’s professors at Fisk. Upon Dr. Work’s recommendation, Willis James sent a telegram

offering Joyce a position teaching music theory at Spelman. She accepted the offer and began teaching at Spelman in 1953. “I never thought of leaving. I had other offers, but I did not give them serious thought. I enjoyed Spelman.”

Since 1953, Dr. Johnson has been a faculty member at Spelman. She became the college organist in 1955. She was twice chair of the Music Department between 1989 and 2001. “I was not chair of the Department for the glory but for the love of Spelman. When Dr. Allison retired, I thought it important to step in for the continuity. I am a helper, a follower. I am not interested in power.”

With funds provided by the state of Georgia, Dr. Johnson pursued a master’s in music at Northwestern University during the summers of 1954 through 1957. She then took



*“I am a helper,
a follower. I am not
interested in power.”*

DR. JOYCE FINCH JOHNSON

Dr. Joyce Finch Johnson, 2004



Photo: Brad Smith

Dr. Joyce Finch Johnson and her husband, Aaron Johnson (left), visit with Nick Bowden, principal organist at Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Peachtree Presbyterian established the Joyce F. Johnson Music Scholarship in 2003.

a leave of absence and, with the help of a Danforth Foundation Fellowship, returned to Northwestern for her doctorate, becoming the first African American woman to obtain a Ph.D. in piano performance from any institution. “There were not many Black women organists nationally. You could count them on one hand. This was true especially for organists who could play with concert quality.” Her hints for surviving difficult situations are: “You must be self-motivated. You have to know what you feel and know about yourself. It is not what they say about you but what you feel and say about yourself.” Dr. Johnson went to the Eastman School of Music and the Columbia University Teachers College for post-doctoral study. She also participated in the Westminster Choir College European Organ Study in 1980 and the Summer Institute for French Organ Studies in the summer of 1996. She is certified as an associate by the American Guild of Organists.

But what about her life at Spelman? She married a Morehouse College graduate, Aaron Johnson, in 1959. “We courted in Bessie Strong and became engaged on Halloween. My husband loves Halloween because of the

engagement. My daughter, Joia, grew up on Spelman’s campus. That is probably why she did not attend Spelman. She attended Duke and the University of Pennsylvania.”

As a faculty member, “Spelman has been a place that I could use my creativity. The challenge has been translating and channeling my skills, talents and knowledge in ways that can be meaningful to Spelman and myself. If what you offer is not appreciated, you do not give up on your goals. You do not sacrifice your values because of fads or whims. For example, I started Quiet Hours for the purpose of providing a period of meditation for the community. This was during the 1960s and a time of Black consciousness. I felt it important to keep Euro-Classical music in the minds of people. I also could keep my own skills and organ performance repertoire.” She has had unexpected significant experiences in history, such as playing the organ for the community when Martin Luther King, Jr. lay in state in Sisters Chapel in 1968.

Dr. Johnson did not forget her roots in the church. She was a part of a 13-member national committee that conceived, designed and produced *The New Century Hymnal*,

“I started Quiet Hours for the purpose of providing a period of meditation for the community. This was during the 1960s and a time of Black consciousness.”

DR. JOYCE JOHNSON

published by United Church of Christ and released in June 1995. She also contributed eight arrangements of hymns.

When asked about her observations of the students over the years, she simply says, “The generations of students are different, with different exposures and opportunities. The current students are no better than previous students.” She pauses and comments, “Today’s students seem to want to blend in rather than stand out. Students want good grades but the levels of effort, aspirations and needs differ. Students value materialism; therefore we need to build in ethics and integrity in all that we do. That is hard to do. It is important that students who come in with hip-hop not leave with just hip-hop. They should leave with a palette of musical experiences. They should leave Spelman with more than they came with.”

Dr. Johnson’s job titles – professor of music and College organist – do not begin to describe the breadth of her impact nor her penetration into the fabric of Spelman’s institutional memory. She has been the accompanist for the Morehouse-Spelman Christmas Carol Concert for decades. She continues to be the accompanist for recitals of artists such as Mattiwilda Dobbs, William Warfield, Hilda Harris and Elwyn Adams. She accompanies seniors in their recitals as well as in departmental matinees. Some of her students have gone on into jazz or on to get graduate degrees. In addition to her numerous music classes, she has served as the adviser for Spelman’s Sigma Alpha Iota Music Fraternity, Zeta Phi Chapter and for Delta Sigma Theta sorority, Eta Kappa Chapter. Thousands of Spelman women have been touched by her “musical magic” through their participation in the weekly campus church programs, the Founders Day Convocations and other Sisters Chapel events. She has served on many College committees and was on the board of trustees as the faculty trustee for two terms. Music may be Dr. Johnson’s passion, but her service at Spelman is her gift.

Dr. Johnson has also accomplished much outside of Spelman’s gates. She has been the solo pianist for the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the Albany Symphony Orchestra and the Savannah Symphony Orchestra. She has been on the boards of the Atlanta Symphony Associates, the Neighborhood Arts Center, the Atlanta Lyric Opera Association, the Georgia Chamber Players, and the Georgia Partners of the Americas. She has been honored by the Music Teachers National Association with their National Certification in Piano. Both the Atlanta and Decatur chapters of the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College have recognized Dr. Johnson. She has been named the Iota Bronze Woman of the Year in the Arts and has received the National Association of Negro Musicians Award, the Lexus Leader in the Arts Award and – from Spelman – the Fannie Lou Hamer Award and the Presidential Award for Distinguished Service. Recently, the Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta established the Joyce F. Johnson Music Scholarship to initiate a relationship between Spelman and the church.

Dr. Johnson is now pondering her next step. She is “not tired” and this is not “the end.” Even after a lifetime associated with music, she still practices. However, she is considering her transition from Spelman. She wants to help Spelman even in her transition and retirement “I could help the institution by working with the music students who left Spelman before getting their degrees, helping them to complete their degrees. Since Spelman is planning a new fine arts building, maybe I can help in creative ways by tapping resources for the building.” Whatever she puts in place during her transition, she hopes that it will “flower.”•

PATRICIA GRAHAM JOHNSON, C’73, is a frequent contributing writer for the *Spelman Messenger*. In addition, she works on special assignments for the Spelman College archives.

THE WISDOM OF LIVING YOUR VALUES

The road that has taken Yvonne R. Jackson, C'70, from South Central Los Angeles to outstanding corporate success, and from flunking a biology class at Spelman to leading the College's board of trustees, has been a lesson in identifying and living her strongest, most enduring values.

BY TARESSA STOVALL



Photo: Brad Smith

When Ms. Jackson arrived at Spelman, “sight unseen” from Los Angeles, she was 17 years old and away from her twin sister, Yvette, for the very first time. She had been inspired to attend Spelman by the example of her aunt Mignon Lackey Lewis, C’51. Like her mother and grandmother, Ms. Jackson planned to become a teacher. But the freedom of campus life proved a distraction. “I was a kid, the first time away from home without all of the constraints. Every day, I went to a party. I didn’t study and I thought I could get by. I didn’t get by.”

She flunked biology – “one of the first failures of my life” – which was a wake-up call. “I called home thinking I wasn’t going to make it at Spelman and my mother said, ‘You will fail at lots of other things in life and you will just come back and do it again.’”

Buoyed by her mother’s wise words and the inspiration of “being around some extremely talented and bright Black women who shared my skin color,” Ms. Jackson focused on academics. Thanks to a history course from Dr. Vincent Harding and an economics course from Dr. Roosevelt Thomas at Morehouse, she majored in history with a minor in business experience.

After graduation, Ms. Jackson’s fascination with “human potential” led her to top human resources positions in such major corporations as Pfizer Inc., Compaq Computer Corporation and Burger King Corporation. Today, she is senior vice president, human resources, at Pfizer Inc. and a member of the Pfizer leadership team, the company’s senior executive governing body. She heads global human resources for the New York-based pharmaceutical, which has 122,000 employees worldwide.

The keys to success in her field have changed over the years, she says. Today, they are “analytical skills, strategic skills, organizational change capabilities, compassion and empathy.” How has she stayed grounded through the challenges of building a successful corporate career in a very demanding and competitive environment? “I have very strong values; with that I therefore have strong points of view. I’m also very positive. I tend to see the glass half full, but I also plan for the downside. I am achievement-oriented and feel successful with achieving goals. What has kept me grounded personally is my husband and family.”

As a human resources expert, she advises young Spelman women to “build the best analytical skills, business skills and organizational effective process change skills as possible.”

Her most important advice, though, is “to think about what we value,” Jackson says. In her position as a human relations expert, she often asks people what they value most. “When people say that their kids are what they value most, for instance, I give them my calendar-and-checkbook test. If something’s valuable to you, you’ve got to check your calendar – how much time do you spend on it? And you’ve got to check your checkbook – how much money do you give to it?”

“I’ve always said that Spelman was very valuable to me. I felt a need to respond to that by giving back my time and my money.” Shortly after she graduated, Ms. Jackson stayed connected to Spelman through The Spelman Alumnae-Student Externship (SASE) program where Spelman students shadowed her at work for a week. She then joined the Spelman Corporate Women’s Roundtable, which she ended up chairing. She joined the Board of Trustees first as an alumna trustee, then as a regular trustee. “I have stayed close to Spelman because I felt I had a lot to offer, both financially and otherwise.”

Ms. Jackson had been a leading alumnae donor, with \$10,000 annual gifts, when then-President Johnnetta Cole asked her to increase her giving for Spelman’s new Capital Campaign. “She asked me for a large gift,” Ms. Jackson remembers. “When I asked how large, she said, ‘\$100,000.’ I didn’t gulp. I thought about it for a minute or so, and then I said ‘I think I could do that.’”

Part of knowing and living your values, Ms. Jackson says, is to know what is most important. “When people ask me to do things, I tell them I have three priorities: one is my family, two is my work, and three is Spelman. That’s all I can do. Some people spread themselves too thin; I don’t. I stay focused.”

As the third alumna to chair the board of trustees, Ms. Jackson’s focus is on “leveraging the board to help President Tatum deliver the resources that Spelman needs.” Chairing the board of the College she loves “is an extreme honor, and a lot of hard work,” Ms. Jackson says. “I would like to see Spelman become all that she could be. Many people believe Spelman is a wealthy institution . . . and in many ways she is. She is wealthy because she attracts some of the most talented, serious, capable and innovative Black women in the country and the world who want to understand themselves as Black women and have the best education in America.

“In order to ensure that Spelman delivers both, we must, as a Board, ensure that we are bringing the right kinds of resources to the Institution. We have a president who has a vision to deliver outstanding services and a supreme and unique education. I have inherited a Board which is engaged and ready to do their part.”

Her vision? To build on Spelman’s strengths and successes to see it become one of the top 50 liberal arts colleges – not just a top Historically Black College – in America.

With that, Ms. Jackson asks her fellow Spelman alumnae to take her values-measuring calendar-and-checkbook test. “No one understands our unique institution, or the need to preserve it, more than we do. To sustain and increase the academic excellence we have at Spelman, we need money and we’re going to have to find it. We need to make sure we’re competitive—we’re competing with Harvard, with Boston University, with UCLA for these women, and we’re going to need the resources to attract them. We’re getting more air conditioned dorms, and finishing up wiring the dorms so that we have wireless technology for our students’ computers. These things are basic today.

“Spelman is important to me and it has been important to many, many African American women. And I know that it will go by the wayside if we don’t put our energy, our time and our money into it.”

Marian Wright Edelman, C’60, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, chaired the Spelman Board of Trustees from 1979 to 1989 and Dr. June Gary Hopps, C’60, Parham professor of social work and retired dean of the Graduate School of Social Work at Boston College, chaired it from 1997 to 2004. •

TARESSA STOVALL, co-editor of the anthology *PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE: Contemporary African-American Literature*, is an author and professor living in New Jersey.

HISTORIC “WOMEN OF COLOR” LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Launches a New Frontier of Leadership

BY DENISE MCFALL

Drawing more than a thousand of the nation’s best and brightest “women of color” to the campus of Spelman College and Georgia World Congress Center, by all accounts, the first-ever leadership conference for women of diverse ethnic backgrounds to be held at a historically Black college or university met with unprecedented success. Hosted by the College’s Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement, affectionately known as LEADS, the **Women of Color—Leadership for the 21st Century: It’s Our Turn** conference, held on May 12-13, 2004, convened an impressive roster of world-class thought leaders from throughout

the public and private sectors to forge new areas of inquiry about the ways in which the issues of race and gender resonate in the workplace and society-at-large.

torium of the Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby Center on the first day of the conference, there was also something intimate and elemental about this large gathering of women coming together on common ground to share their insights about the trials and tribulations of racism and genderism. Prominent among the conference presenters was Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College, whose LEADS initiative formed the basis for the conference organized by the Center’s founding co-directors, Kimberly Browne Davis, C’81, a managing director of JPMorgan-Chase, and Pamela G. Carlton, president and co-founder of the New York-based leadership development firm Springboard, Inc.

“We [African American women] often have a difficult time talking about gender because we are so dedicated and committed to talking about leadership within the race. We need to continue to address the opportunities and challenges that relate to gender without feeling we have abandoned the race discussion.”

Dr. Jane E. Smith, C’68

Chief Executive Officer

Business and Professional Women/USA

Addressing the symposium plenary session, Drs. Kumea Shorter-Gooden and Katherine Giscombe, noted researchers in the field of women’s studies, spoke to “The State of Women of Color.” Their respective research findings dispel many of the myths most often associated with women of ethnic minority backgrounds. For example, despite popular belief, “women of color” *do not* earn more than “men of color.” “While we [“women of color”] have heightened visibility in rarified, senior-level positions, we are also subject to more intense scrutiny, making us more vulnerable to criticism and discrimination,” says Dr. Gis-



the public and private sectors to forge new areas of inquiry about the ways in which the issues of race and gender resonate in the workplace and society-at-large.

With “women of color” as the fastest growing and most influential demographic group in the nation, developing leadership acumen among minority women remains a top priority at Spelman. Held during Reunion 2004, the two-day leadership symposium, summit and conference provided an informative and educational “value added” experience for visiting alumnae and a rare opportunity for faculty, administrators, students and other women of diverse professional and ethnic backgrounds to immerse themselves in Spelman’s extraordinary brand of sisterhood. While the magnitude of the occasion was evident among the classmates, colleagues, and friends who filled the audi-

combe. “Our research findings give qualitative validity to the fact that “women of color” are both grossly under represented *and* grossly under paid at the highest reaches of the corporate America where only 1.2% of corporate officers are minority women,” she adds.

Salary Disparities

White Men as Compared to Women of Color

White Men	\$1.00
Asian Women	.75
White Women	.70
African American Women	.63
Native American Women	.58
Latina Women	.53

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor

Dr. Giscombe provides further insight when speaking to the unique challenges of Latina and Asian women: “While equally disturbing, the challenges may be quite different from those experienced by African American women. Although skin color may not be the focal point of the more subtle forms of discrimination heaped upon Latin American and Asian women in the workplace, these women may often deal with the language barriers inherent in having English as a second language, or dispelling the “hot Latina” or “china doll” stereotypes. And, because of the ability of some lighter-skinned Latinas to “pass,” some Hispanic women must also deal with negotiating their true identities in the white world.”

Exploring the workplace and beyond, Dr. Shorter-Gooden echoes the chorus of survey responses of African American women to her research on the cultural realities of relationships and community as well as those of beauty, body image and “colorism” in the context of society’s devaluation of African physical features, even within the Black community. In her book, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, Dr. Shorter-Gooden exposes the internal and external manifestations of genderism and bigotry, the significant emotional energy “women of color” expend in responding to bias, and the negative impact “fitting in” has on our overall well being.



“Like chameleons, we move in and out of our private lives in ways that cause problematic shifts leading to high rates of depression, emotional overeating, hypertension, sleep disorders, abusive relationships and manifestations of the “Sisterella Complex”—the proverbial strong Black woman who refuses to acknowledge her needs by wearing a mask of hyperfunctionalism.”

Dr. Kumea Shorter-Gooden

*Professor of Psychology
Alliant International University*

In panel discussions moderated by Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Anna J. Cooper Professor of Women’s Studies and director of Spelman’s Women’s Research and Resource Center; clinical/organizational psychologist Dr. Patricia Romney, president, Romney Associates; Dr. Jane E. Smith, C’68, chief executive officer, Business and Professional Women/USA; and Dr. Tatum, some of the nation’s most distinguished womanist scholars and social activists engaged in spirited discourses about the never-ending quest to seek a delicate balance between the responsibilities of demanding careers and equally demanding personal lives. “Regardless of the existence of financial and other resources, the lives of “women of color” tend to be fraught with concerns and considerations that are relatively absent from the lives of our majority peers,” says Dr. Romney.

We need to develop strategies to penetrate the essential, informal networks of business and industry, strategies that will enable us to reach the highest levels of corporate authority. As “women of color,” we need to address the issues of under-employment, salary inequity, stereotypical charac-





terizations, and the absence of an adequate pool of “men of color” to serve as companions, help-mates, husbands and fathers.”

Dr. Patricia Romney

*Clinical/Organizational Psychologist and President
Romney Associates, Inc.*

The statistics and testimonies brought forth in the “Mentoring and Sponsorship for Women of Color” discussion reinforces the need to establish broad-based mentoring relationships. “There is an undeniable correlation between supportive alliances and career advancement,” says Dr. Becky Wai-Ling Packard, assistant professor of psychology and education, Mt. Holyoke College. Speaking to the importance of developing one’s own “board of directors” for professional support and guidance, the experts also stress the difficulty “women of color,” often experience in gaining mentors, given the tendency of many corporate cultures to be less than supportive of mentoring relationships across race and gender.

The purpose of the conference, however, was not simply to note the current state of affairs facing “women of color,” but also to provide strategies and solutions to address these unique obstacles. Led by Dr. Tatum, the intergroup dialogue, “The Call to Lead: Strategies for Collaborative Leadership Models and Initiatives,” provided a thought-provoking synthesis of Day One of the conference that culminated with a festive Women of Color Networking Reception for participants, presenters and corporate sponsors.

Building on the excitement and momentum of the previous day, Day Two of the conference featured noted economist, author and syndicated columnist Dr. Julianne Malveaux who “brought down the house” with a rousing keynote address that spoke to the concept of “voice” in a hostile society—the voice we are denied, and the voice we deny ourselves. “Our lives would be transformed if we ever got to the table,” Dr. Malveaux suggests, “but if we ever get to the table, what will we say? What will we do?” She urges us to embrace the notion that leadership is not merely a ministry of presence, but one of action—that we must be willing to “talk-the-talk” and walk-the-walk” if we are to

make a qualitative difference in our lives and in the lives of others, and that we have a responsibility to lift up our voices in opposition to the widespread abuses of power that negate leadership opportunities for “women of color.”

Dr. Malveaux goes on to enumerate some of the ways in which “women of color” often enslave themselves. Peering out over the multigenerational audience of fashionably dressed, well-heeled women, she cautions us to watch carefully what we spend, and where we spend it. “If there’s one place we have equality, it’s in the amount of money we owe through credit card debt. Worse yet, 12% of Black folks own absolutely nothing!” Taking a hefty swat at the so-called “Queen Bees”—Black women who, regrettably, wear their unique positions as the one and only “sistah” in the house [within their organizations] as badges of honor—she admonishes their inflated egos: “If you think you’re leadin’ and nobody is followin’,” she cautions, “you’re not leadin’, you’re just trippin’!”

“You can tell who you are by looking at your calendar and your checkbook, because how you spend your time and your money is a direct reflection of your values.”

Dr. Julianne Malveaux

Economist/Author/Syndicated Columnist

The research findings of Dr. Ella L. Bell, associate professor of business administration, Tuck School of Business, Dartmouth College, the *ESSENCE WOW Report*, and the technologically driven, on-site survey of conference participants administered by Dr. Bell, provided a colorful portrait of the attitudes and aspirations of African American women. The comparative demographic and ethnographic data reveal the insidious manner in which the authority and credibility of “women of color” are constantly being tested, resulting in blatant status and power differentials. In assessing the effects of the racial binary of white superiority and black inferiority, Dr. Bell proclaims: “It’s clear that the psychosocial effects of racism and genderism continue to devastate those who experience such disparities of opportunity. Likewise, the nation’s stake in the increasingly competitive global economy is significantly weakened by its continued failure to fully capitalize on the attributes of ‘women of color’ as an invaluable human resource.”

“Race has always been a lynch-pin stratifier. As “women of color,” we need to expose the fiction, know the context, expand the relational framework, and develop compassionate allies to address the status and power differentials.”

Dr. Maureen Walker

Faculty Member and Director of Program Development
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Associate Director, MBA Support Services,
Harvard Business School

More than a dozen concurrent workshops and seminars provided additional opportunities for in-depth discussions about the significant aspects of leadership development, the political process, financial management and entrepreneurship, art and social commentary, faith and spirituality, and stress relief through health and wellness, all of which illuminated how the issues associated with race, gender, nationality, religion, language, class, culture, color, age and other dimensions of differentness serve as impediments to achievement. As one might expect, given the statistical realities of eligible and available “men of color”, among the most popular small group sessions was “Where Is My Leading Man? —Man Love and Self Love,” in which participants candidly shared their innermost feelings about loving themselves in the absence of man-centered validation.

Scheduled to coincide with conference activities, two age-appropriate Spelbound Youth Seminars were conducted for local middle and high school students and the children of Spelman reunioning alumnae. The Merrill Lynch Foundation, as part of its highly successful, national “Jump Start” initiative, presented an interactive workshop to promote financial literacy and the development of sound financial management skills, while the New York-based, public relations executive and community development specialist Terrie Williams led the older students in a series of inventive exercises geared toward youth leadership development.

The conference luncheon provided the occasion for The Honorable Shirley Clarke Franklin, the first African American woman to serve as mayor of Atlanta, to address the auspicious gathering. The mayor received the first-ever “Legacy of Leadership” award along with other award recipients Derrick A. Bell, Jr., visiting professor, New York University School of Law; Yvonne R. Jackson, senior vice president, Human Resources, Pfizer, Inc., John E. Pepper, Jr., vice president for finance and administration, Yale University. They were recognized for their exemplary contributions in shaping the destinies of past, current and future generations of leaders and their advancement of women and women’s issues in the public and private sectors.

“While we frequently hear about personal experiences related to race and gender, many of us have not had access to the hard data. The research information provided at the conference not only

supports our suspicions, but serves as a foundation for meaningful dialogue and the sharing of best practices.”

Dr. Westina Matthews

First Vice President, Community Leadership
Merrill Lynch

Commenting on the focus and value of the conference, perhaps Dr. Jane Smith best expresses what is in the hearts and minds of the vast majority of alumnae participants: “Spelman is now a brand name that means leadership, service and quality. With each new president, with each graduating class, with each entering class, there are new opportunities to engage our work. We need to embrace our power and our possibilities. We simply cannot forget or ignore the significance of gender as we find new ways to contribute to business, industry and society through civic engagement . . . and through Spelman.”



Mark your calendar...May 2005!

Building on the enormous success of this year’s conference, next year’s event, scheduled for May 2005, promises to attract an even greater number of participants and corporate sponsors to delve even deeper into the existing and newly emerging issues and challenges that preclude the advancement of “women of color” from reaching the highest rungs of the leadership ladder. •

DENISE McFALL, an Atlanta-based freelance writer with an extensive background in higher education administration, program management and curriculum development, is a frequent contributor of articles and publications that focus on notable initiatives in higher education.

DR. JANE E. SMITH

Appointed to Head The Center for Leadership and Civic Engagement

BY DENISE MCFALL

Spelman College announces the appointment of alumna Dr. Jane E. Smith, C'68, as executive director of the College's Center for Leadership & Civic Engagement. The Center, affectionately known as Spelman LEADS, was launched in October 2003 under the visionary leadership of founding co-directors Kimberly Browne Davis, C'81, and Pamela G. Carlton. Building on the foundation established by Ms. Davis and Ms. Carlton, Dr. Smith, formerly chief executive officer of Business and Professional Women/USA (BPW), assumed the directorship of Spelman LEADS on August 9, 2004.

While at BPW — one of the oldest women's advocacy organizations in the nation — Dr. Smith was responsible for promoting equity for all women in the workplace through advocacy, education and information. "Civic engagement is an amazing 'industry' to me," says Dr. Smith. "My entire career has been steeped in service and activism, and I perceive my work at the Center to be a continuation of my efforts to accumulate those skills that can be of benefit to others," she adds. "Life has provided so many opportunities for me to both lead and serve, so I have a deep gratitude that Dr. Tatum's vision for the leadership center so closely matches my own, and my need to come full circle in the fulfillment of my own personal growth."

Dr. Smith's first priority is to engage in a self-imposed, structured orientation, and conversations with Spelman students, faculty, staff and alumnae that will lead to shaping the Center's future direction. Building on the enormous success of the first Spelman LEADS conference held in May 2004, she will then begin the task of planning for a second annual "women of color" leadership conference and strengthening the program's "Leaders on Leadership" series, a premier forum in which distinguished women leaders from industry, academia, government and the nonprofit sector share their experiences, challenges and insights on what it takes to lead in today's global society. "I'm com-

ing into this position with an incredible rolodex, a list of leadership contacts from all walks of life. That list now belongs to Spelman," says Dr. Smith, "and we're going to use it!"

In discussing her long-term goals for Spelman LEADS, she is both passionate and definitive. "Spelman has always stood for leadership, and the leadership center is a programmatic extension of that long-standing tradition. Every student at Spelman knows exactly *where* she is. Because Spelman is an institution of resources and privilege, we all know that we are at a place that prepares us to make a positive difference in the quality of life, if we choose to use all that is available to us. First and foremost, I have a vision to create a premier leadership center that provides cutting-edge leadership models not only for Spel-

man students, but also for students everywhere. We want the Center to be a place where the concept of civic engagement as the foundation of democracy is explored from the perspective of African American women and other women of color, a convener of women from around the world to discuss leadership and civic engagement as a foundation for increased acceptance of differences. The task is huge, and Spelman can do it!"

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"Spelman has always stood for leadership, and the leadership center is a programmatic extension of that long-standing tradition." —DR. JANE E. SMITH, C'68

than 250 community and college-based chapters — she directed worldwide strategies to improve the quality of life for families at the neighborhood level, inspired the grassroots work being done by its members and focused on capacity building with emphasis on strengthening the organization's financial base and membership development. She was later appointed by President William Clinton to the National Women's Business Council, and by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the Beijing Plus Five Conference delegation.

Dr. Smith has served on the advisory boards of Prudential Insurance Company, Citizen and Southern Bank (now Bank of America) and Fleet Bank and as a member of the national judging panel for inductees into the 2001–2002 and 2002–2003 National Women's Hall of Fame. A founding member of the Women's Chamber of Commerce and a judge for Lifetime Television's 2003 Lifetime Achievement Awards, she currently consults with several foundations on topics related to leadership, education, race and families in communities. Her award-winning work has been featured on CNN and in *ESSENCE*, *Life*, *Emerge* and *Ebony* magazines.

Dr. Smith began her professional career in 1975 at Spelman College as assistant professor of sociology and director of freshman studies. Later, as assistant to President Donald M. Stewart, she was selected for an American Council on Education Fellowship and assumed the responsibility for managing Spelman's multi-year, seven-million-dollar Advanced

Institutional Development Grant. From 1979 through 1980, Dr. Smith served as assistant vice president for development of Atlanta University and as a member of the president's strategic planning management team before moving on to assume managing directorships of INROADS/Atlanta and INROADS/Detroit wherein she implemented career development services for over 300 college interns and 50 sponsoring corporations.

In 1991, Mrs. Coretta Scott King invited Dr. Smith to serve as director of development at the Martin Luther King Center for Nonviolent Social Change. Under the guidance of Mrs. King and Christine King Farris, vice president of The King Center and associate professor and director of Spelman's Learning Resources Center, Dr. Smith gained entrée into the civil rights leadership arena while assisting Mrs. King and Professor King in producing the events that commemorated the 25th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination. Reporting directly to President Jimmy Carter, from 1994 to 1998 she directed The Atlanta Project, a community development initiative of The Carter Center that fostered partnerships between 20 neighborhood clusters and community advocates, churches, private and government service agencies, and corporations.

As a third-generation native Atlantan, Dr. Smith's roots in Atlanta and at Spelman College run deep and wide. First introduced to the College as a nursery school student, she has been "in and out" of Spelman all of her life, attending many programs at the College before her enrollment as an undergraduate student. Her mother's great aunt, Victoria Simmons, was a member of Spelman's second graduating class. Her mother, Lavada Johnson Smith, was a member of the class of 1943, and her aunt, Georgia Smith Dickens, C'42, was a 2001 recipient of the Spelman College Alumnae Achievement Award for civic service. There is a host of other relatives with close ties to Spelman, including Dr. Smith's second cousin, Ché Smith, a member of the Class of 2005, and her niece, Dr. Jamillah Karim, who joined the Spelman College faculty in the Department of Philosophy and Religion in the fall of 2004. Added to that, she also counts several "Morehouse men" among her closest relatives, including her father, retired Atlanta dentist Dr. Harvey Smith, and his father, The Reverend Harvey Smith.

While a student at Spelman, Dr. Smith was a member of the Granddaughters Club, served as a class officer during her freshman and senior years



Photo: Brad Smith

and, as a senior, served on the editorial staff of *Spotlight*. It was, in fact, during her senior year that Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. In response to this momentous and historic event, Dr. Smith, along with former Spelman College dean of students, Freddye Hill, C'68, and a handful of other classmates, founded the student organization "Sisters in Blackness" to enrich their college experience through activism.

As a sociology major, Dr. Smith counts among her many mentors Dr. Harry LeFever, then chair of the Sociology Department, and Professor Millicent Dobbs Jordan, who brought her unique brand of passion and commitment to community service into the classroom through the study of English literature. Throughout the years, there have been others at Spelman who have impacted Dr. Smith's understanding of and commitment to issues of race and gender, such as Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Anna J. Cooper Professor of Women's Studies and director of the Women's Research and Resource Center, who Dr. Smith views as the nation's preeminent authority on issues that affect the lives of Black women and other women of color.

Dr. Smith holds a bachelor of arts degree in sociology from Spelman College, a master's degree in sociology from Emory University, a doctorate of education in social policy analysis from Harvard University, and honorary doctorates from Spelman College and Texas College. She is a member of



Photo: Brad Smith

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and a recipient of the Emory University Alumni Medal, the American Association of University Women's 2002 Woman of Distinction Award and the Chicago Spelman College Alumnae Association's first Johnnetta B. Cole Achievement Award.

Today, in addition to crafting a stellar professional career, her time and interest are devoted to maintaining close ties with her family, which includes her father, two adult sons and four grandchildren. When questioned about the legacy she hopes to leave Spelman, Dr. Smith's response is as humble as it is sincere: "I now have the opportunity to bring all that I am, and all that I ever hope to be, to the Spelman table. I simply want Spelman to be proud of me as an example of what they created." •

BOOK REVIEWS

ANGELA BROWN TERRELL

Non-Fiction

Their Memories, Our Treasure: Conversations With African American Women of Wisdom

Volume I and II in the SIS (Spelman's Independent Scholars) Oral History Project.

Under the direction of Dr. Gloria Wade Gayles, this project explores the lives of 19 women, ages 70 to 95, of diverse lifetime accomplishments. Each of these mentors was interviewed at length by Spelman's Young Scholars, themselves from various backgrounds and study disciplines.

The value of this project, writes Young Scholar Danielle Phillips, is that "...intergenerational learning

in SIS has been one of the most memorable experiences of our education at Spelman College. . . . [T]his volume is our way of honoring them (Women of Wisdom) and sharing the wisdom they shared with us."

What Matters Most: Ten Lessons in Living Passionately from the "Song of Solomon"

by Dr. Renita J. Weems (Warner Books)

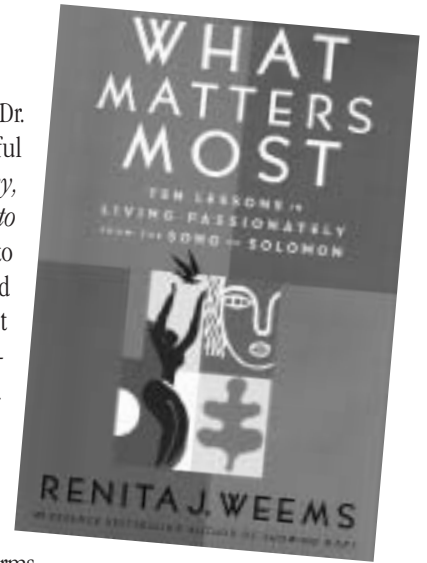
Bible scholar, minister and writer, Dr. Weems has followed her successful books including *Showing Mary*, *Just A Sister Away* and *Listening to God*, with another excursion into the world of spirituality and women. Using the Bible's most romantic writing, Dr. Weems challenges the reader to look beyond the yearnings of a lovestruck maiden in search of her lover, to see the strength and determination of the Shulammitte to find

her own place on her own terms in God's plan for her life.

Have you ever wondered why the Bible would include a book of erotic poetry in its teachings, especially one written by a woman? "The woman's open, candid talk about love, passion, desire and longing reminds us that we are not just spiritual and rational creatures. We are indisputably physical and sexual beings, despite all of our Sunday morning, high and holy pretensions," writes Dr. Weems, who was named to the William and Camille Cosby Visiting Professorship in the Humanities at Spelman College. She is also an

associate professor at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, where she teaches Old Testament studies.

When speaking of "living passionately," Dr. Weems addresses our whole selves. The 10 lessons cover The Self, Identity, Truth, Balance, Choices, Inner Wisdom, Danger, Your Body, Sacrifice, Sex and Love. Put into the context of our spirituality, and by using the Bible as our guide, women, especially Black women, can begin to dispense with the schizophrenic dual-



ities of being good girls versus bad; of being aggressive versus submissive, of being outspoken versus silent, of being depressed instead of happy. "Ours is a journey of discovery and development, of integrating both the shadow and the light of our character into our whole, yet complex, personality," Dr. Weems writes.

Dr. Weems helpfully includes exercises at the end of each chapter for readers to journal their personal feelings, making it a great tool for women's Bible studies and other groups. Through her examination of the hidden messages in the ancient Shulammitte's poetry, Dr. Weems offers a guide for today's women to enjoy the blessings God has planned for each of us.

A Wealth of Wisdom: Legendary African American Elders Speak

*Edited by Camille O. Cosby and
Renee Poussaint.*

*Photography by Howard L. Bingham
(Atria Books)*

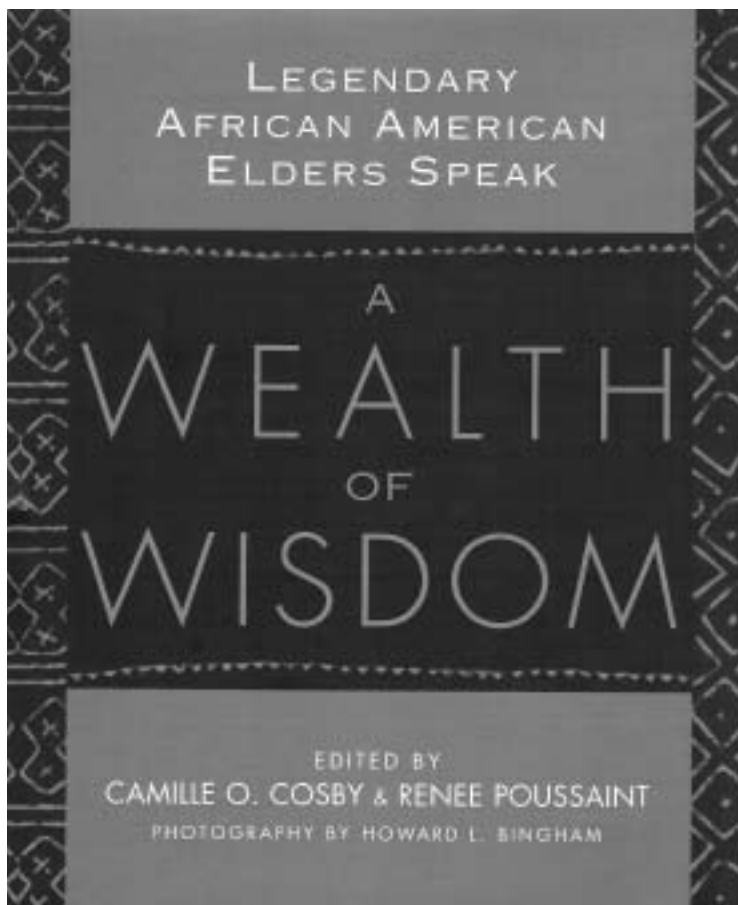
Dr. Camille O. Cosby, philanthropist, producer and educator, and Renee Poussaint, veteran journalist and documentarian, are bringing to readers the fruits of their National Visionary Leadership Project, which teams elderly public and community visionaries with their younger counterparts, who record their accumulated experiences and knowledge for posterity.

From the lips of 48 African Americans ranging in ages from 70 to 90-plus, hailing from diverse occupations such as politics, theater, music, art, civil rights, business, religion and

education, comes a richness of experiences – both the good and the painful – that can teach us about our wonderful heritage on which we can build the future.

Learn about long-term relationships from actors Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, the struggles and triumphs of Maya Angelou, the political shunning experienced by Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm, the tenacity and humility of gifted historian John Hope Franklin, and the spiritual wisdom and love of Spelman's own Dean Emeritus of Sisters Chapel, Dr. Norman Rates.

The Bible teaches us that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor (Ecclesiastes 7:12b), and so readers of this volume will certainly benefit from the wisdom shared here, to help us to avoid pitfalls, and to gain the encouragement to persevere.



Great Foods Without Worry

*by Cindy Moseley
(Aventine Press)*

Most of us have the pleasure of enjoying our meals without worry, except maybe when we eat too much. But there are millions who are limited in what they eat because of allergies to the most common ingredients in our foods. These allergies can cause reactions ranging from mild cases of hives to life-threatening anaphylaxis.

Faced with this dilemma with her own children who had multiple food allergies, author Cindy Moseley took on the almost insurmountable task of learning how to cook healthy foods for her family within their diet restrictions, which she now shares with us.

This cookbook, subtitled “More than 90 Delicious Recipes without Wheat, Eggs, Nuts, Dairy, Soy, and Gluten,” supplies such all-time favorites like Hush Puppies, Breadsticks and Pretzels, Pot Pies, Double Chocolate Chip Cookies, Carrot Cake and Peach Cobbler.

In addition to recipes, Mrs. Moseley supplies lists of food substitutes and ingredients, cooking tools and tips, and support organizations. One helpful index lists ways to read product labels to identify ingredients for wheat-free, milk-free and nut-free diets.



FICTION

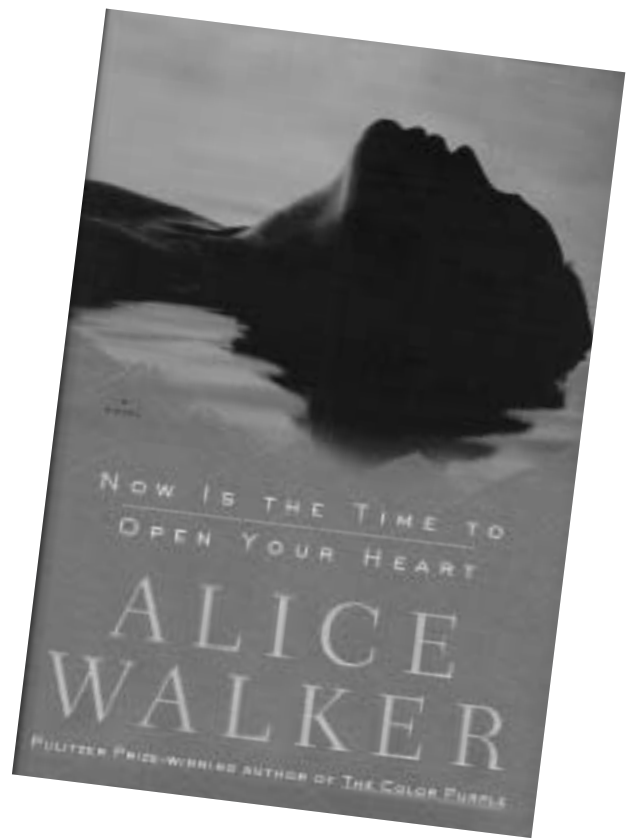
Now Is The Time to Open Your Heart

by Alice Walker
(Random House)

In her newest novel, award-winning author Alice Walker explores a woman's mid-life journey in search of her spiritual foundation.

Kate Talkingtree is a successful 57-year-old writer who finds herself still trying to find what her life is all about. Married many times and living with her latest lover, Yolo, a younger man and artist, Kate decides to leave him and heads out for an all-woman rafting trip down the Colorado River. At the same time, Yolo, feeling deserted, decides to seek his own adventure and travels to Hawaii.

These parallel journeys will either lead Kate and Yolo to separate lives or unite them in a stronger relationship. Mixed into their individual adventures are dreams, flashbacks, the Amazon jungle, anaconda snakes, shamans, spiritists, past pains and joys, the wisdom of an All-Knowing Grandmother spirit and the ancient beliefs of the Hawaiians.



Ms. Walker's storytelling is often confusing as we are led from past to present to future adventures at an almost dizzying rate. But saving it all are her inimitable and poetic writing skills that keep us reading to the conclusion. In other words, you may not understand everything Alice Walker writes, but you'll enjoy the richness and beauty of your reading journey.

A Love Story

by Denene Millner and
Nick Chiles
(Dutton)

Few contemporary writers can tackle relationships any better than the husband-wife team of Denene Millner and Nick Chiles. Their non-fiction tomes, *What Brothers Think*, *What Sisters Know: The Real Deal on Love and Relationships*, and previous fiction, *Love Don't Live*

Here Anymore, were bestsellers.

A Love Story asks the question, can childhood buddies of the opposite sex find love and happiness with each other? And if friends become lovers, will they ruin the bonds that formed their friendship?

When the young Aaron moves across the street from Nina, an inseparable bond is formed. They see each other through schoolyard fights, family feuds and puppy love excursions. Now, 25 years later, they're at a crossroads in their relationship. Suddenly, they submit to an intimate attraction for one another that other people saw, but which they had refused to acknowledge.

Things change. Nina knows too much about Aaron and he knows too many of her secrets. The aroused doubts and tensions seem insurmountable.

If you like romance with an edge, check this out.

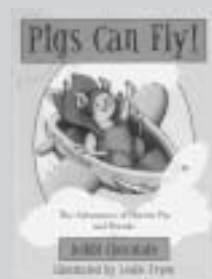
ANGELA BROWN TERRELL is a freelance writer in Columbia, Maryland.



Billie Montgomery Cook, C'73, is the author of *The Real Deal: A Spiritual Guide for Black Teen Girls*, a handbook for African-American teenage girls addressing such topics as self-esteem, friendship, work, sexuality and suicide. Written in a tone and vernacular designed to appeal to the target audience, each section concludes with a prayer, self-assessment and scriptural references. In *The Real Deal*, Ms. Cook offers “realistic comfort, counsel, advice and hope.” In addition to counseling and communicating with her teenage daughter, she is coordinator of the drama ministry at Third Baptist Church in Portsmouth, Virginia. (ISBN 0-8170-1458-6; Judson Press, Valley Forge, Pa., www.judsonpress.com)



The latest literary release by celebrated children’s author **Deborah “Debbi” Chocolate, C'76**, is *Pigs Can Fly!* This endearing collection of four stories is based on the adventures of the invincible Harriet Pig, and how she and her friends realize dreams, eliminate obstacles and overcome fears. Filled with foundational lessons about such character-defining elements as attitude, determination and gratitude, *Pigs Can Fly!* is an entertaining read for adults and children alike. The magic and morals of the stories are magnified by the charming detail of the black-and-white illustrations throughout the book. (ISBN 0-8126-2706-7; Cricket Books, Carus Publishing, Chicago, Ill., www.cricketbooks.net)



Lucille P. Fultz, C'59, an associate professor of English at Rice University, is the author of *Toni Morrison: Playing with Difference* (ISBN 0-252-02823-6; University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, Ill.). In this work, she examines the use of contrasting elements – such as black and white, love and hate, wealth and poverty – as found in the body of literature by Toni Morrison. This “necessary and thought-provoking work” offers a thorough and in-depth analysis of the addressed texts. In addition to writing essays on Toni Morrison, which have appeared in a number of collections, Ms. Fultz is a coeditor of *Double Stitch: Black Women Write about Mothers and Daughters*.



Nzinga's Tribe, a children’s book written and illustrated by **Elizabeth Hendricks, C'92**, tells the story of an imaginative girl of African decent, whose fearlessness is confirmed when she is forced to stand up to a lion. The story’s positive message is further enhanced by illustrations consisting of colorful and textured fabrics and visuals, and photos of African American icons. (ISBN 0-9762145-0-4; 5,6, Pickup Sticks Publishing, Atlanta, Ga., tcmacr@bellsouth.net)



When young women began to enter college in substantial numbers late in the nineteenth century, the health and social commentary of the time suggested that campus life would negatively impact their health and physical image. When noted contemporary historian Margaret A. Lowe decided to test these notions by investigating the realities of female body image on three college and university campuses between 1875 and 1930, she included the views of **Spelman College women** in her study. She writes about her findings in the book, *Looking Good: College Women and Body Image, 1875–1930* (ISBN 0-8018-7209-X; The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Md.). Spelman student publications, press accounts and photographs provided valuable information and insight for the book. Ms. Lowe is an assistant professor of history and project director of the Teaching American History Grant at Bridgewater State College.



SISTERS CENTER FOR WISDOM:

Illuminating the Value of Values

BY DENISE MCFALL



Photo: Julie Varbrough

Sarab Thompson (left), WISDOM Center resident and Rev. Lisa Rhodes, Dean of Sisters Chapel and Director of the Sisters Center for WISDOM.

While many of the nation's oldest and most prestigious colleges and universities, including Spelman College, were born within the faith community, over time, most of these institutions have witnessed a growing separation between what is considered academic and co-curricular, sacred and secular. Increasingly, at most colleges, co-curricular and community service activities are taking a back seat to what happens in the classroom. At Spelman, however, the basic philosophical tenets upon which the College was founded – that ethics, morality and spirituality are the cornerstones of character development – remain as relevant today as they were at the time of its founding in the late 1800s. Reinforced by the pervasive role religion has traditionally played within the African American culture, worship and religious education were and still are very much a part of the Spelman College experience – as attested to by the school's motto: *Our Whole School for Christ*.

In search of new and effective ways to advance the notion that religion and service must inform and direct

secular training, in 2002 Spelman established Sisters Center for WISDOM (**W**omen **i**n **S**piritual **D**iscernment **o**f **M**inistry), the latest and, perhaps, the most vibrant expression to date of the College's sensitivity to issues of religion and spirituality. Funded through the vision and generosity of Lilly Endowment Programs for Theological Exploration of Vocation, Sisters Center for WISDOM provides a holistic educational experience that nourishes the spiritual and ethical development of a new generation of Black women, addressing the gender-based disparities and inequities that have historically continued to serve as sources of stratification in society and in the Black Church. The \$2 million, five-year Lilly Endowment grant has enabled the College to fulfill the need to help students make the connection between contextual learning experiences and formal classroom instruction, and to confront, head on, the relevancy of the historic Black Church in the minds, hearts and daily practices of African American youth.

"As Spelman enters the new millennium, it recognizes that there are an increasing number of young women who are intellectually and spiritually challenged by their faith traditions who seek to better understand the meaning of faith for their lives and work," says The Reverend Lisa D. Rhodes, M. Div., MSW, dean of the Spelman College Chapel and director of Sisters Center for WISDOM. As such, the intellectual, spiritual, social, psychological and cultural aspects of life are an integral part of the program's framework, in keeping with Spelman's overall mission to provide an education that positively impacts students in *all* their endeavors, during their college years and beyond.

At Spelman... the basic philosophical tenets upon which the College was founded – that ethics, morality and spirituality are the cornerstones of character development – remain as relevant today as they were at the time of its founding in the late 1800s.



Photo: Julie Varbrough

According to Reverend Rhodes: “Black women, in particular, have not been able to advance their leadership role, develop support networks and engage in mentoring opportunities that would attract generations of women to and sustain them in ministry and other religious vocations.” Reverend Rhodes contends that although feminist and womanist movements have contributed to the paradigm shift in the acceptance of female pastoral leadership, present and future emerging women pastors need attention given to their development and training. Through Sisters Center for WISDOM, Spelman seeks to forge new models of egalitarianism and mutual partnership that respect the uniqueness of gender in what has historically been a male-dominated arena.

Assuming a leadership role among institutions of higher education, Spelman is now addressing the national need to attract, retain, nurture, increase and support Black women in their pursuit of religious vocations, helping students identify the many ways in which they can serve the Black Church, the African American community and the world in service to God through all forms of vocational endeavor. “It’s important that we understand how faith should inform our career choices, our ethical decisions and the nature of our leadership,” says Reverend Rhodes. “I’m hopeful that we can make significant contributions to the ethical development of the next generation in ways that will help them to be resilient and withstand the pressures of this generation.”

WISDOM project manager, The Reverend Melva L. Sampson, M.Div., M.A., concurs with Reverend Rhodes and other faith leaders and academicians who perceive that contemporary society has led too many of today’s college students to become focused on narrow career development and individual interests, motivated by monetary gain without a corresponding commitment to the common good, the causes of justice, peace and reconciliation. “The Black Church is, indeed, the keeper of the African American narrative, at the very core of our moral discourse and ethical leadership development,” asserts Reverend Sampson.

“We need to develop a stronger listening ear, to re-evaluate who we are, and redefine the Black Church for contemporary society – to explore the relational paradigms that are not supportive of our history, of who we are.”

The Reverend Lisa D. Rhodes, M.Div., MSW
Dean of the Spelman College Chapel and
Director of Sisters Center for WISDOM



Building on the work of Dr. Walter Collier, who served as the Lilly Endowment Planning Grant project manager, the programs of Sisters Center for WISDOM have evolved into a series of independent, yet interrelated, activities in five areas of emphasis:

Broad-Based Campus Education and Awareness: Lectures, public forums, and a student-organized Women in Vocational Exploration and Spirituality (WIVES) campus education effort

Student Recruitment, Mentoring and Pre-Professional Development: National recruitment, student mentoring and leadership development efforts that pair Spelman students with African American women pastors for academic and professional development through summer internships

Faculty and Curriculum Development: A seed grant program to enable faculty to revise existing courses or develop new courses and to provide for the hiring of a new full-time faculty member to bring added diversity to the Department of Philosophy and Religion course offerings

Research, Scholarship and Resource Network: A global conference that convenes faculty and religious scholars, practitioners and undergraduate and graduate students to present commissioned papers, address the paucity of scholarship relative to Black women and religion, and disseminate transcripts of conference proceedings

Community Linkages: A women’s empowerment program designed to create support networks among women



Photo: Julie Yarbrough

In January 2004, a four-day celebration was held to launch the Sisters Center of WISDOM housed in Bessie Strong Hall.

pursuing the ordained ministry and other religious vocations, and an annual HBCU Summit designed to strengthen the link that has historically existed between the Black Church and the historically Black college and university community

The grant supports Sisters Chapel Scholars in the amount of \$5,000 tuition assistance awards, as well as supporting a multi-year faculty position for a theologian with expertise in womanist and feminist theology, ethics and cultural theology to help students better understand and intellectually critique the religions of the world. As part of their leadership development, student scholarship recipients are mentored by African American women pastors and complete six-week summer internships at domestic and international faith-based sites. There are also several mini-grants available to faculty members who have an interest in piloting interdisciplinary courses that integrate spirituality, religion, ethics, science and service-learning components into the College's curriculum.

In seeking to strengthen collaborative efforts and cooperative opportunities with other schools in the Atlanta University Center (AUC) and local theological institutions, WISDOM has held a series of meetings with religious leaders at sister institutions to explore internship programs, cross-registration opportunities, ethical leadership development training and collaborative research projects. In 2002, WISDOM held an HBCU summit, co-sponsored by the Fund for Theological Education, entitled *Does Ja Rule? Hip Hop and Religion*, and has hopes of mounting a second summit in 2005. During spring break of 2003, Spelman and Morehouse students embarked on a seminary tour, visiting six seminaries throughout New England and New Jersey. WISDOM has also partnered with Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in sponsoring a women's empowerment program, and seeks to further explore how faith and spirituality can inform student activism.

Over the five-year grant period, it is anticipated that Sisters Center for WISDOM will directly impact more than 2,500 undergraduate students, faculty and staff on the Spelman campus; at least 2,000 students, faculty and staff within the Atlanta University Center and at other metropolitan Atlanta colleges and universities; and more than 500 scholars, practitioners and lay persons in faith-based organizations throughout the United States, Europe, Africa and Latin America.

“As I look about me today in this veiled world of mine, despite the noisier and more spectacular advances of my brothers, I instinctively feel and know that it is the five million women of my race who really count. Black women (and women whose grandmothers were Black) are...the main pillars of those social settlements which we call churches.”

W.E.B. DuBois (1918)

In addition to Reverend Rhodes and Reverend Sampson, other Spelman faculty members continue to make significant contributions to the overall mission of the program. In April 2002, Dr. Renita Weems, professor of biblical studies at Vanderbilt University, was among the distinguished scholars and religious leaders at WISDOM's one-day retreat who spoke to the meaning of vocation as a soul-searching process, reaching a decision about one's true calling, one's true self and one's place in the crossroads of life. Today, on leave from Vanderbilt, Professor Weems serves as Spelman's 2003–2005 Cosby Endowed Chair of Humanities and as a major source of inspiration to the WISDOM program and its students. Likewise, Dr. Rosetta Ross, associate professor and chair of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, has demonstrated a commitment to reviving the department's offerings and rethinking its curricular programming with an eye on creating a more holistic liberal arts universe.

“The Black Church is, indeed, the keeper of the African American narrative, at the very core of our moral discourse and ethical leadership development.”

The Reverend Melva L. Sampson, M., Div., M.A.
Project Manager, Sisters Center for WISDOM

Beyond its curricular and co-curricular initiatives, WISDOM also makes a place for students of unwavering faith as well as for the faithful who have found traditional, organized religion to be irrelevant and discon-

nected from the young Black cultural hermeneutic. Publicly launched in January 2004, the newly renovated Bessie Strong Hall has been transformed into the WISDOM residential living and learning center wherein a small and select group of students from different faith traditions have the opportunity to live for an academic year in a nurturing, spiritual community in which they can share their spiritual journeys.

Guided by the College's strategic plan, a primary goal of the program is to also *revive*, *renew* and *reclaim* Sisters Chapel as the spiritual nexus of the Spelman campus, to create a vibrant and flourishing spiritual center for student and academic life. "Although Sisters Chapel continues to be the major gathering place for the College, over the past few decades its spiritual and religious foundation had weakened as it struggled to translate its traditions into contemporary expressions of faith. We envision creating a multidimensional, student-centered program of religious studies that has a national focus and global reach," says Reverend Rhodes.

Ranked among the top historic chapels on the campus of a college or university, Sisters Chapel had been the center of spiritual life at Spelman since its dedication by John D. Rockefeller in 1927. Until 1961, attendance at eight o'clock chapel programs, held five days a week, was required for all students. Mandatory Sunday vesper services were held until 1968; however, by the end of the decade all forms of mandatory chapel attendance were discontinued. In 1982 and 1986, compulsory chapel attendance was re-instituted for first-year and sophomore students, respectively. Since mandatory chapel attendance was discontinued, the major focus of religious and spiritual activities has been Sunday Worship Service, at which attendance is now voluntary.

Reverend Rhodes believes that religious life should be a personal choice. "We have a number of religions represented on campus that are not Christian, so we work hard to remain inclusive through interfaith conversations that affirm and support religious diversity and reaffirm the sacredness of all faith traditions. However, in the midst of our struggles, our darkness, we want all of our students to recognize and understand the existence of a greater power."

Over time, the students and culture changed, but the traditional expressions of worship were maintained, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of students attending worship services. Added to that, the dearth of ministers of music within Black churches was equally reflected on the Spelman campus. Given that music is an integral part of the Black Church tradition, there appeared to be a direct correlation between the lack of a worship service program that recognized, appreciated and

incorporated the gospel music genre of today's youth and the significant decline in chapel service attendance.

In response to the need to attract students to Sisters Chapel programs, spiritual enhancement and leadership development workshops, seminars, and lectures are now held throughout the academic year as well as an annual *Moment of Grace Prayer Breakfast* and an annual *Praise Fest*. A Chapel Assistant Program has been established, which includes seven Spelman women who serve during Sunday worship services, and a newly instituted Graduate Ministry and Context Program which allows seminary students from Atlanta University Center's Interdenominational Theological Center and Emory University's Candler School of Theology to gain hands-on field experience.

Sisters Chapel has also served the Greater Atlanta community as a public platform for national and international dialogue related to issues within the civil and human rights movements for guest speakers such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Dr. William H. (Bill) Cosby, Jr., and Marian Wright Edelman, among others. Throughout most of the 20th century, prominent religious leaders have also graced the podium of Sisters Chapel, including Dr. Howard Thurman, Bishop Desmond Tutu and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It was, in fact, at Sisters Chapel where for 48 hours in April of 1968 the body of the slain civil rights leader lay in state. The perseverance and vitality of this historic and sacred space are, therefore, very high priorities to all Spelman constituents. The Lilly Endowment grant now empowers Sisters Chapel to strengthen its religious and spiritual presence and prominence throughout the College campus, with a far-reaching impact in the local community, the Black Church, the African American community and the nation.

In the final year of the project, Sisters Center for WISDOM plans to host a global invitational conference, bringing together religious scholars, practitioners, undergraduates and graduate students to share new knowledge relative to the scholarship on Black women and religion. "We need to develop a stronger listening ear, to re-evaluate who we are and to redefine the Church for contemporary society – to explore the relational paradigms that are not supportive of our history, of *who* we are," says Reverend Rhodes. •

DENISE McFALL, an Atlanta-based freelance writer with an extensive background in higher education administration, program management and curriculum development, is a frequent contributor of articles and publications that focus on notable initiatives in higher education.

SARAH ELIZABETH THOMPSON

“What Makes Sarah Run?”

BY DENISE MCFALL

“While I’m aware of the myth of the ‘Spelman woman,’ knowing I am not [her] is liberating! I think today’s Spelman students are redefining who and what [she] is in self-actualizing, powerful ways.”

Sarah Elizabeth Thompson, C’2006

Rounding the curb of Northside Drive toward the entrance of the “new” Paschals Restaurant, Sarah Elizabeth Thompson, C’2006, glides along on her trusty bicycle as if she is coasting through life on the wings of angels. Removing her safety helmet, electric blue locks fall from the crown of her head into a mass of twists, each with a mind of its own, leading onlookers to contemplate: “Is this a *good* hair day, or a *bad* hair day?” On this warm, spring, Sunday afternoon, Sarah wears a gold-colored T-shirt that shouts “ROOT CAUSE” and a purple crocheted skirt, compliments of a California thrift shop. Native American silver chains encircle her left ankle, a found-on-the-ground watch adorns her wrist, penned reminder notes cover the backs of both hands, and a well-worn pair of hand-me-down, green suede running shoes hugs her feet. In all her glory, Sarah Thompson has arrived. Moving at breakneck speed through a daily schedule that is not for the faint-of-heart, it is obvious that she has little time for the meaningless or mundane. Navigating each moment with a sense of clarity, purpose and an infectious sense of humor, somehow Sarah seems to instinctively know exactly where, how and when she is going, and precisely what needs to be done once she gets there.

In no time at all, one by one, the layers of eclectic eccentricism peel away to reveal the driving force behind this Spelman student of keen intellect, spirit-filled wisdom and youthful exuberance. Affectionately dubbed “Marian Wright Edelman, Jr.,” virtually everything to which Sarah devotes her precious time and unbridled energy is in some

way dedicated to improving the quality of life. Majoring in women’s studies, with a double minor in international studies and economics, she is a perennial dean’s list student who routinely takes her education far beyond that which she has learned in the classroom. Putting her ideas into action, Sarah’s authenticity, commitment to humanity, and passion for justice are the guiding principles that sustain her life journey.

“A lot of people are waiting for Martin Luther King or Mahatma Gandhi to come back—but they are gone. We are it. It is up to us. It is up to you.”

Marian Wright Edelman, C’60

Founder and President

Children’s National Defense Fund

As the 20 year-old daughter of an unlikely alliance between a North Carolina-born, Baptist, African American father and a white Mennonite mother from Indiana—who met and married after grad school at the University of Wisconsin before trekking off to assignments in Sudan—Sarah’s unique family and religious backgrounds, and work with international missions, have fashioned her expansive world view and commitment to activism. Born on United Nations Day (October 24), her travels have taken her to Belize, Sudan, Egypt, South Africa, Zimbabwe, England, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Canada. This past summer, she also journeyed to Cuba to work on issues of solidarity with the Venceremos Brigade before returning home to Indiana to do faith-based community organizing through her church.

In the fall of 2005, Sarah is scheduled to visit the Balkans to study peace and conflict resolution as part of American University’s Washington Semester Program. Later in the year, she hopes to visit Ethiopia to continue her worldwide mission work. Along the way, she has become proficient in Spanish, French, Swahili and Amharic. “The

more I travel, the more people I meet all over the world, the more of an advocate I become for *humanism*,” she says. “Diversity is a gift; we should rejoice in living it every day.”

As a Mennonite, Sarah’s faith is grounded in the tradition of a loving God who motivates her to focus on peace, justice, servanthood and humility. As a student of nonviolent conflict resolution, she is an “active pacifist” who renounces the use of all forms of violence. During the fall of her first-year, Sarah co-founded the Atlanta University Center Peace Coalition. Among her other activities are her participation in the Youth Anti-War Network, POSSE (**P**rotecting **O**ur **S**pelman **S**isters **E**veryday), SASSAFRAS (**S**ociological and **A**nthropological **S**isterhood: **S**cholar **A**ctivists for **R**eshaping **A**ttitudes at **S**pelman), Toni Cade Bambara Scholar Activist Collective, Spelman Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, Sisterfire (an organization dedicated to creating autonomous women’s spaces), and Sisters Center for WISDOM (**W**omen in **S**piritual **D**iscernment of **M**inistry).

Sarah’s participation in WISDOM includes her being one of only a handful of students to be selected to live in the newly renovated Bessie Strong Hall, the program’s living and learning community. “My faith and my involvement in WISDOM sustain my hope in creating revolution. WISDOM fosters a sense of wholeness, balance and progression that helps us ascribe meaning to something beyond empirical reality. It helps us to believe in ourselves, each other and beyond. It’s an anchor that provides us with that deep sense of self-peace that comes with living your life intentionally,” she says.

Politically speaking, Sarah sees herself as an “extreme liberal” who favors community organizing and mounting grassroots campaigns to protest U.S. policies that fly in the face of peace, or negate a reasonable quality of life for its most needy citizens. “It makes my heart hurt to know that there’s a connection between money and power,” she laments, when speaking to the ills of oppressive capitalism. “But I need to see if the place for me is “inside” the government system, or if I’m better working “outside” the parameters of government in grassroots organizations.”

Although she views voting as an essential and important civic duty, she remains skeptical about the nation’s move toward electronic voting: “A voting system that leaves no paper trail is a voting system fraught with possibilities to deceive the public,” she warns. “But I refuse to live in fear of the government,” she declares, before completing her thought with a quote from the critically acclaimed poet-teacher-

activist Audre Lorde: “The master’s tools will never destroy the master’s house.”

Moving on to discuss world and current events, Sarah is definitive in her statements about war, proclaiming: “War is horrible and gruesome. It’s not a viable way to solve problems. We have to move away from a brand of imperialism that makes it scary for the whole human race. The money that is being spent on the Iraqi war leaves less money for education, jobs, and health care, and it’s hurting Black people the most. There is a different vision for the world that makes a space for people like me.”

Why Spelman? Sarah recounts in vivid detail all of the factors that went into making her college decision: “I’ve been an athlete all of my life—swimming, gymnastics, soccer, T-ball, track, basketball, you name it. In fact, that’s how I developed my competitive spirit, by learning to challenge myself. I thrive on the raw emotion of sports competition. I was offered quite a few scholarships to play college sports but, after suffering a career-ending injury, I shifted my focus to other interests and aspects of my life.”

Named scholar-athlete of the year in 2003 and MVP of Spelman’s soccer team in 2004, Sarah still manages to kick around a ball or two just for the thrill of the game. Her holistic mind-body-spirit regimen includes serving as an early morning lifeguard at the Spelman pool, where she teaches swimming and aqua aerobic classes, and being an avid runner. In her travels around the world, she never leaves home without her soccer ball. “Soccer is the world’s favorite sport,” says Sarah. “People come together more quickly around a soccer ball than anything else. I’ve been in pick-up games where people spoke more than four different languages!”

“I chose Spelman primarily because of the strength of its women’s studies and dance programs. Coming out of a middle-class, Mennonite private school environment in Goshen, Indiana, I also wanted a college experience that was different from what I was accustomed to. Atlanta was the ideal place to immerse myself in a city filled with African Americans of all educational, professional and



Photo: Inke Verbrugghe

“My faith and my involvement in WISDOM sustain my hope in creating revolution. WISDOM fosters a sense of wholeness, balance and progression that helps us ascribe meaning to something beyond empirical reality.”

SARAH ELIZABETH THOMPSON,

C’2006

socioeconomic levels, and Spelman offered a women-centered campus environment of promising young Black women just like me,” she says.

Sarah readily admits she has gained far more from her experience at Spelman, and in Atlanta, than she ever dreamed was possible. During her brief college career, she has been the recipient of a Discover Card Scholarship, a second-place winner in the Black History Makers of Tomorrow Essay Contest, a multi-year Spelman Academic Scholar, a Davis-Putter grantee, and a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Freshman Honor Society.

“Where else, but Spelman, could I have gone and been exposed to mentors like President Tatum, Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Dr. Renita Weems and so many other Black women scholars and role models of their caliber?” she hypothesizes. “Spelman has taught me to critique and view things from a different perspective; it’s given me the tools to open my eyes and my mind, to analyze, to not take things at face value,” she notes, before shifting her focus to Atlanta. “Atlanta’s history in the Civil Rights Movement created an atmosphere here of advocacy and activism. The AU Center has a core group of students who are actively involved in combating racism, genderism and homophobia and fighting for equitable standards of living, such as affordable housing and adequate child and health care.” Since her arrival at Spelman, Sarah has participated in internships with a variety of nonprofit organizations, including The King Center, Atlanta Activist Collective and Not In Our Name (NION). “I’m humbled and inspired by people like Marian Wright Edelman, SNCC activist Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, Toni Cade Bambara, Ché Guevara, Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.,” she adds.

“The dream is real, my friends. The failure to realize it is the only reality.”

Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995)
The Salt Eaters, 1980

The Spelman sisterhood is one in which Sarah says she is deeply invested. “Spelman students need to recognize that in order to capitalize on this sisterhood, it’s a matter of give-and-take. I would encourage them to broaden their definition of sisterhood, to embrace the spirit of camaraderie we have at Spelman that can sustain you during the good times and the bad. We should walk in gratitude for what we have here.”

A staunch environmentalist, she goes on to address the issue of community in a broader sense: “We [Spelman students] need to think about ways to beautify the walk to the MARTA station in hopes that more people will be encouraged to take public transportation. We also need to think more

seriously about an institution-wide recycling plan. And, we need to work together to take back our streets so we can have a safe and secure environment that will allow us to tear down the gates that stand between Spelman and the larger community. The legacy I would like to leave Spelman is for students to know that activism is worth it—that what you do makes a difference—that you don’t have to conform.”

Sarah’s assessment of the historical Spelman-Morehouse relationship is both candid and pointed: “The Spelman-Morehouse relationship has always been socially viable. I have a very active social life and count a number of “Morehouse men” among my closest friends and fellow activists. But, the relationship between Spelman and Morehouse can also be viewed as a damaging and problematic “marriage” in which Spelman women are objectified. There seems to be a huge disconnect wherein [we] are devalued because of genderism. I want to transcend people’s expectations of what it means to be female,” she adds.

Taking multi-tasking to a whole new level, Sarah intermittently munches on her veggies, checks her watch, answers her cell phone, reads the reminder notes on her hands, and lends a level of focus to the conversation that belies her favorite motto: “Keep it simple!” With the afternoon nearing to an end, one final question is posed, the question that has been looming around the fringes of this conversation since it began: “So, tell me Sarah, why is your hair blue?” With a “thought-you’d-never-ask” grin spread across her cherub-like face, she serves up her rationale on a silver platter: “One of the things I’ve learned from Black women is that your hair is an important means of self-expression. I see myself as bold and joyful. I’ve already had my hair bright red, pink, bleach-blond orange, rainbow-colored (although that was a *big* mistake), and now it’s electric blue. Why blue? Why not? You’re only an undergrad once!” •

EDITOR’S NOTE: Spotted in early May with purple hair, before leaving for summer “vacation,” Sarah Thompson shared her plan to abandon her brilliantly colored locks in favor of dyed black hair. She now sports a closely cropped, natural afro as she prepares to don business suits and high heels for her upcoming stint in the nation’s capital. Sarah’s attempt to camouflage her liberal activist persona is prompted by her desire to expand the breadth of her Washington Semester experience by feigning some level of assimilation into the prevailing culture that exists within the hallowed halls of government.

DENISE McFALL is an Atlanta-based freelance writer and frequent contributor of articles and publications for colleges and universities.

WISE WORDS FROM MISS SIMON

BY PATRICIA GRAHAM JOHNSON

This is what Marguerite Simon says about wisdom: “Wisdom is a compilation of experiences that make your life. You acquire wisdom as you grow. You grow from each experience. It is the knowledge of life that helps to the expansion of the life. As you acquire knowledge, you put it to good use, and then it becomes wisdom. You are exposed to life, people, attitudes and environment. Those experiences equip you for better thinking and for better use of your knowledge. That is wisdom. It is not a designation like the Bessie Strong Wisdom Center. I don’t call myself wise. . . . Whatever is a part of your environment leads to your knowledge and ultimately becomes wisdom. You live, understand and live.”

Bit of Wisdom: The W.I.S.D.O.M. Center

In order to be correct, you should use the acronym W.I.S.D.O.M., not Wisdom, when referring to the Center. A building cannot have wisdom or be wise. Only people can be wise.

Marguerite Simon is quick-minded, a warm and loving person and a great storyteller. She knows exactly what she wants to say and what she wants us to know.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee on October 30, 1912, she was the youngest of four and the only girl. Her parents, Edward Lee Simon and Laura Dickerson Simon, were both college graduates, her father from Atlanta University and her mother from Lemoyne-Owens in Memphis. In 1923, the family moved to Atlanta, and Edward Simon started teaching woodworking and shop at Washington High School. Miss Simon still uses a rocking chair that he made. She laments, “We have lost skills such as bricklaying. Negroes were excellent in the trades. They are not being taught now.”

Bit of Wisdom: Spelman Artifacts

We should make sure that the artifacts are documented. We should be true to the period. Like by not removing the newspaper that may have been placed in the drawer of furniture. It tells the date. I saw myself the Victrola that Packard and Giles had. Spelman also has a basin and pitcher in Reynolds Cottage. I saw the black leather bag that Packard and Giles used when they traveled to Europe. We need to preserve these things somewhere.

The rocking chair is not the only memento in that house on Martin Avenue where Marguerite Simon has lived since her family’s move to Atlanta in 1923. Miss Simon’s home is an archive of sorts. She has photos, books, artifacts, Spelman awards and cards lovingly displayed throughout her home. She even has a discarded slate from a renovation

project of the roof of Reynolds Cottage. She wanted her family home to continue to be “old and closer to the memory” as a reflection of her heritage and love of “preservation and community.” Recently, the Barnes family, the first family that Miss Simon had met on Martin Avenue, visited her. The family shared memories of the neighborhood. When one recalls a memory, “you can even smell the bread.”

Bit of Wisdom: Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are people. You may not be bosom friends with each other but families have a common experience. It is the comradeship, the interests, the neighborhood-ness – its meaning to someone. It’s a memory. It is the environment that you’re in. These experiences make up your life. Just live them.

Miss Simon (her preferred designation – no “Ms.” for her) attended school in Memphis up to the fifth grade. In Atlanta she attended South Atlanta Public School, Clark University, Oglethorpe, Knowles High, Spelman and Atlanta University Lab School before enrolling in Spelman for college study.

After graduating from Spelman in 1935, she found herself at a crossroads. At that time, the segregated South offered a college-educated woman few job choices. One could “work in someone’s home, at a factory like Scripto, in a department store – as an elevator operator, not a clerk – or teach.” Miss Simon’s father felt that if his daughter worked outside of the home, she should select a work environment where she would not be exposed to the negative aspects of segregation. “He wanted me to be safe, respected and in a wholesome environment.” During the 1936–1937 school year, Miss Simon attended Atlanta University and worked as a graduate assistant in biology at Spelman. Since she had



Miss Marguerite Simon, 2004

Photo: Brad Smith



Photo: Spelman Archives

Miss Marguerite Simon, 1951

Miss Simon summarized her experience at Spelman as an ongoing relationship with the students. “I worked. I was dependable. People saw me at Read Hall. I rarely went to lunch. The students knew me and knew that I would be there.”

never worked outside of Spelman College, she did not have a job reference, but Mrs. Jane Hope Lyons, the dean at Spelman, recommended her for a teaching position. Though Miss Simon was a biology major and certified with a Georgia high school teaching certificate, she was not hired by the Atlanta school system. “There were several issues such as being blocked to employment as a teacher if you were not a product of the Atlanta public school system. Or politics – the status of the person who recommended you for the position – could affect hiring decisions.” She finally landed a position teaching second grade in Milledgeville, Georgia. She proved her worth in elementary education and was moved to third grade the next year.

Bit of Wisdom: Education

I expanded my life. I read a lot. I take in information but I don’t assume anything. I take out of my experiences the information that I can use. I learned from my students.

Later, Marguerite Simon taught science in Evergreen, Alabama. The challenge in that rural school was the lack of running water and the inadequate science equipment. To teach a basic lesson on distillation there was not easy, but she was undaunted. She elicited the help of the agriculture teacher to build a wooden barrel and install a faucet so she could improvise the running water for the lessons on distillation. “What Negro teachers did with nothing and what they had to labor under, all to teach something!”

Miss Simon, an avid reader, had read a lot about sugar cane but it was her students who invited her to visit the cane fields where they worked to see how they made syrup from sugar cane. “I learned from my students. [They] helped me to see things brought to life that reading had [only] given me information about. It is easy to gain information. What’s important is the acceptance and love between students and teacher that goes along with it. Your attitude helps you obtain experiences. It makes you a better person. It’s a give and take, a two-way learning experience.”

By 1942, World War II was in full swing. Miss Simon was assigned as a supply teacher at the Crogman School in the Pittsburgh area of Atlanta. Teachers supported the war effort by issuing or passing out stamps [coupons] to families so they could get their allotment of kerosene and food rations. “Miss Edna Callahan was the physical education teacher [at Spelman] for the college students. Miss Dupree was the physical education teacher for the high school. Both teachers were products of the Sargent School [of Physical Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts], which was known for its excellent training in physical education. They were responsible for the caliber of the physical education program and the apparatus that was purchased.” Miss Callahan, who had taught Marguerite Simon at Spelman,

recognized her potential and knew of her experience organizing field days in elementary school, her background of teaching biology and her interest in children. When Miss Callahan decided to join the WACS in 1943, leaving a vacancy in the middle of the semester, she recommended Marguerite Simon to fill her place. A phone call by Miss Florence Read, Spelman’s president, allowed Miss Simon to be released in the middle of the semester, and she began working at Spelman on March 24, 1943.

Bit of Wisdom: Historically Black Colleges and Universities

The persons that started Negro colleges had far-reaching knowledge. They spearheaded the development, but it was the character, quality and insight that made Spelman’s mission. The purpose had to be substantial enough for it to live this long.

It was the State Department’s policy that students take physical education from kindergarten through high school. In keeping with Spelman’s philosophy from its inception that students should be well-rounded intellectually, spiritually and physically, Spelman required physical education in addition to the other academic courses. In the 1940s, many colleges did not require physical education, but Spelman students were required to take the courses for four years in order to instill a lifelong appreciation of exercise. “We taught classes every day and half of Saturday in order to make sure that all the students could get exercise.”

But Miss Simon did not have a background in physical education. Appreciative of the opportunity and Spelman’s confidence in her, she took classes at the University of Colorado in order to be better prepared. There was no housing for graduate students, so she boarded with a family that had been referred to her by a Spelman faculty member. Though she was a long way from home in an unfamiliar city, Miss Simon took comfort from her belief that all people need to do is “just live the experiences that make up your life.”

The war continued through 1945, and there was limited production of anything that was not essential to the war effort, including uniforms for physical education students. Nonetheless, the Physical Education Department was determined to continue its use of uniforms. Miss Simon, again undaunted, pulled together alumnae and students in home economics to sew the uniforms. “Lurline Baker sewed many of the bloomers. We helped ourselves.” They bought all of the t-shirts that they could get their hands on. Students wore white socks with the cuff according to the traditional class color. “We [found] yellow, green, blue but we could not get red. The class that had red as a class color used all white.”

Physical education courses were held in the ground floor of Giles Hall. “There were showers and two big rooms

where I taught drills, tumbling, simple exercises, volleyball and corner ball which helped students learn skills leading to basketball. Outside, students played soccer and softball, and they could play tennis at their own leisure. Students learned how to use apparatuses like the horse and the box. Physical Plant helped me to make jump ropes out of window cords. Students would use ropes to gain arm strength and body control.” A long-term fundraising effort that had started in 1919 was realized in 1951 when a gymnasium was built. The Florence Matilda Read Health and Recreation Building was significant not only because a dream had been realized but also because of the opportunities that now became available for the women at Spelman, who had access to recreational facilities that were denied to the African American community in general.

Bit of Wisdom: Naming the Gymnasium for Miss Simon

I am humbled. I'm not sure that it was the right thing to do. I just want it to be understood what part of the building is named after me. Read Hall is not being re-named for me. I appreciate the people who did this honor.

In 1957, Miss Nellie Randall, the chair of the Physical Education Department, organized sports teams. Spelman students competed against the other Atlanta University Center Colleges and Georgia Tech, Agnes Scott and the girls’ teams of colleges that played Morehouse.” Miss Simon pointed out that Read Hall was not built for competition or big games. “It was built so that each girl could have access to physical education. The sports were to be competition between classes, a congenial competition. The goal was to enhance the girl, help girls be with each other and like each other – not fighting the other sisters. The thought was that if they played together then they could learn together.”

Miss Simon summarized her experience at Spelman as an ongoing relationship with the students. “I worked. I was dependable. People saw me at Read Hall. I rarely went to lunch. The students knew me and knew that I would be there.” Even now, she continues to support the students who did not know her as a faculty member. She recently attended the Physical Education Awards Banquet at Paschal’s. Miss Simon was pleased that the students had excelled in team sports such as track and golf. She was impressed that there was a separate teacher for each sport, observing, “most of them are men.”

Bit of Wisdom: Loyalty to Spelman

I was loyal because Spelman gave me an opportunity. I was not trained for physical education. I was a biology major; Spelman allowed me to stay at

home while I cared for my mother. I don't just go back to my experience at Spelman. I am loyal because of the beginning of Spelman. I believed in it from the beginning, back to the beginning of Spelman.

Although Miss Simon retired from Spelman in 1979, she continues to be involved in the life of Spelman. You can find her at most of the programs at Spelman as well as Alumnae Association events – or at just about any time in between. She has become the conscience, the unofficial historian and the teacher of “common sense” to whoever listens. In retirement, Miss Simon is active with the First Congregational Church and continues to teach Sunday school. She works as a volunteer with the Community Friendship organization that helps those who have mental problems to get back into the job market. She volunteers at the Library Gift Shop and at the Compeer organization where she is a friend to mentally ill people. Why does she volunteer? Because “it is people and there is a need. I might engage someone, embrace them in some way. Part of the desire is my interest in them.”

Not only is Miss Simon committed to her work at Spelman and volunteer organizations, she also has her own personal extracurricular interests. “I am interested in preservation, especially parks. I read about what they plan to do about land in the city. I have a lot of magazine subscriptions, especially in science.

Bit of Wisdom: Longevity

I am fortunate to be able to walk to the door.

Miss Simon never married. As the only girl in the family, she cared for her mother until her death in 1953. “It occupied my life.” Miss Simon realizes that we have choices in life and “this was my desire, not a plight.” After 92 years of living her life, Miss Simon continues to grow from her experiences. “The driving force in my life is the regard for the people that came before me. They set the standard of quality and I tried to perform the very best that I could. I tried to maintain that standard. . . . All that has happened made me know that I am blessed to have the opportunity to do what I did.

One can see how her layers of wisdom were unraveled, illuminated through close inspection and then finally placed in Miss Simon’s “lesson-learned experience box” of her life. According to Miss Simon’s philosophy, we can all become wise. Just keep living. •

PATRICIA GRAHAM JOHNSON, C’73, is a frequent contributing writer for the *Spelman Messenger*. In addition, she works on special assignments for the Spelman College archives.



Miss Marguerite Simon at the groundbreaking of Read Hall in 1950.

Photo: Spelman Archives

HOLLYWOOD WISE

Spelman's Own Turn the Spotlight on Art, Fame, Commerce and Staying Sane While Thriving in Tinseltown

BY TARESSA STOVALL

Lights. Camera. Action. Spelman women are making big strides and leaving indelible marks on the Hollywood entertainment industry, notorious for its obsession with eternal youth, shallow race/gender stereotypes and narrowly defined anorexic Euro-beauty. Against the odds, they are walking the tightrope to balance their personal dreams with the need to pay bills, juggling the demands and rewards of work and family and *still* managing to stand for quality in a world that demands constant compromise.

A half dozen of Spelman's brightest entertainment stars bared their souls about their dreams, struggles, triumphs, heartbreaks and lessons learned. They are wonderfully versatile, making their mark as actors, writers, directors, producers, journalists, talk show hosts and child stars. Undaunted by limited options for African American actors, particularly women, they are creating their own opportunities. Driven by vision, faith, passion, they share an unwavering belief that they are destined to reach their goals and make a positive difference. And they fight hard to maintain courage and dignity in a land of illusion, bringing true Spelman substance and style to the Hollywood hype machine.

Kathleen McGhee-Anderson, C'72, LaTanya Richardson, C'72, Iris Little-Thomas, C'79, Rolonda Watts, C'80, Shaun Robinson, C'84, and Keshia Knight Pulliam, C'01 came to Spelman College from many places in varied times. While their paths are as diverse as their talents, all agree that their Spelman education and experience provided an incomparable foundation for success. It was this foundation, they say, that has made it possible for them to fulfill their purpose, maintain their sanity, hone their craft, polish their gifts and acquire a great deal of potent wisdom along the way.

Kathleen McGhee-Anderson, C'72
Producer/Writer/Director

"I'm a storyteller by nature," says Kathleen McGhee-Anderson, C'72, whose career has taken her from an English major/math minor at Spelman to serving as executive producer/writer in the fifth and final season of *Soul Food*, television's longest-running African American drama.

After graduating *cum laude* from Spelman (where she earned her stripes onstage in the Spelman-Morehouse Players), she received an MFA in film directing from Columbia University's School of Fine Arts, then worked as a film editor for ABC in Washington, D.C. and Los Angeles, cutting news and documentaries. She also taught film at Howard University.

The Detroit native wanted to work in the Industry, but wasn't sure how to break in. After marrying actor/singer Carl Anderson (best known for his long-running definitive portrayal of Judas in the musical stage sensation "Jesus Christ, Superstar"), McGhee-Anderson moved to Los Angeles. "I was still trying to figure out how to break into film," she says. "The film and television industries didn't overlap then as they do now."

In 1979, "the business was opening up to minority writers" and she was accepted into the Warner Brothers Minority Writers Workshop in 1979, where she learned to write for both television and film. Wanting to help create opportunities for her talented husband, she created a script for *Little House on the Prairie* that included a part for him. "Someone gave the script to Michael Landon [star and producer of the series], who gave me my first break. That made it easier to get other work."

Soon, she was writing for episodes of *Benson*, *Webster*, *Charles in Charge*, *227*, *Gimme a Break*, and *The Cosby Show*. She and Anderson divorced and with a son in high school, McGhee-Anderson opted for steadier television staff jobs, writing her own plays, feature films and long-form dramas on the side. "So many people in the Industry have to do something else while working toward their goal. The circuitous route sometimes leads to where we need to be."

Her first television staff job was with the series *Amen*. She wrote a half-hour PBS show called "The Righteous Apples" and worked as supervising producer on *Moe's World*, *Matt Waters*, *South Central*, *413 Hope Street* and *Touched by an Angel*, as well as consulting producer for *Any Day Now* and *Soul Food*.

Ever focused on telling stories, she has had several screenplays and theatrical plays produced, garnering awards and acclaim along the way. Her career, she says, has been interesting, fun and challenging — but not without frustration. "The door was and is still opened wider for us as African Americans to do comedy than drama. My com-



Photo: WifordHammond

mitment is to try to see another quality Black drama on the air with our characters and our stories."

Rooted in that commitment, McGhee-Anderson reflects upon the lessons she has learned working behind the scenes. "You write to become a writer, and you rewrite to become a better writer. If you want to win, you have to keep doing it. I remember once feeling very discouraged and saying to my ex-husband, Carl, that I thought I'd have achieved this or that by now. And he said, 'you're not dead yet.' There's no deadline that says you have to achieve anything by a certain date. If you're passionate about your art, someone will appreciate it."

She is candid about America's obsession with fame. "What I've learned from being in the land of the famous is that those people who are truly at peace are past the fame. Fame is not the reward. It's the by-product that often keeps you from doing what you want to do. With creativity, the *process* is the reward. You'd better love the *doing* of what you're doing, because it's not the end result that brings you the day-to-day satisfaction you need to make you happy. The end point feels good, but it's not the hit show, the Tony, the Oscar, the commercial success. If you aren't in love with the process, a hit show or award won't make your life better."

In an industry built on collaboration, "you can only succeed by connecting," she says. "You have to help others

"You have to help others to achieve their goals and, at the same time, you're gaining something from learning and passing on what you know."

KATHLEEN MCGHEE-ANDERSON, C'72

to achieve their goals and, at the same time, you're gaining something from learning and passing on what you know. This opens you up to learning new things." McGhee-Anderson says she keeps in touch with her Spelman sisters in the business.

She tells the story of how she had dreamt for years of a safe, pastoral place, not knowing what that place was. When she brought her son, Khalil, to his first year at Morehouse, she went to see Bessie Strong "and I looked out upon the green and it hit me that this was the scene I had dreamed of for so long without realizing what it was. It hit me that I had spent years in a safe haven and heaven here at Spelman College."

Her Spelman experience fortified her for the battles of Tinseltown. "Spelman validated who I was as an African American woman in a world where there were no sisters doing what I do now. What Spelman told me, told us, is that we could do anything we wanted to do, that we were in the world to achieve. Our instructors encouraged and affirmed us, and that really sustained me.

"We are all important to the Spelman community – you are so seen and heard – and that reinforcement gave me a launching pad that that took me through many years until I was successful. I can't imagine having gone to a better place."

LaTanya Richardson, C'74 Actor/Producer/Director

LaTanya Richardson met her professional destiny and the love of her life at Spelman College. The Atlanta native first came to campus at age 14 with her teacher, the great actress, Georgia Allen, as part of Spelman's Summer Theater program. She stayed through undergraduate school, and now is a Spelman Trustee, never straying far from the stage.

It was in the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Fine Arts building that Richardson first met her lifelong love, Samuel L. Jackson (yes, the famed actor – more on that in a minute), the Morehouse man to whom she has been married for 24 years and the father of their daughter, Zoë.

Growing up, Richardson wanted to be a doctor, "because I liked fixing things." But once I started acting in high school (and once I won an award), that was it, I was hooked." She went to Spelman on an academic scholarship and continued working under the late Dr. Baldwin Burroughs. "It was," she said, "a very privileged time." The Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) was in residence at Spelman, and I was able to observe many gifted actors and be a part of the very exciting post-Civil Rights/Black Power time in Atlanta."

Spelman drama majors were required to be well-rounded. "We had to learn a little of everything – how to build a set, how to light a stage, costumes, etc. I got a firm foundation from studying with great teachers – Dr. Burroughs, Luis Maza, Dr. Carlton and Barbara Mollette, Joan Lewis, Andrea Frye – the list is pretty long. We learned so much."

The spirited powerhouse who today is often identified first as "Samuel L. Jackson's wife" was, in reality, the first star thespian in the family. "Anyone who knows Sam and LaTanya knows that for years it was she in the limelight," says fellow Spelmanite actor and longtime friend, Iris Little-Thomas. Richardson's ascension into that limelight came in the form of the most powerful role in the work that defined African American theater in the late 1970s, *The Lady in Red* in Ntozake Shange's landmark choreopoem, *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*, which was a Broadway sensation.

Launching the New York Shakespeare Festival's Broadway national tour of *For Colored Girls*. . . , Richardson traveled the country as the dramatic backbone of the production. Despite competition from the hugely successful musical, *A Chorus Line*, *For Colored Girls*. . . won an award for the most critically acclaimed, highest-grossing show on tour that year. "*For Colored Girls*. . . changed my life; I count it as a great artistic accomplishment," she says. Balancing acclaim with responsibility, the cast of *For Colored Girls*. . . visited police departments, community orga-



LaTanya Richardson on the red carpet with husband Samuel L. Jackson.

Photo courtesy of LaTanya Richardson

nizations, social clubs and prisons in each community they visited during the national tour. Richardson says she misses that kind of commitment.

After Richardson and Jackson had lived together for a decade, the couple married in 1980, as he was building his acting career. "I was the actress," she says. "I thought it would be me, you know? He'd followed me to New York. I was so full of myself."

During the late 1980s, she made guest appearances on television shows shot in New York. She made her feature film debut in *Hangin' with the Homeboys* in 1991, and acted in *The Super* and *Fried Green Tomatoes* that same year.

"Being married to an actor," she says, is "cool because you can bring the work home and work on it." The couple moved to Los Angeles in 1992 for her role in *Frannie's Turn*, a short-lived series on CBS. "I came out here a working actress," she says, but they intended to return to New York. Once her series was cancelled, Jackson, who had won the Palm D'Or at Cannes for *Jungle Fever* started working a lot. His agents wouldn't let him leave, so they stayed. Meanwhile, Richardson appeared in the films *Juice* and *Malcolm X* in 1992. With his career on the fast track, Jackson told Richardson that she didn't have to work, she could focus on rearing their daughter. "I said, 'It's not about the money. What am I doing about my life, my craft and the art I still want to make?'" she recalls.

After searching her soul, Richardson "decided to be happy and content as a wife and mother." In 1992, she became "super-mom" to Zoë, who was then 10, put her career on hold and told her husband, "Go ahead. Fly. Do whatever it is that you can do."

And in the eyes of the Industry, she became a co-star to her leading man. "It's a very humbling experience, being the wife of a movie star," she admits. "Most people in California know me as Mrs. Jackson. To this day, there are still people who ask what I do, or say, 'I didn't know you acted.'"

While focusing on her daughter, home and philanthropy, Richardson appeared in such films as *Sleepless in Seattle*, *Lorenzo's Oil*, *When a Man Loves a Woman*, *Losing Isaiah*, *U.S. Marshalls* and, more recently, *The Fighting Temptations* and the HBO film, *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge*. The *New York Times* said she was "brilliant" in HBO's *Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slaves' Narratives*. She was in demand as a guest star on several TV series including *NYPD Blue*, *Homicide*, *Chicago Hope*, *Law and Order*, *Sesame Street*, *Ally McBeal* and *Judging Amy*, and she co-starred with Alan Arkin for two seasons in Sidney Lumet's critically acclaimed series, *100 Centre Street*.

"California and the whole movie industry are very different from the New York theater world," she muses. The physical constrictions of Hollywood have been tough. An

ongoing issue, she says, is "what you look like, and how skinny and funny you are. Everybody thinks, well look at Whoopi and Mo'Nique; they've made it and they're not skinny. But they're comedians. When I was in New York doing theater, we felt it was more about the work and who was best suited to do the work. Here it's about a look. It does something to the heart and the mind."

With Zoë grown (and recently graduated from Vassar College), Richardson can return to putting her own passion front and center. "I have to have my own thing because I have to be at peace with the work I'm doing." She will continue acting while creating projects through her film company, Bushwazee Productions, including a feature film with a hip-hop theme and an hour-long drama for UPN. "I am learning from these children, the hip-hop generation, and how they just got up and did it." She made her directorial debut with the Lifetime film, *Hairstory*.

Richardson is very involved in church, Bible study and civic organizations. She is preparing to direct a benefit for Artists for a New South Africa in the fall. It is her faith, she says, that has kept her both grounded and soaring through the challenges of career, parenting and marriage to a high-profile celebrity. It even kept her sane during Jackson's well-publicized bout with drug addiction. "You have to be very loving, forgiving and kind. When it's tough, I say 'God, HELP!' I pray for God's vision and will. I can't do it alone. Marriage has to be a spiritual journey and it's one I have to make every day. I have to do it from the teachings of Christ. Otherwise, this is not an easy thing, living with a man. There is something God has allowed me to see and feel in my husband's heart that has kept me in it. It has spoken and it did not lie."

Her husband, she says, is "very kind. He tells me to do whatever I want to do. He is my 'love-love, my everything love.'" They are friends as well as soul mates, and co-stars in life. One career highlight, she says, was when she and Jackson played opposing attorneys in the made-for-TV movie, *Losing Isaiah*, with Halle Berry and Jessica Lange.

Above all, Hollywood has taught her "that fame is elusive, and it doesn't always have anything to do with a person's talent. So 'to thine own self be true.'" What upsets her most is that "celebrity is now a vocation. I'm not hating those who are seeking that or who enjoy their celebrity. It's just that fame used to be something that came along with having done something well." Now, she laments that fame, rather than art or the quality of art, is more important.

Along with acting, writing, directing and producing, Richardson serves on several boards, including Spelman's. "It is a joy," she says, "to be able to give back. Because of Spelman College, I am the woman who dares to be all I can be, because I was given the challenge at Spelman and taught how to get to it. Everyone who graduates with a

Above all, Hollywood has taught her "that fame is elusive, and it doesn't always have anything to do with a person's talent. So 'to thine own self be true.'"

LA TANYA RICHARDSON, C'74

degree from Spelman has a can-do attitude. I got the basic tenets of success from Spelman; I still stand on them. If you don't know, let me tell you what that means.

"Because I went to Spelman instead of, say, Yale, I got to work center-stage instead of sitting on the sidelines while someone else was the main event. Thank God for Spelman; may it continue to grow."

Iris Little-Thomas, C'79 Actor

Growing up in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Iris Little longed to be a sportscaster. "I loved Howard Cosell; he made me enjoy any sport, and I wanted to take people into any sport and let them have a good time."

While visiting her older brother, a Morehouse man, during Homecoming, Little-Thomas was awed by "the most incredible bouquet of African American people I had ever seen" and fell in love with the Atlanta University Center. Soon she was at Spelman, majoring in drama, with a broadcast minor at Clark College.

She honed her talents alongside up-and-comers Bill Nunn and Denise Mickleberry, C'73, now acclaimed actors in their own right, and Kenny Leon, founder of True Colors Theater Company and director of the recent Broadway hit, *A Raisin in the Sun*, which featured Sean P. Diddy Combs and garnered a landmark Tony Award for star Phylicia Rashad.

Little-Thomas recalls the influence of renowned playwright/director Walter Dallas (founder of Philadelphia's New Freedom Theater) who cast her as Nina in an all-

Black production of Chekov's *The Seagull*. She hit her stride with the starring role in the musical *Hello, Dolly!* "It was such a wonderful journey," Little-Thomas says, "to tell people the story, to learn how to tell the truth of what a character was doing or where they were going."

The Spelman experience helped her flourish. "The undergraduate environment was amazing. You could live in an artistic community and learn the craft." During Little-Thomas' senior year, Spelman theater legend LaTanya Richardson conducted a workshop on campus. The two bonded right away. "We kept in touch and she mentored me. My first union play after college was in the first Black mainstage production of 'For Colored Girls...'" at Atlanta's Alliance Theater. Walter Dallas directed, and Richardson reprised her role as the woman in red. Little-Thomas was, she says, "the baby in the production." Her dream of broadcasting forgotten, her acting career was truly "on and crackin'" after that." She appeared in many of fellow Spelmanite Pearl Cleage's plays.

In 1986, she left Atlanta for New York where she lived with Richardson and her family until she got married. There, she started working with the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC), "sitting in the middle of Black theater history." She traveled the country building her acting resume, honing her craft and earning a reputation as an actor who was invited back to work by directors who liked her style and work ethic. "A lot of my business is repeat business. A good impression will make room for you every time."

Her film career began in 1980, with credits that include *Maid in America*, *Malcolm X*, *Above the Rim* (for which young people still stop her on the street), *Drop Squad*, *Girlfight* and *Shadowboxer*. She fondly recalls having "the glorious honor of playing Miss Rosa Parks" in the HBO movie *Boycott*. Most recently, she appeared in the HBO film *Everyday People*.

The scene-stealing actor has enjoyed repeat roles on *Law and Order*, often playing a judge, and on *Soul Food* (as character Damon Carter's stepmother). One challenge

"A lot of my business is repeat business. A good impression will make room for you every time."

IRIS LITTLE-THOMAS, C'79



Photo courtesy of Iris Little-Thomas



Photo: Julie Yarbrough

Iris Little-Thomas honored as former Miss Maroon & White at Homecoming 2004.

she faces is that, with light skin and long hair, people often mistake her for races and nationalities other than African American. “I’m trying to convince agents to let me audition for any role. People have preconceived notions of what a Black woman looks and sounds like,” she says, “and I don’t always fit those notions.” Still, she says, she’s gotten a lot of opportunities because her agents gave her a chance.

Real opportunity comes, she says, from excellence. “You’ve got to study the craft, hone your craft. You have to be well-read, be able to speak, to be able to conduct yourself with all kinds of people.”

Part of that means staying sober in an industry where behind-the-scene substance abuse is rampant. “In a work environment, you want to be in complete control of your instrument at all times. Your reputation will be based upon the work you have done.”

Staying centered, while often difficult, is essential. “This business can take you down. You’d better know who you are.” Like her friend LaTanya Richardson, Little-Thomas stays rooted in family and faith. “I have a great family; a good support system. I am rooted in Christ; He has opened doors and made a way for me.” Show business is, for her, “the greatest ministry; it’s such an opportunity to touch a life in a hopeless, dying world.”

With a young son and daughter, Little-Thomas acted part-time, keeping her career “on low simmer” for a decade. Now that her children are older, she is rekindling her ambition to act full-time. “It’s my joy to touch people’s lives through acting,” she says. “I’ve had a healthy family life and a full life to draw from and that fuels my being able to tell a story.”

Her advice to aspiring actors is clear. “First, you have to know yourself and be grounded in who you are and what your purpose is, why you are there and what you are doing. Second, it’s important for you to be able to do something besides act. Find a mentor; hook up with somebody running in the same direction. Don’t settle for second best,” she adds, “and don’t step on people.”

“You have to have a backup plan, to be able to humble yourself and make an honest dollar. The more skills you have, the more options you have to make money. Make sure that you have health insurance – that’s very important. And save your money!”

Standing at the crossroads of mid-life and contemplating the exciting possibilities ahead, Little-Thomas culls the wisdom and power of her Spelman education. “At Spelman, I felt so empowered. I was able to try my wings in a safe, loving community. I came out with a clue. I came out marinated in the beauty of possibilities as an African American woman and a strong sense of history. I had been exposed to so much that I could fit in anywhere with anyone in any circumstance. I came out equipped for life!”

Rolonda Watts, C’80 Actor/Journalist/Talk Show Host

Rolonda Watts took the road less traveled to acting success. Always practical, she minored in English “as a backup plan,” while majoring in theater arts at Spelman. “At 17, I’d just gotten to the drama department and I was in *Guys and Dolls*, *Cabaret*, and *Pippin*.”

Bitten by the theater bug, she graduated from Spelman, *magna cum laude*, after three years and went to New York to try her luck on Broadway. After one theatrical cattle call in 1980, “before Bill Cosby and Spike Lee were doing their thing,” she found she didn’t have the stomach for repeated rejections and went to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where she earned a master of science degree and served as president of Sigma Delta Chi, the national journalists’ society.

With the requisite looks, brains, charisma and talent, Watts made a name as a reporter and anchorwoman, spending a decade in local news around the country, most notably on WNBC-TV and WABC-TV in New York, where she received an Emmy nomination for live spot news coverage of a deadly train crash. She also negotiated a hostage situation.

Next, she co-hosted the talk show, *Attitudes* (on the Lifetime television network), which was nominated for a Cable ACE Award. From there, she moved to *Inside Edition* in 1992. Nine months into that show, she was offered a show of her own, the talk show, *The Rolonda Show*, a hit that was internationally syndicated from 1993–1998. She was the supervising producer and one of the owners of the



Rolonda Watts hosted President Beverly Daniel Tatum’s fundraising birthday party, “ALIVE @ 50 with Stars on the Rise,” during Homecoming 2004.

“I came to Hollywood in my late 30s. When the talk show was over, it was the first time in many years that I was free of a contract, and I had money in the bank, so I decided to try something new.”

ROLONDA WATTS, C’80

show. After four successful years with the talk show, she returned to her acting, her first love.

“I came to Hollywood in my late 30s. When the talk show was over, it was the first time in many years that I was free of a contract, and I had money in the bank, so I decided to try something new. She found some work — a part on *Dawson’s Creek*, but overall, “if you weren’t 18 to 22 years old, or a skinny, white male, it was hard.”

Part of Watts’ success, however, has been her personal theme, appearing in her speeches, “turning nos into yesses be the key to your successes.” She says she figured that if Hollywood was going to cater to a young crowd, all of the young characters would need parents, teachers, doctors, attorneys, judges, cops and counselors. “And I’ve played all of them,” she says. She has had recurring roles on *Days of Our Lives* and *The Bold and the Beautiful*, playing attorneys. “In real life, I’m not a mama,” she laughs, “but I play one on TV,” most recently as the mother of *American Idol* star Tamyra Gray on *Boston Public*. Other television roles include parts in *Sister, Sister*, *The Jamie Foxx Show*, *The Steve Harvey Show*, *The West Wing*, *The Division*, *The District* and *New York Undercover*.

She has appeared in several films including *Girl 6*, *The Stupids*, *Meet Wally Sparks*, *Best Actress*, and *Maniac Magee*.

Reflecting on the road she traveled from her childhood in Winston-Salem, North Carolina to Spelman, TV success and acting in Hollywood, Watts balances gratitude and perspective. “Here I am, six years after the talk show ended, working in my chosen field. I have a great resume. It’s harder than anything I’ve ever done.”

Time, often viewed as the enemy of those in front of the camera, is something she sees as an advantage. “I’m glad I came out here in my late 30s, at a time when I’d learned not to take things personally. It’s not about looking at someone else getting a part you wanted and asking ‘what’s wrong with me?’ The rejection is hard, but it’s so subjective, never personal. It just means that the part is not right for you.”

She draws strength from those who came before. “I knew it would be tough. I look at the women and men who came before us, who didn’t have the opportunities I had. Times were much worse for them, and they still endured and did it. If Sidney Poitier and Dorothy Dandridge could do what they did, I knew I could come out here and do a sitcom.”

It is essential to stay optimistic and versatile, she says. “After doing two talk shows a day, three days a week, I had to get used to the downtime” between projects. To fill that time, she writes and is currently crafting a novel. “So much goes on in Hollywood beyond what you see,” she says. To maximize her options, Watts takes acting and writing workshops, and is producing works for herself and others.

“You’ve got to stay in the game, on the field. I have a company, Watts Works Productions, and right now I’m co-executive producing and developing a daytime talk show with Forest Whitaker, the acclaimed actor/director, who has directed such feature films as *Waiting to Exhale*, *Hope Floats* and the upcoming *First Daughter*. Watts also has an important role in actor/comic D.L. Hughley’s breakout dramatic film, *Rikers*, about the notorious island prison. With her hands in many pots, Watts is busy, excited and at the top of her game.

Her advice to art majors? “Get a backup plan. Do a double major. I knew I wouldn’t do just one thing; I knew the discipline it took to be a writer and an actor, so I started off being a double major, then I got my master’s in journalism.” She loves young people and would one day like to teach. “One thing I like about talk shows is being able to improve young people’s minds.”

Watts says that family ties, spirituality and faith keep her stable and strong. “I know the Creator has a plan specifically for me, and I can’t look at what others are doing. I’m here for a specific purpose. I walk by faith, not by sight.”

That faith has paid off; along with her great resume. She was honored with an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Winston-Salem University back home. And she maintains a strong Spelman connection with other alumnae in the business. “Every year, I emcee the California chapter of the NAASC brunch; we raise scholarship money. Wherever I go, I find a Spelman sister.”

The woman whose face once graced the cover of the Spelman College admissions catalogue credits the institution that nurtured her many talents and aspirations. “Spelman taught me I could do anything in the world I wanted to do. In fact,” she laughs, “Spelman created this monster. I believed what they told me — that dreams could come true.”

Shaun Robinson, C’84
Weekend Co-Anchor and Correspondent,
Access Hollywood

Emmy award-winning reporter Shaun Robinson fixed her eye on the prize at a young age and has not veered from her early vision. “I wanted to be in news ever since I was little,” she recalls. Growing up in the Motor City, she wanted to be just like Beverly Payne, one of the first female anchors in Detroit: “I would watch her every night. She was so smart.”

While in high school, Shaun joined an acting troupe and currently enjoys guest appearances on television shows and movies, but her main goal has always been to be a reporter on a national entertainment show.

After hearing “so many wonderful things about Spel-

man,” it seemed a natural launching pad for her ambitious dreams. She entered in 1980 as an English major with a minor in mass communications and wasted no time gaining the experience she needed to complement her academic studies. “While at Spelman, I hosted two shows on a small, local cable station. The summer before graduation, I interned at a small, independent station in Detroit, working for free to learn the ropes, learn how to report and write.” She was hired there as a full-time reporter and anchor.

Back home in Detroit, Robinson hosted a talk show called *Strictly Speaking*. From there, she snagged a job at the ABC affiliate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as a medical reporter. She soon began hosting a talk show called *Milwaukee’s Talking* and also took on duties as the weekend anchor. Then she was off to Austin, Texas, as the five o’clock anchor and reporter for the CBS affiliate where she interviewed death row inmates at the notorious Huntsville Prison and won an American Women in Radio and Television award for her series profiling powerful women in Austin. A year and a half later, she was in Miami working for the FOX affiliate as morning and noon anchor. There, she anchored coverage of the Clinton impeachment hearings and of Hurricane George, which devastated the Florida Keys, and traveled to Oklahoma City to profile survivors of the Oklahoma City Bombing.

Despite her acclaimed skills and impressive credentials, Robinson met many challenges on the road to a national gig. “Agents were eager to represent me for a local news job, but felt that there were so few national entertainment shows, they would advise me not to pursue such a position.”

Her response? “I was not going to let anybody define what I could or could not do.” Her perseverance finally paid off when *Access Hollywood* saw a tape of her anchoring and reporting from Miami and flew her in for an interview.

Access Hollywood, currently in its eighth season, airs nationwide. Robinson wakes each day giving thanks for the chance to do what she loves most: interview and profile some of the entertainers she most admires. She has covered the red carpet for the Oscars, Golden Globes, Emmys and Grammy Awards and co-hosted the pre-shows for both the 2002 Golden Globes and the 2003 Academy Awards. She just flew to Monte Carlo as a guest of the Prince of Monaco to cover its annual Television Festival. Shaun has also won an Emmy for her coverage of the National Black Sports and Entertainment Hall of Fame Awards Show.

One of the best parts of her very glamorous but hectic job is chatting with entertainment icons. “I have a very fun, cool job,” she says. “I don’t get much sympathy when working overtime means interviewing Denzel Washington.” For the record, she says that the two-time Oscar-winning heartthrob “is laid back; he really puts you at ease.”

“I was not going to let anybody define what I could or could not do.”

SHAUN ROBINSON, C’84



Shaun Robinson appeared in the August 2004 issue of Jet Magazine with a group attending the American Black Film Festival’s Film Life Movie Awards.



Photo: Brad Smith



Photo: Brad Smith

Shaun Robinson hosted Blue Note Theatre at Reunion 2004.

Will Smith, “who I just adore, even anchored the show with me to promote *Bad Boys 2*.” While she hobnobs with the world’s most famous faces on a regular basis, “Every once in a while I get a real surprise,” she admits.

During a recent interview with Prince (the musician, not the one in Monaco), she discovered that while he is very reserved on camera, “Off camera, he’s very funny, very charming, and sometimes he’ll let you see a little bit of the ‘hood.”

An interview with Bill Cosby backstage at the Playboy Jazz Festival was memorable, she says, because America’s favorite dad is “laid-back, very cool, very concerned about others. Somebody had brought him some sweet potato pie and he said to me, ‘Hey, Spelman,’ — that’s what he called me all day — ‘come here and taste this pie.’ And he gave me a slice.”

Now that she has reached one pinnacle of success, Robinson still does a little acting. She has played an anchor in such films as *Bruce Almighty*, *Dr. Doolittle II* and *America’s Sweetheart*, as well as television shows like *Charmed*, *The Parkers* and *Half & Half* and was actually animated on *The Proud Family*. While such opportunities are an actor’s dream, she says, Robinson has no plans to quit her day job. “Hollywood is a tough place. I have a lot of friends who are actors and I see how much they struggle. Somebody’s in one moment and out the next.”

The lack of onscreen color is an ongoing concern. “I see so many Hollywood movies and I say, ‘where is the diversity?’ Why can’t my actress friends play leads opposite Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt in a movie?”

Common sense keeps her grounded amid the glitter and frustration. “Even though I have a fun, glamorous job, I haven’t lost sight of the fact that we’re really all the same, just trying to make our way in the world.”

Her advice to those craving careers in show biz? “The climate is so different today. Reality shows are the wave at the moment. Learn everything you can about the business — both in front of and behind the camera. Learn how to write and produce. You never know what is going to get you in the door. And always remember the struggles that those before you made that allowed you to have the opportunities that you enjoy. And always be willing to help someone else.”

To recharge, Robinson visits family back home where she can leave the makeup and fancy hairstyles behind. “I was blessed to have wonderful role models growing up, and I feel so good when I get back to my peeps.”

Spelman further fortified that sustenance, Robinson says. “Spelman reinforced the belief that we as African Americans are a proud race and we belong anywhere we want to be. As long as we work hard and keep our eyes on the prize, we can continue that legacy.”

Keshia Knight Pulliam, C’01 Actor

The first time Keshia Knight Pulliam came to Spelman was in 1987. She was eight years old, and an episode of the top-rated *Cosby Show* was being filmed on campus in Sisters Chapel. “I saw all these beautiful African American women and I said, ‘Wow! I’m going to Spelman College.’”

Though her father steered her toward the (mainstream) Ivy League schools, the young woman who had grown up as America’s favorite baby sister, Rudy, didn’t waver from her early pledge. Spelman was the only school she applied to; she got in on early admission, majoring in sociology with a concentration in theater and film at Clark Atlanta University.

On the small campus of exceptional young Black women, Knight Pulliam stood out. Because everyone knew her face and had grown up with her in their living rooms, they felt they knew her as a person. Of course, it was an eternally cherubic one-dimensional Rudy they knew, not the flesh and blood three-dimensional Keshia. And unlike her classmates who were just starting the process of clarifying their ambitions and realizing their professional dreams, she had scaled the heights of mega-stardom at a very early age.

“I had some drama at Spelman,” she admits. “A lot of people had preconceived notions about me. I had incidents where people walked into the dorm, knocking on the door to my room, to girls who were haters and jealous.” She credits Dean Alwood, dean of students during Keshia’s first year, for helping her over the hurdles. “But the good far outweighed the annoying,” she says, and “I walked away with a fabulous education.”

She has three younger brothers, one a senior at Morehouse. “He says I don’t understand the magnitude of what I have achieved.” The first time it hit her, she says, was “sitting in a sociology class hearing about how the *Cosby Show* shaped society.”

Knight Pulliam chose sociology because “society relates to film; your job as an actor is to bring the real-life dynamics.” Her studies included a focus on images of African American women in “Blaxploitation” films. “I’m interested in the study of the evolution of African American women in film.” She rounded out her campus experience by pledging Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

While at Spelman, Knight Pulliam was offered acting opportunities, but she chose to focus on her studies and personal growth. Overall, college “makes you a stronger person in depending on yourself and knowing what you’re capable of. It’s empowering; you’re away from your parents and what is familiar, and you have to navigate through all of these different obstacles, and you come out feeling, ‘If I can do this, there’s not much I can’t do.’”



Photo courtesy of Keshia Knight Pulliam

Keshia Knight Pulliam donated her \$37,000 winnings on *Weakest Link* to Spelman.

After graduating in 2001, Knight Pulliam took some time off. Education, she says, “gives you perspective. A lot of acting is about having perspective and bringing life experience to the screen, and the more you have, it helps you become that much better of an actor. More than anything, it gives you the security of knowing ‘if I decide to do something else, I can; this isn’t the only thing I’m good at.’”

She has stayed grounded thanks to a strong belief in God and a close-knit family. “They wouldn’t let me go Hollywood.” Thanks to them, she says she stays “down-to-earth and very humble.”

Prior to attending Spelman, Knight Pulliam appeared in several television and theatrical films including *The Little Match Girl*, *Polly* and *Polly: Comin’ Home*, *The Last Dragon* and *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*. She is back in front of the camera, with guest appearances on such television shows as *Weakest Link* and *Fear Factor* and *The Mole*. In fact she donated her \$37,000 *Weakest Link* earnings to Spelman.

More recently, she has acted in *What About Your Friends: Weekend Getaway* and *Motives ‘04*, and she graced rapper Chingy’s video for the hit song, “One Call Away.” “I’ve been strategically selecting roles,” she explains, and one project she has enjoyed is the upcoming *Beauty Shop* with Queen Latifah, Alicia Silverstone, Alfre Woodward, Kevin Macon and Mira Sovari.

Her long-term goal for acting is to have “a diverse body of work. Like Halle has played so many different types of things. I’d love to do a period piece. Every role can be in a different time and a different space.”

She is also writing, with plans to direct and produce. At the heart of her growing endeavors is the career she began



at nine months old. “I’ve been in this business my whole life, 25 years, and I’m just taking my time. I love acting; it’s about the craft for me.”

Her biggest advice? “It’s wonderful to follow your dreams; I was in a very fortunate position. In following your dreams, you have to continue to go to school. Today, so many little kids want to be singers and entertainers. The competition is so stiff, you need an education to fall back on. You can get an education and follow your dreams on the side.” No matter what, she emphasizes, “Don’t abandon the education.”

As for acting, “do it because you love the craft. It’s not about the fame, the fortune, the notoriety. Stay humble. Stay grounded; it’s so important.” And to young people trying to find their way amid parental expectations she adds, “live for what’s going to make you happy.”

These are some, but not all, of the Spelman women brightening the entertainment industry with their gifts, and each stands on the shoulders of their Spelman sister, the late Esther Rolle, ‘C42, best known for playing the strong-willed mother Florida on the hit 1970s sitcom *Good Times*. Rolle, whose social conscience earned her a reputation as a “remarkable actress with a cause and a woman of her convictions” shone even as an onscreen maid – a role that epitomized the limited opportunities for even the most gifted African American actresses a few decades ago. She won an Emmy for one such role in the movie *Summer of My German Soldier*.

Rolle’s other film credits included *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Rosewood*, and *How to Make an American Quilt*” Though she passed away – from complications due to diabetes – in 1998 at age 78, Esther Rolle laid a great deal of the groundwork for her Spelman sisters to follow. It is because of such thespian pioneers, who imbued stereotypical roles with uncommon talent and grace, that Spelman women of stage and screen who walk in her footsteps are able to flourish and shine.

TARESSA STOVALL, co-editor of the anthology *PROVERBS FOR THE PEOPLE: Contemporary African-American Literature*, is an author and professor living in New Jersey.

She has stayed grounded thanks to a strong belief in God and a close-knit family. “They wouldn’t let me go Hollywood.”

KESHIA KNIGHT PULLIAM, C’01

Sister to Sister:

SPELMAN THE THREAD THAT BINDS SPIRIT ~ LEADERSHIP ~ SERVICE

For generations of women, Spelman has served as a resource of invaluable threads, connecting them to wholeness of spirit, effectual leadership and commitment to service. For some, these threads were first woven by prominent voices of wisdom heard in Sisters Chapel. For others, the unfolding fibers of character and duty are bound to experiences revealed in a classroom in Giles Hall or Tapley, words of encouragement spoken in a residence hall by a roommate or classmate, the passion ignited for a just cause during a 10K walk or marathon run, or the exhilaration of moments spent tutoring an elementary school student in the West End community which surrounds the Spelman gates. Yet, regardless of whether the time or the testimony finds us as a student or an alumna, Spelman, for each of us, is the thread that binds.

Throughout Founders Day and Reunion activities, and my ongoing interactions and correspondence with alumnae, I have collected an overwhelming amount of evidence that proves the connection between the Spelman mission to “develop the intellectual, ethical and leadership potential of its students” and the reality of the fulfillment of this assignment as witnessed through the actions and achievements of alumnae. Our case rests solidly in the facts that appear in this letter, and on the pages that subsequently follow. And as Spelman women do the awesome things that we do, in the ways that only we can do it, we engage the world, summoning it to be judges and jurors. And the world, in turn, comes to know Spelman and the women who are the products of this amazing educational experience.

During the 2004 Founders Day celebration, we recognized the spirit, leadership and service of 10 of our own during the Spelman Alumnae Achievement Awards hosted by Tiffany & Co. at Atlanta’s Phipps Plaza. A few weeks later, the Reunion Banquet and Blue Note Theatre provided a celebratory environment to honor our commitment as alumnae to being donors and volunteers. The 2004 Reunion classes competed in the category of philanthropy, with the **Golden Girl Class of 1954** receiving top honors for the

most significant Reunion class gift that ultimately totaled \$79,580 at the conclusion of the fiscal year. Collectively, the Reunion classes gave \$423,951. The class with the highest percentage of donor participation was the **Class of 1949**. The Reunion effort played a key role in our ability to surpass our ambitious 2003–2004 goals to achieve **\$1,017,000 in total giving and 21% donor participation** from alumnae. Additionally, the National Alumnae Association of Spelman College (NAASC) extended its highest awards to **Pearline Adamson Davis, C’58** (Hall of Fame), **Rose Harris Johnson, C’57** (Merit) and **Janet Lane Martin, C’72** (Merit).

The **Class of 2004** gave indication of the readiness of its members to join the alumnae ranks when they took on the challenge of conducting the **Senior Class Appreciation Campaign**, an effort designed to encourage senior gifts to the Annual Fund in honor of faculty, staff and family members who impacted their Spelman experience. As a result of this class effort, and the support of the NAASC through a challenge gift, the Class of 2004 established a **Senior Class Assistance Fund** as a source of financial assistance for members of the Class of 2005.

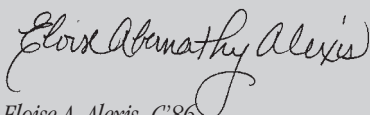
The Spelman legacy is often tied to family legacies, as is the case with our cherished affiliation with the Dobbs Family. **President Beverly Daniel Tatum** spent time with **Willie Dobbs Blackburn, C’31**, who at age 94 is one of six Dobbs sisters, all of whom attended Spelman. Also present during the visit was Mrs. Blackburn’s sister, **Dr. June Dobbs**

Butts, C’48, as well as her daughter, **Juliet Blackburn-Beamon, C’58**.

President Tatum, along with members of the Spelman College family, joined the Dobbs family at a ceremony in which **Mattiwilda Dobbs-Janzon, C’46**, was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame (see “Take Note!”).

These are just a few of the prevailing and intertwining threads of which the fine garments of the Spelman sisterhood are made. As the frequency and preeminence of our stories grow, blessed be our spirit, our leadership and our service – the Spelman threads that bind.

In the Spelman spirit,



*Eloise A. Alexis, C’86
Director of Alumnae Affairs and Annual Giving*



Eloise Alexis, C’86, Director of Alumnae Affairs and Annual Giving with Class of 1954 representative Ruby Handspike Clay.

Photo: Bud Smith

SPELMAN COLLEGE

**ALUMNAE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS
2004 RECIPIENTS**

ARTS & MEDIA

Margarethia G. Ellis, C'84
Founder & Publisher, Me Magazine for Women -
Macon, GA

Annie Jewell Moore, C'43
Fashion Designer & Owner, Ann Moore
Couturiere, Inc - Atlanta, GA

BUSINESS & LAW

Rita Benton Gibson, C'73
Program Director, Integral Properties, Carver
Homes Revitalization Project - Atlanta, GA

Marilyn "Penny" Jones Joseph, C'76
Director, Recruiting and Outreach Programs,
Panasonic/Matsushita Electric Corporation of
America
East Orange, NJ

CIVIC SERVICE

Ruby Handspike Clay, C'54
Community Servant/Leader and Retired
Educator - Lithonia, GA

Geneva Hood Watson-Dean, C'59
Educator and Community Activist - Brooklyn, NY

EDUCATION

Christine King Farris, C'48
Associate Professor and Director, Learning
Resource Center, Spelman College - Atlanta, GA

Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Ph.D., C'66
Anna Julia Cooper Professor of Women's Studies
and Director of the Women's Center, Spelman
College
Atlanta, GA

HEALTH & SCIENCES

Yolanda Wade Smith, M.D., C'90
Physician and Clinical Researcher, Rutgers
University Health Service - West Orange, NJ

Jacqueline Holloway Sulton, M.D., C'78
Principal Pediatric Physician and President &
CEO, The Sulton Pediatric Group, PC
Lithonia, GA



Rose Hams
Johnson, C'57,
NAASC Merit Award
recipient.

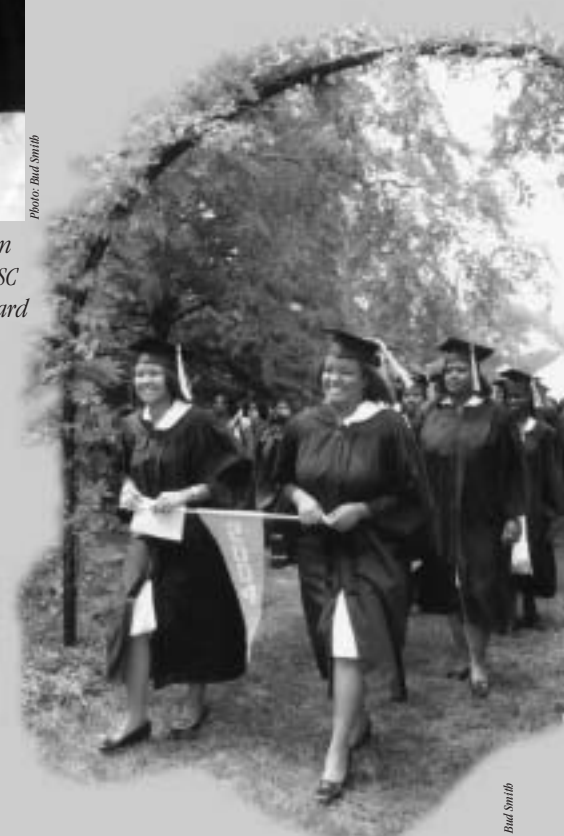
Pearline Adamson
Davis, C'58, NAASC
Hall of Fame Award
recipient.



NAASC President
(2002-2004) Rosa
King Kilpatrick, C'70
with Janet Lane
Martin, C'72, NAASC
Merit Award
recipient.



President Tatum and Willie
Dobbs Blackburn, C'31.



Golden Girl Class of 1954



Achievers 2004

1938

Dovey Johnson Roundtree

Personal: Celebrated her 90th birthday on April 17, 2004, at the Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina.

1941

Jenelsie Walden Holloway

Personal: Her sketch, Figure in Motion, was chosen as the signature piece for the first annual Illuminations: Artistic Memories Cocktail Party and Auction hosted by the Alzheimer's Association Atlanta Auxiliary. She was the subject of an article in the *Atlanta Daily World*, "Holloway's Work Benefits Alzheimer's Group."

Johnnie Hines Prothro

Personal: Honored by WXIA-TV with the 11 Alive Community Service Award in April. At age 78, Mrs. Prothro volunteers at the Midtown Assistance Center, the First Presbyterian Church, Project Open Hand and Meals on Wheels. She was the subject of an article in the *Atlanta Daily World*, "Retired Professor Honored with Community Service Award."

1943

Annie Moore

Professional: Produced a Fashion Design Exhibit, Timeless Fashion: A Woman Ahead of Her Time, on February 27, 2004, at the Music & Art Complex of Clark Atlanta University.

1944

Jeanne Spurlock

See Take Note!

1946

Ollivette Smith Allison

Personal: Her story was featured on Fox 5, WAGA-Atlanta, during its Black History Month program, Real People, Real Stories, Real History. Ms. Allison was an orphan in the Carrie Steel Pitts Home where she became its first social service worker. She still serves as the executive director at age 80.

Mattiwilda Dobbs-Janzon

See Take Note!

Christine King Farris

See Take Note!

1949

Ella Gaines Yates

Personal: Honored by the Friends of Southwest Regional Library on April 22, 2004, at its first annual "Books for Life" gala fundraiser.

1949

Doris McCollum

Personal: Honored by the Antioch Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio, in recognition of church membership of more than 50 years.

1952

Joy San Walker Brown

Personal: She and her husband, Dr. Calvin A. Brown (Morehouse, C'52), achieved a milestone, marking their 50th wedding anniversary. Her husband passed on July 8, 2004, after an extended illness. Daughters JoiSanne Brown, M.D., C'81, and SannaGai Brown, M.D., C'83, had joined their father to form the Brown Medical Associates P.C. in the West End community.

1955

Audrey Forbes Manley

See Take Note!

1959

Geneva Watson Dean

Personal: Honored by the Association of Black Educators of New York, Inc. as the Teacher of the Year (High School of Legal Studies) at the 29th Annual Scholarship and Awards Luncheon held on June 19, 2004.

1960

Marian Wright Edelman

Professional: Was named by *Ebony Magazine* as one of the 100+ Influential Black Americans. Also interviewed by *Parade Magazine* in celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the Children's Defense Fund. CDF founder, Ms. Edelman, shared a report card on the state of America's children.

June Gary Hopps

Personal: Honored by the Links, Inc. along with her three sisters at a reception held at the High Museum of Art.

1963

Brenda Hill Cole

See Take Note!

1965

Alice Walker

See Take Note!

1967

Barbara Anthony Brown

Professional: After 35 years of service, Ms. Brown retired from Spelman College on June 29, 2004. She held various positions such as secretary in the Business Office, counselor for freshman students, director of career planning and placement, coordinator of student activities, associate dean of students and interim vice president for student affairs. She introduced Spelman students to non-traditional careers of investment banking, consulting, research, sales and marketing. She created SASE, the Spelman Alumna Student Externship program. The resulting corporate relationships became the basis for the Spelman

Corporate Partnership Program. Ms. Brown retired from the College as the associate director of institutional effectiveness.

Berdie Ricks Hardon

Personal: Participant in the Founders Day Alumnae Worship Service that was held in Sisters Chapel on April 4, 2004.

1968

Jane Smith

Professional: Appointed as the executive director for the Spelman College Leadership Center.

1969

Laura English-Robinson

Professional: Presented a faculty recital at Spelman College on March 3, 2004.

Maxine Hayes

See Take Note!

Shirley Marks

See Take Note!

Beverly Simons

Professional: Keynote speaker at the Morehouse School of Medicine at the Fall Convocation in 2003. Beverly was the only Spelman graduate in the charter class of the Morehouse School of Medicine. Also spoke to reunioners at the 35th year reunion on the topic "Healthy Living from Head to Toe: 35 Things You Need to Know."

1970

Yvonne Jackson

See Take Note!

Ollie Irons Manley

Professional: Presented the following papers: "Integrating Technology in the Science and Mathematics Curriculum" at the UNCF Fellows Institute, "A Wholistic Approach to Teaching Environmental Education" at the Environmental Education Alliance of Georgia conference and "Using Peer Tutoring to Teach Chemistry" at the Georgia Academy of Science in March 2004. She also presented "Differentiating the Elementary and Science Curriculum Using Multiple Intelligence" at the National Science Teachers Association annual conference in April 2004. She received the following grants: The UNCF Research Grant for Technology and a Service Learning Grant.

1971

Tina McElroy Ansa

See Take Note!

Pearl Cleage

See Take Note!

Latanya Richardson Jackson

See Take Note!

Take Note!

When *Essence* magazine compiled words and wisdom from the women and men who have appeared in the magazine's stories and articles throughout the years, two Spelman alumnae were among those chosen to appear in the book, *Wisdom of the Ages: Extraordinary People 19 to 90*. **LaTanya Richardson Jackson, C'74**, and her husband, Samuel L. Jackson, are featured, offering insightful words on love, faith and healing in marriage. **Jerri L. DeVard, C'79**, talks about choosing wisely in love and spending quality time with family.



Marian Wright Edelman, C'60, was named among the 100+ Most Influential Black Americans for 2004 as compiled by *Ebony* magazine in the May 2004 issue. In the same issue, **Keshia Knight Pulliam, C2001**, is featured in an article entitled "'Where Are the Child Stars of Yesterday?'" Ms. Pulliam is known for her role as Rudy on *The Cosby Show*, for which she became – at six – the youngest actress ever nominated for an Emmy. See page 37.



Seven Spelman women are included in the National Library of Medicine exhibition, *Changing the Face of Medicine: Celebrating America's Women Physicians*, which honors the lives and accomplishments of women physicians and is designed to inspire a new generation of medical pioneers. They are **Georgia Rooks Dwelle, M.D., H.S., C1900**, **Jeanne Spurlock, M.D., F.S.C'44**, **Audrey Forbes Manley, M.D., M.P.H., C'55**, **Maxine Hayes, M.D., C'69**, **Shirley F. Marks, M.D., M.P.H., C'69**, **Virginia Davis Floyd, M.D., C'73**, and **Deborah Prothrow-Stith, M.D., C'75**. The exhibit will run through April 2, 2005, at the National Library of Medicine located at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. View it online at www.nlm.nih.gov/changingthefaceofmedicine.



Christine King Farris, C'48, received top honors during the NAACP 35th Annual Image Awards ceremony, celebrating outstanding work by people of color in film, television and literature. She was honored in the literary category for her children's book, *My Brother Martin: A Sister Remembers Growing Up With the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* This recognition was highlighted in the March 29, 2004 issue of *JET Magazine*.

1972

Kathleen McGhee Anderson

Professional: The executive producer of the successful HBO Series, *Soul Food*, which premiered its final season.

Sheryl Harris Gripper

Personal: Founder of the Black Women Film Preservation Project. The group honored actress/director/activist Sheryl Lee Ralph, photographer Sue Ross and Jennifer Harper, writer of "Playas Ball" at the fundraiser held in March 2004.

Janet Lane Martin

Personal: Participant in the Founders Day Alumnae Worship Service that was held in Sisters Chapel on April 4, 2004.

1973

Virginia Davis Floyd

Professional: Was initiated into the Epsilon Chapter of the Georgia Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society as an Alumnae Initiate on April 24, 2004.

Pamela Gunter-Smith

Professional: Worked on a project that studied learning environments that promoted the development of women leaders while on an ACE Fellowship at the University of Miami.

Lillian Cain Hill

Professional: Was interviewed for an article for the Reading Online series *Teachers' Voices*, titled "Fostering Preschool Learning with Standards and Computers: An Interview with Lillian Cain Hill." The feature celebrates projects that combine technology and literacy.

Fleda Mask Jackson

Professional: Contributed to the book *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education*. She was also the co-chair of the committee responsible for the Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Awards at Emory University. The Emory School of Public Health visiting associate professor was the subject of an article in the Emory report, "Remembering King & Community."

Personal: Dr. Jackson was the Women's Day speaker at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta on July 18, 2004.

Janice White Sikes

Married: Rev. Will Rogers at the Cane Creek Waterfalls in the North Georgia mountains.

Professional: Public librarian specializing in African American studies at the Auburn Avenue Research Library in Atlanta. Founded the Intergenerational Dialogue, a counseling and community building service located in historic West End.

1974

Neva McGhee Williams

See Take Note!

1975

L. Patricia Ice

Married: William L. Chandler on May 1, 2004, at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Jackson, Mississippi. She and her husband, along with stepsons Martin and William, live in Jackson, Mississippi.

Professional: Completed five years as an immigration law attorney in Jackson. Member of the Bar in Michigan, New Mexico and Mississippi.

Deborah Prothrow-Stith

See Take Note!

1976

Deborah Chocolate

See Book Notes

Y. Yvonne Cribbs

Personal: Introduced the speaker for the Founders Day Worship Service that was held in Sisters Chapel on April 4, 2004.

Yolande Herron-Palmore

Professional: Pastor of the Kainos Community Church in Katy, Texas. Brought the message for the Founders Day Worship Service that was held in Sisters Chapel on April 4, 2004.

1977

Zenobia Hikes

Professional: Dr. Hikes is the vice president for student affairs at Spelman and contributed to the book *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education*.

1978

Marshallita Sims Peterson

Professional: Dr. Peterson is the chair and assistant professor in the Education Department at Spelman. She co-authored the text, *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education*. The text focuses on academic environments and classroom strategies as they relate to achievement levels of African American college students. The text identifies successful retention and mentoring techniques that have been advantageous for Black students.

Cynthia Neal Spence

Professional: Dr. Spence is an associate professor at Spelman and contributed to the book *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education*.

1979

Keva Wright Berry

Professional: Assumed new position as the financial manager for the College of Arts & Sciences at the University of Southern Maine in Portland, Maine.

Jerri DeVard – See "Take Note!"

Personal: Was honored as one of the 25 Influential Black Women in Business by the Black Professionals and *Small Business Magazine* at their Sixth Annual Awards Program that was held in New York City on March 19, 2004.

1980

Patricia Rattley Johnson

Personal: Recently published the book, *Journey into God's Presence* which chronicles a 15-year spiritual journey following the death of her husband in a plane crash with the late Congressman Mickey Leland.

Professional: An ordained minister and professor at Nyack College (D.C. campus).

Valerie Johnson Kaalund

Professional: Dr. Kaalund is an assistant professor in African and Afro-American Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and is the first recipient of the Meardis Cannon Fellowship. The Fellowship requires use of the African American holdings in Special Collections. Her research project is *African American Written Word and Moral Imagination*.

1981

Kiron K. Skinner

Education: Earned an M.A. and a Ph.D. in political science and international relations from Harvard University.

Professional: Appointed to the National Security Education Board and Chief of Naval Operations Executive Panel by United States Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Assistant professor of history and political science at Carnegie Mellon University, she specializes in the study of American foreign policy, international relations theory and international security. She is also a research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Co-edited the *New York Times* best-seller collection of speeches, *Reagan, In His Own Hand: The Writings of Ronald Reagan That Reveal His Revolutionary Wisdom for America*; *Stories in His Own Hand: The Everyday Wisdom of Ronald Reagan and Reagan in His Own Voice*.

Donna Stephens Morgan

Education: Earned a master of cross-cultural education degree from National University on May 9, 2004.

Sheron Covington Patterson

Personal: Dr. Patterson is the senior pastor of the St. Paul United Methodist Church in

Dallas and wrote an editorial that was featured in the Dallas, Texas *Morning News* – "These women told rap star, 'Enough,'" which discusses the Spelman students' response to the Nelly video.

1982

Bridgett M. Davis

Professional: Published her debut novel, *Shifting Through Neutral*. Her previous project was the award-winning feature film, *Naked Acts*.

Jodi Clement Smart

Personal: Elected to the Board of Directors of the Fresh Air Fund, a not-for-profit agency that provides summer vacations in the country for low-income neighborhood children. Also serves on the Acquisitions Committee of the Studio Museum in Harlem, a contemporary art museum for artists of African descent.

1984

Vida L. Avery

Professional: Program officer with the Beaumont Foundation of America, Inc. in Beaumont, Texas.

Doe Winfrey

See Take Note!

1985

Vickie L. Hughes

Professional: Received J.D. degree with concentrations in litigation and constitutional law/civil rights from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

Stacey Utsey Horton

Personal: Featured in the 2004 Special Edition of *Who's Who in Black Atlanta* that was published by the Who's Who Publishing Company in Columbus, Ohio.

1986

Kathleen Edwards Mond

See Take Note!

Dazon Dixon Diallo

Professional: Received the National Black Herstory Auset Award at the Seventh Annual National Black Herstory Conference and Awards Banquet on March 26–27, 2004. The conference was co-sponsored by Emory University and dedicated to the memory of Dr. Etta Zuber Falconer, a long-time professor of mathematics at Spelman College.

Sharon Toomer

Professional: Editorial producer for the CNN Financial News program *Your Money*.

Angela Farris Watkins

Professional: Dr. Watkins is an associate professor in the psychology department at Spelman College and is a contributor to the

Take Note!

Black Enterprise magazine profiled **Yvonne R. Jackson, C'70**, in the Powerplay section of the June 2004 issue. Ms. Jackson, who is the head of global human resources at Pfizer, the largest pharmaceutical company in the world, is responsible for more than 120,000 employees worldwide. She also serves as chair of the Spelman College Board of Trustees.



The late actress **Esther Rolle, ES '42**, is among the popular TV moms shown on a postcard available from fotofolio.com. Miss Rolle is best known for playing Florida Evans, the strong mother character, in the situation comedy *Good Times*.

“Pearl Cleage: Southwest Atlanta’s Literary Jewel” is the cover story of the Summer 2004 issue of *Southwest Atlanta Magazine*. A resident of Southwest Atlanta for more than 30 years, **Pearl Cleage, C'71**, is an author, playwright and professor whose noted works include the novel *What Looks Like Crazy on An Ordinary Day* and the play “Blues for an Alabama Sky.” She frequently contributes essays and articles to leading publications, including “Learning to Say No” which appeared in the February 2004 Wise Women section of *Essence*.



When notable Southern writers are mentioned or gathered, **Tina McElroy Ansa, C'72**, is one of the most noted among them, as is evident in “Made in the Shade,” a series of profiles of such writers found in the June 17–23, 2004 issue of *Creative Loafing*. Ansa is highlighted for her Southern presence as a writer, editor, teacher, author of four novels, emerging filmmaker and founder of the Sea Island Writers Workshop, designed to help African American writers make their way into print.



In 2003, **Kathaleena Edward Monds, C'86**, an assistant professor in the Department of Business Information Systems & Education at the Albany State University (Ga.) College of Business, was recognized as Teacher of the Year during the spring commencement exercises. A few months later, in August, she and her family were profiled in an *Essence* article, “Back to the Land,” in which she and her husband, John, a Morehouse College alumnus, discuss their decision to leave city living behind and move their family to Cairo, Georgia, a rural southern town. In a succession of personal and professional successes, Dr. Monds taught in Belize, Central America, during the summer 2004 semester and has submitted or is currently developing a number of papers and publications associated with her professional and student-advised research and teaching.

book *Instructing and Mentoring the African American College Student: Strategies for Success in Higher Education*.

1987

Jennifer Satterfield Siegel

Personal: Was honored by *The Indianapolis Business Journal* as one of the 40 under 40 who have distinguished themselves in the Indianapolis community.

1988

Pamela Bigelow

Birth: Boy, Jaylen MeKhi on July 21, 2004, at 3:25 a.m. at the Henry Medical Center—weight 7 lbs. and 19 inches long.

Angela Lyles

Professional: Cast member as The Goddess in the performance of “The Temptation of St. Anthony” that completed a five-country European tour. The stateside performance of the production was held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October 2004.

Cherise Kimball

Married: Jose Newell on March 21, 2003, in Montego Bay, Jamaica.
Birth: Boy, Nigel Kenard Newell on April 22, 2004.

1989

Deborah Anderson-Tinsley

Professional: Realtor with the Coldwell Banker, Cascade Realty in Atlanta, Georgia.

Wendy G. Johnson

Education: Obtained an M.D. from the University of Maryland before pursuing a master’s in public health from Harvard University.
Professional: The bio/pre-med major is now a practicing pediatrician. In December 2003, she opened a photography business, “wendy g photography, LLC,” that specializes in weddings, special occasions and portraits.

Alonia Jernigan

Professional: The founding publisher of *IMANI: The Magazine of Faith, Family & Empowerment* conducted a workshop, The 10 Commandments for Effective Business, at the Butler Street YMCA on March 20, 2004.

Lisa Stinson

Professional: Georgia residential mortgage licensee with the HomeBanc Mortgage Corporation in Tucker, Georgia.

Sheronda L. Youngblood-Minton

Professional: Joined the Institutional Advancement staff at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) as the major gifts officer for the Youth Hope Builders Academy.

1990

Schonay Barnett-Jones

Birth: Daughter, Olivia Grace, born on April 20, 2004, weighing 7 lbs., 5 oz. She joins big brother Cameron and big sister Kendall Claire.

ViaKristi Varnell

Married: Kevin Borden on July 3, 2004, at The Atrium in Norcross, Georgia.

Victoria Spear Darrisaw

Birth: Daughter, Helen Victoria Darrisaw, born on February 12, 2004. Husband George Darrisaw, Jr., and three-year-old George III also welcome new addition.

Kellye Blackburn

Married: George Eccles on March 9, 2002
Birth: Son, Emerson Blackburn Eccles, on November 30, 2003, weighing 6 lbs. 7 oz. and 19 inches long.

Anjanette Belt Elligan

Professional: Employed as a regional clinical research associate (CRA) for AstraZenica Pharmaceuticals.

Tracey D. Hughes

Professional: An independent consultant with Warm Spirit, a line of natural beauty products such as body butter, massage oils and teas.

Loree Jones

Professional: Appointed by Philadelphia Mayor John F. Street as the chief of staff to the managing director of the City of Philadelphia. She will support the citizens of Philadelphia by implementing initiatives that improve the delivery of social and city services.
Personal: Appointed by Mayor Street to the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board in September 2003. She is the recipient of the 2003 Whitney M. Young, Jr., Young Leader Award given by the Urban League of Philadelphia.

Kandace Weems-Norris

See Take Note!

1991

Cherry A. Collier

Professional: Author of the book, *Move Out of Your Own Way*, which offers tools and tips for reaching and exceeding goals (www.thefruitsoflabor.com).

Lisa Cyler

Professional: Joined the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan in February 2004 as the director of development. Previously practiced law for 10 years in the Detroit area.
Married: Derrick Anthony Miller and has a two-year-old son, Miles.

Keceya Campbell Durham

Education: Earned a master’s in education from Bowie State University on May 25, 2003.
Birth: Daughter, Logan Elyse Durham, on September 9, 2003, weighing 6lbs. 3 oz. and 20 inches long.

Keisha Evertsz

Married: La Roy Michael Williams, IV, on June 19, 2004, at The Atrium, Norcross, Georgia.

Sonja K. Knighton

Professional: Appointed as the city attorney for the City of Miami Gardens, Florida.

Sherina Redding Pate

Professional: Relationship manager with the First Horizon Home Loans, South Atlantic Region, in Dunwoody, Georgia.

Torii Ransome

Married: Craig M. Freeman on August 8, 1998
Education: Earned law degree from the Paul M. Hebert Law Center in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Professional: Hired as the assistant director of human resources at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.
Births: Son, Ransome Aaron Freeman, on August 23, 2001, and daughter, Baylor Constance Freeman, on July 1, 2003.

Michelle L. Warner Waller

Birth: Charles D. Waller III, who was born on October 16, 2003, weighing 6 lbs., 9 oz. and 20 inches long. Husband, Charles, and 3 three-year-old daughter, Lauren, welcome the addition.
Professional: Employed as senior associate with Baker and Hostetter LLP in Cleveland, Ohio.

Stephanie L. Williams

Education: Completed a master’s degree in organizational management at George Washington University.

1992

Allecia Alexander

Professional: Appointed as the director of Coordinated School Health and Partnerships for the Chicago Public Schools on April 12, 2004. Ms. Alexander will implement the CDC Model for Healthy School Children initiative. In her position, she will coordinate the health services, physical education, environmental protection, nutritional services, mental health services, community involvement and employee health and prevention services for the Chicago school population comprised of 438,000 children.

Carlotta A. Johnson

Education: Received a Ph.D. in electrical and computer engineering [lower case] from Vanderbilt University on May 9, 2003.

Take Note!

PR News, the knowledge resource for professional communicators, named **Tomika DePriest, C'89**, PR Executive of the Year in Education during the PR People and Platinum PR Awards ceremony held October 6, 2004, in New York. Ms. DePriest is Executive Director of Public Relations and Communications at Spelman. In addition to strategically enhancing the College's internal and external public relations and communications, she led the public relations efforts surrounding the Spelman Student Protest of Misogynist Images and Lyrics in Hip Hop, which resulted in more than 645 million media impressions.



When prominent Detroit attorney Geoffrey Fieger and the local ABC television affiliate, WXYZ, conducted and aired *The Intern*, their own version of Donald Trump and NBC's *Apprentice*, **Heather Thompson, C'99**, came out the winner. Ms. Thompson competed against five other candidates in a grueling week of tasks, which included navigating a high ropes course, selling memorabilia at a local hockey game and arguing a case in front of a real judge. As the winner, she was awarded a paid internship with the law firm Fieger, Fieger, Kennedy & Johnson and \$5,000 in scholarship money. A law student at Wayne State University, Ms. Thompson is the recipient of the Kenneth V. Cockrel Law Scholarship. She is a writer for the *Advocate*, and was featured in the Wayne lawyer alumni magazine for her extensive community service.

The magazine *rolling out atlanta* consistently showcases the accomplishments of Spelman alumnae. In the January 15, 2004, issue, **Kandance Weems-Norris, C90**, is deemed the "crème de la crème" in the business profile of her work as a lawyer at Sullivan & Cromwell, one of the nation's oldest law firms. From the New York company headquarters, Weems-Norris directs financial and legal deals for some of the most powerful national and international companies, including managing million- and multimillion-dollar sales of hotels and real estate. In a later *rolling out* issue, **Dulcina "Doe" Winfrey, C'84**, is the subject of the business profile as vice president – marketing manager for SouthTrust Mortgage Corporation in Decatur, Georgia. In this role, Ms. Winfrey is making home ownership for all, but particularly African American women, a reality. In a June 2004 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* report on home sales in the Atlanta area, Winfrey is quoted as jokingly refers to herself as "the financier of the sisterhood," referring to the fact that 80% of her business is establishing mortgages for single black women from a variety of socioeconomic circumstances.



The article, "Extreme Politicians Not to Voters' Liking," appearing in the @ Issue section of the August 20, 2004, edition of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, offered the landslide re-election of Georgia State House of Representatives member **Alisha Thomas Morgan, C2000**, as evidence that Georgia voters were moving away from support of the "right-wing extremist" agenda. Morgan defeated her two opponents, both deemed ultraconservative, by getting 86% of the vote.

Not even the making of a bicoastal career in television could keep **Tanika Ray, C'94**, from participating in her 10-year class reunion. Ms. Ray, who from Los Angeles has hosted the makeover program *Head2Toe* on Lifetime Television, and most recently became the NewYork-based correspondent for the syndicated entertainment newsmagazine *Extra*, served as mistress of ceremonies for the 2004 Reunion Convocation hosted by her class. She was named the *Ebony* celebrity of the month in the magazine's October 2004 edition.



Her dissertation topic was *Enhancing a Human-Robot Interface via a Sensory Ego-Sphere*.

Married: William Tyrone Berry on November 29, 2003, in Nashville, Tennessee.

Professional: Employed as a professor of electrical engineering at Tennessee State University.

Personal: Recovered from a vascular malformation and brain surgery on January 2, 2004.

Crystal Drake

Professional: Her recent appointment as the public relations director for the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta was featured in the *Atlanta Tribune*. She was previously the special assistant to First Lady Marie Barnes, wife of Governor Roy Barnes.

Wilmetta Toliver Diallo

Education: Earned Ph.D. in African history from Stanford University.

Birth: Daughter, Coumba Taiba Diallo, born on February 9, 2004, at the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital in Paris, France. Was 2 lbs. at birth and at 5 five months of age is over 9 nine lbs. Husband, Samba, and Wilmetta live in Paris, France.

Monica R. Johnson

Education: Graduated from the Turner Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Seminary in May 2002.

Professional: Ordained as an itinerant elder in the AME Church in October 2002. A captain (chaplain candidate) in the U.S. Army Reserves. On staff at the St. John AME Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Ulrica Wilson

Education: Earned a Ph.D. in division algebras from Emory University.

1993

Elisa Cramer

Professional: Ms. Cramer is an editorial writer for *The Palm Beach Post*. She wrote an editorial article, "Refusing to take bad with good. Spelman stood up to a rapper's misogyny." The article discusses the Spelman student support of the National Bone Marrow Registry and criticism of disrespectful behavior of women in videos.

Tonya Y. Jones Dedeaux

Birth: Daughter, Natasha Yvette Dedeaux, 7 lbs. 1 oz., 19 inches long. Husband, Chris, and two-year-old brother, Jalen, welcome addition to the family.

Professional: Employed as a counselor at Woodward Academy in College Park, Georgia.

Erika Nicole Jackson

Married: Elijah Harris Garner, IV, at the Old Ship AME Zion Church in Montgomery, Alabama. They honeymooned in Aruba.

Professional: The Emory University School

of Law graduate is an assistant claims manager for RLI Insurance.

Hilary Janet Jones

Education: Earned a Ph.D. in history from Michigan State University on May 7, 2004.

Professional: Employed as an associate professor of history at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her specialty is West African French-speaking countries.

Alisha Coleman Knight

Education: Earned a Ph.D. in English from Drew University in New Jersey.

Professional: Employed as an assistant professor at Washington College in Eastern Shore, Maryland. Dr. Knight was a UNCF Mellon Fellow and received an M.A. in English from Rutgers.

Nicole Ann LaBeach

Married: Calvin Thomas IV at the Half Moon Resort, Rose Hall, in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The couple lives in Los Angeles.

Professional: Author and CEO of Volitions Enterprises, Inc.

Kai N. Williams

Married: Shannon Maurice Slaton on May 15, 2004, at the Antioch Baptist Church North in Atlanta, Georgia.

Kim Yokely

Professional: Was the subject of a business profile article in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "Soothing Asian Arts Practiced at Retreat." Ms. Yokely opened Kimochi Body N Sole Sanctuary, a spa salon retreat in Atlanta. She is certified in traditional Thai massage, shiatsu, reflexology, chi gong and yoga.

1994

Estelle Archibald

Professional: Hired as the Bonner scholar coordinator at Spelman College.

Tanika Ray

See Take Note!

Raveen A. Seaton

Professional: Employed as the vice president and credit manager for the Builders Bank in Westbury, New York.

Daphne Walker

Professional: Elected as magistrate court judge for Clayton County, Georgia.

1995

Loren Compton-Williams

Professional: Promoted to the position of vice-president at Goldman, Sachs & Co. where she is an equity research analyst on the U.S. Active Equity Value Team. She is a member of the portfolio management team for the energy, chemical and banking industries.

Alleassandra Beth Ennett

Personal: Was selected as a UNCF/Merck research dissertation fellow in 2003. Also chosen as a recipient of the Black Engineer of the Year/GEM Student Leadership Award. Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering at the University of Michigan.

Nicole Martin Franks

Birth: Michelle Cheri Franks born May 13, 2004.

Professional: Accepted into the inaugural L.E.A.D. Atlanta program that was developed by Leadership Atlanta. Nicole is the only physician chosen for the program. L.E.A.D. Atlanta is a six-week program for professionals between the ages of 25 and 32 and equips young people with skills, knowledge and contacts for leadership roles.

Danielle Baptiste Jackson

Personal: Selected for the prestigious two-year Global Health Fellowship provided through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. She was a part of the HIV, Tuberculosis and Reproductive Health Team.

Teri McMurty-Chubb

Professional: Assistant professor at Fairhaven College at the Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. Her specialties are social and legal history, hegemony studies and comparative gender studies.

Mendi Lewis Obadike

Professional: Published *Armor and Flesh*, her first collection of poems (www.lotuspress.org). A Ph.D. candidate in literature at Duke University, she is currently visiting instructor of English and African American studies at Wesleyan University.

Na'Taki Osborne

Personal: Honored by the National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Metro Atlanta Chapter with the Unsung Heroine Award for her advocacy work on behalf of women and children.

Angelique Smith

Birth: Daughter, Eirini Alexia Williams, born on December 31, 2003, weighing 7 lbs., 8 oz., and 20 inches long.

Taraesa Vinson

See Take Note!

Tiquette Mason

Married: Johnny Terrell White at the Flipper Temple AME Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

Education: Completed pediatric residency at the University of Tennessee School of Medicine - Chattanooga.

1996

Melissa Agnew

Married: Mr. Joseph Alexander, III, on April 10, 2004, in Fairfax Station, Virginia.

Blessed ChukSORJI

Education: Received a juris doctor degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in May 2001.

Professional: Employed as the vice-president and corporate counsel for the U.S. Trust Company's Special Fiduciary Services Division. U. S. Trust is a subsidiary of the Charles Schwab Corporation.

Mekka Robinson

Married: Michael Clark at the Bell Harbor International Conference Center in Seattle, Washington. The couple will reside in Seattle.

Professional: Employed as a probation counselor for the City of Seattle.

Deidre A. Solomon

Married: Alexis M. Richburg, Morehouse alumnus, C'98, at the Chateau Elan in Braselton, Georgia

Nakia Hicks Robinson

Professional: Founded the real estate law firm, The Bingham Law Group, PLLC, with two other partners.

Spring A. Taylor

Education: Earned master of public administration degree in public & nonprofit management & policy from New York University in May 2004.

1997

Tiffany N. Johnson

Professional: Passed the Georgia Bar exam and was licensed to practice law in the State of Georgia after the swearing in ceremony held on June 17, 2004. Attorney Johnson is also licensed in Alabama and the District of Columbia.

D'Rita Parrilla Robinson

Married: Elbert O'Neal "Robbie" Robinson, Jr., a *summa cum laude* graduate from Morehouse College, at the Daufuskie Island Resort and Spa on March 20, 2004.

Professional: Employed as a sales representative for Merck Pharmaceutical Company.

1998

Charity R. Bridgewater, Esq.

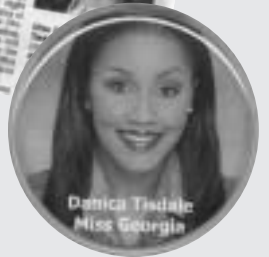
Professional: An art broker with the company Simply Art, Inc. that sells canvas art reproductions of various portraits and landscapes.

Katasha S. Butler

Professional: Appointed as director of pharmacy at the Citizens Health Center, a federally qualified health center that serves indigent persons in Indianapolis, Indiana. She is the youngest board director at Citizens Health Corporation. She was previously employed by the Indiana State Board of Health, PharmaSource, LLC, and CVS Pharmacy.

Take Note!

After winning the title of Miss Atlanta, **Danica Tisdale, C2001**, became the first African American to be crowned Miss Georgia in the 60-year history of the pageant in June of 2004. In September, the Emory University graduate student and doctoral candidate went on to compete for the title of Miss America. On the evening that ABC aired the Miss America Pageant, Spelman students, faculty, staff and alumnae gathered on campus for a viewing party to cheer Ms. Tisdale on to her impressive finish among the top 10. After crowning another Spelman alumna, **Melanie Sanders, C2004**, as her successor to the Miss Atlanta title, Danica will continue her reign as Miss Georgia into 2005 and provide information and support for her platform on the importance of hospice care.



Ebony Glover, C2002, is the subject of the article, "Changing the Face of Neuroscience," which appears in a Center for Behavioral Neuroscience publication. Ms. Glover, whose interest in neuroscience began during her years as a Spelman student, is a graduate scholar in psychology who aims to be a role model for African American women considering careers in neuroscience.

Changing the Face of neuroscience



When she was inducted into the Georgia Music Hall of Fame on September 18, 2004, **Mattiwilda Dobbs-Janzon, C'46**, joined the ranks of Georgia music legends Ray Charles, Gladys Knight and Lena Horne. Considered to be one of the great coloratura sopranos of our time, Mattiwilda Dobbs performed on the stages of the greatest opera houses in the world. Her performances often broke the color barrier: she desegregated the San Francisco Opera Company and was the first black female to sing at the Metropolitan Opera House. A native Atlantan, and one of the six Dobbs sisters who graduated from Spelman, Ms. Dobbs began her formal voice training at Spelman College under the tutelage of Naomi Maise and Willis Laurence James.

Fulton County State Court Judge **Brenda Hill Cole, C'63**, was one of three "savvy women" featured in an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article profiling women of varying ages wearing trendy fashions. Although she indicates her preference for more tailored clothing, she is photographed wearing a striking lemon and chartreuse pantsuits and complementary patent leather pumps.



Stephanie D. Daniels

Married: Ralph Coleman, III, Morehouse alumnus, C'98, at the Antioch Baptist Church North.

Tara D. Holman

Education: Earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Memphis in May 2004. *Professional:* Out of 1000 nominees, Dr. Holman received the Graduate Student Meritorious Teaching Award.

Kimyata R. Morgan

Professional: While on campus, she recruited Spelman students to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Aisha E. Shamburger

Education: Graduated *magna cum laude* with a master of science in rehabilitation counseling from the Medical College of Virginia at the Virginia Commonwealth University.

1999

A.R. Tulani Grundy

Education: Earned a law degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and is practicing with an Atlanta-based law firm.

Heather Thompson

See Take Note!

2000

Stephanie Joiner

Education: Earned a master's degree in public health from the East Tennessee State University in December 2002.

Kia Campbell Rahman

Birth: Son, Salih Nosakhare Abdul Rahman, born to Kia and Rashad Rahman (Morehouse Class of 2000) on July 22, 2004.

2001

Lakeyshia Graves

Married: Musashi Ono at the Haynes Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Hope, Arkansas. They live in Long Beach, California.

Professional: Employed as the childcare director for the Kettler Elementary School.

Keshia Knight Pulliam

Professional: Was the subject of an article "A Different World" in *King Magazine*. Was also in the May 2004 edition of *Ebony*, "Where Are The Child Stars of Yesterday?" The article notes that Ms. Pulliam was the youngest actress ever nominated for an Emmy.

Nicole D. Taylor

Education: Earned a juris doctorate from Howard University in May 2004.

Danica Tisdale

See Take Note!

Tamela M. Woods

Education: Earned a juris doctorate with honors from the University of Minnesota Law School.

Professional: Clerks for Justices Alan Page and Helen Meyer of the Minnesota Supreme Court during the 2004–2005 term.

2002

Philathia Bolton

Education: Earned an M.A. degree in American studies from Purdue University.

Professional: Instructor for an introductory composition course at Purdue while working on Ph.D. in American studies. Presented "Shared Stories, Shared Pain: Gayl Jones's Corregidora and the Civil Rights Movement" at the first Annual Women and Conflict Graduate Conference at the University of California at Santa Barbara in October 2003. Her essay "Across the Americas" selected for inclusion in a volume of select student papers from UNC – Chapel Hill's Moore Undergraduate Research Apprentice Program.

Taneya Gethers

Birth: Daughter, Nia Assata Gethers Muhammad, born on July 9, 2004, at 5:26 a.m. at the Brooklyn Birthing Center, and weighing 7 lbs., 8 oz. and 21 inches long.

Ebony Glover

See Take Note!

Kafia Haile

Professional: Awarded a Joan Gillespie Foundation Fellowship while pursuing a master of arts in law and diplomacy degree in International Security at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Will teach class "Black Feminist Thought" at Tuft's Experimental College in Medford, Massachusetts.

Brittany M. Meekins

Professional: Assistant to the provost and vice-president of the Levin Institute of International Relations and Commerce in New York, New York.

2003

Elena Jettaun Bell

Married: Derrick B. Walker at the Paradise Lakes Country Club in Riverdale, Georgia, on May 30, 2004.

Preye Kilanko Cobham

Married: Brian Armon Tillman at the Wyndham Vinings in Atlanta, Georgia, on May 29, 2004.

Makeba Dixon-Hill

Professional: Appointed coordinator of public programs and education at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York following the completion of a one-year internship.

Ashley V. Jenkins

Professional: Employed as an associate staffing specialist with Reebok International Ltd. in Canton, Massachusetts. Responsible for the recruitment of associates for the Reebok Distribution Centers.

2004

Tiffany Wells

Professional: Employed by King & Spalding.

Teach for America

Spelman Alumnae in the Teach for America program. Teach for America is a nonprofit organization that places outstanding college graduates in rural or urban schools for two years. The following alumnae are participating in for the 2004–05 year:

Class of 1995

Leslie Shaw-McGee – Newark

Class of 2000

Ayana Gabriel – Atlanta

Class of 2001

Taylor Smith – Newark

Class of 2002

Jennifer Grimes – Atlanta

Shaba Simmons – Atlanta

Class of 2003

Elena Bell – Atlanta

Shaymora Blanks – Miami

April Broussard – Baltimore

Samantha Chamblee – New York

Clarissa Collins – Atlanta

Niyoka Dixon – Atlanta

Salena Gray – Atlanta

Jennifer Hembrick – Chicago

Shakira Hemphill – New York

Nathalie Means – St. Louis

Ebony Thomas – New York

Tonya Phipps – Atlanta

Tamara Smith – Philadelphia

LaQuanta Wilkins – Atlanta

Kendall Wilson – Atlanta

Class of 2004

Shaymora Blanks – Miami

Erica DeBardeleben – Philadelphia

Alexis Dimes-Smith – Atlanta

Ahjani Fuller – Houston

Avise Hayes – Philadelphia

Rainey Jackson – Miami

Keisha McCauley – Atlanta

Erika Parrish – Houston

Jessica Rambo – New York

Hafeeza Rashed – Atlanta

Crystal Smith – Atlanta

Talisha White – Atlanta

Take Note!



Burrell, one of the nation's leading Black-owned, full-service communications agencies with offices in Chicago and Atlanta, announced the appointment of **N. McGhee Williams, C'80**, as managing partner in the July 5, 2004, issue of *Jet* magazine. An 18-year veteran of the agency, Ms. Williams directs the research, account planning, media and engagement marketing departments, as well as the agency's Atlanta office.



The voice of **Teraesa Vinson, C'95**, is described as velvet, versatile and sophisticated in reviews of her musical release, *Opportunity Please Knock*. Tackling songs made famous by such masters as Dinah Washington and Frank Sinatra, Ms. Vinson's debut recording is heralded as one that confidently and competently brings together the sounds of swing, pop and jazz. More information about Vinson and her music can be found at www.teraesavinson.com.



Bernice Johnson Reagon, C'70, is composer and lyricist for *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, a musical which opened to rave reviews at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on Tuesday, October 19, 2004. The music Dr. Reagon created for this production delves into African American musical styles from spiritual and blues to soul and funk.

In "Grandmother Spirit," the cover story of the March/April 2004 issue of *Pages* magazine, **Alice Walker, FS'65**, discusses turning 60 and other turning points in her life and career as writer and activist. Most recently, Atlanta hosted the world premiere of *The Color Purple*, a new musical adapted to stage and based on Ms. Walker's acclaimed novel.



SPELMAN: THE THREAD THAT BINDS

Spirit ~ Leadership ~ Service

EXCERPTS FROM SPELMAN REUNION CONVOCATION
MAY 14, 2004

MARLA FREDERICK, C'94

"...Spelman is one phenomenal institution ...and, as we said in 1994, the best only gets better! ..."

I have been asked to speak on the theme of the reunion. Spelman: The Thread That Binds: Spirit, Leadership, Service. What a powerful theme [it is] because it identifies those elements of Spelman that make her unique... For generations she has inspired leadership and service in young women of African descent around the globe.

And so the theme inspires me. And, yet it leaves me wondering. What is the essence of the thread that binds and, most important, how do we keep it strong? I would presume that the thread that binds ties us not only to this present generation, but also to past generations and future generations... and this bridge, this tie, is only as strong as the individuals who make up the Spelman community. In other words, when we are strong, Spelman is strong. ...

But, how do we as alumnae of these institutions and soon-to-be-alumnae, guarantee their footing in the days, weeks and years ahead? How do we ensure that Spelman is not only here, but also securely positioned to continue to produce servant leaders? What is our sacrifice? What is required of us as present and future alumnae?

As we give our time to Spelman, joining local alumnae chapters which recruit promising high school students, host senior luncheons and mentor young Spelman women. ...

And as we give our talents to Spelman – some coming back to join the faculty and administration, others serving on boards and using their talents to build Web sites, connect Spelman with corporate entities and offer consulting advice. ...

We must make sure that some of our greatest assets, our material and financial resources, are equally employed in the process of strengthening Spelman.

Sometimes we say, "I'll give back once I have more to give." But, we miss the logic of compounded interest if we delay. The longer we defer our gifts, the more money it will take to make up for the interest lost. So regardless of how small the gift at this point in your life, the point, however, is still to give. The office of institutional advancement will tell you that between the ages of 23 and 40 people don't give because they are buying homes, starting families, securing business loans,



Photo: Brad Smith

Marla Frederick, C'94

paying back grad school, medical school and law school debts, OR our debts to Spelman. But, these are the crucial years! They are interest-bearing years, and regardless of whether you give \$25/year or \$250/year, money given earlier has a longer time to grow.

Secondly, I would be remiss if I did not say this as a cultural anthropologist and one who studies American culture at that. We must beware of the greatest enemy of our giving – American consumer culture. We must be critical consumers and conscious Americans.

Juliet Schor, author of a book titled *The Over-spent American*, argues that we as Americans are

no longer trying to keep up with "The Joneses," our next-door neighbors.

Today, we don't even *know* our neighbors anymore. Instead, there is what she calls the "new consumerism," where we are engaged in upscale spending to keep up with people who make three, four and 10 times more than what we make – primarily celebrities and other public figures that are present in electronic media. And not only are we adopting clothes and fashion sense from such media icons, but also our sense of what kinds of homes, cars and vacations to purchase.

We must aggressively guard against falling victim to this American consumer culture. It is marked by conspicuous consumption (i.e., the purchase of unnecessary items to meet our own emotional and status needs) and this pattern challenges our ability to fully invest in the mission that is Spelman. Conspicuous consumption tears at our commitment.

What do I mean by this? I mean, it's hard to love Spelman and DSW at the same time. It's *hard* to love Spelman and DSW at the same time. It's hard to worship at the throne of Lord and Taylor and pay homage to Spelman simultaneously. ... One Scripture suggests that you cannot love two masters. Either you will love one and hate the other, but you can't love both... That's what some would suggest.

My father actually put it in very simple terms for my sisters and me. When we were entering college and later going into the work force we experienced, what shall we say, "financial challenges." ... He would say with great fatherly wisdom, "Daughter, if your outflow exceeds your income, then your upkeep will be your downfall." Our propensity to get trapped in this culture leads not only to our own personal downfall, but also to the downfall of our beloved institutions.

And, so what do we do? What is our solution? ... What have we learned from our fore-parents? Surely, they taught us the significance of our own institutions... They could see even then what we are losing sight of today:

That 35% of all Black lawyers, 50% of all Black engineers and 65% of all Black physicians are graduates of HBCUs

That two Black colleges – Fisk University and Spelman College – would send a greater percentage of their graduates on the path to the completion of a doctoral degree than more than 95% of all predominantly white four-year colleges and universities

That Xavier University would consistently lead by producing a larger number of Black medical doctors than any other university in the country

That Florida A&M would have one of the leading business schools, bar none, in the country.

Our fore-parents knew the stakes. . . . If these institutions are not maintained, do not remain competitive, then we are placing our own futures and the futures of our communities in danger.

Yesterday, I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in Spelman's Women of Color Leadership Conference. An incredible conference! One of the panels I attended was on personal philanthropy. The panel was full of women who've committed to giving to Spelman and encouraging others to give, like Ms. Isabella Tobin, C'45, Angela Middleton, C'89, and Andrienne Lance Lucas, C'90. These women understood something. In so many words they suggested that. . . .

When we walk into DSW, or Lord & Taylor, or Rooms to Go, or Best Buy, or Lowes or our beloved Marshalls, we should already have established our priorities. The choice should never come down between a pair of shoes and Spelman, a new suit and Spelman, a new car and Spelman, a new bedroom set and Spelman. It's an unfair comparison. The choice for Spelman should be made long before we walk into the bastions of American consumer culture. We are FIRST philanthropists and secondly consumers. Ms. Isabella Tobin said that we ought to "plan for giving like we plan for paying bills." . . .

Automatic deductions can make our gifts to Spelman consistent and painless. You decide: \$5, \$10, \$20, \$100 per month. As a graduate student

maybe you can only sacrifice \$5, but at the end of the year, you've given \$60 and by the time the logic of compounded interest takes effect, you will have given more than if you waited until you were secure in your career and gave a lump sum of \$500 or \$600. I challenge you to become an automatic donor to Spelman College. I know that I'm preaching to the choir. The women gathered here today have already given.

The choice is yours. The stakes are seriously high.

Between 1976 and 1994, the year we graduated, the number of students attending HBCUs increased, not decreased, but increased by 26%. William Gray III, former U.S. Congressman and president of the UNCF put it this way. He said, "Black colleges are going to be more important going into the 21st century than they were going into the 20th century." . . .

Spelman invests our money well! The leadership we demonstrate today will reflect in the generations we educate tomorrow. I believe the Scriptures are true. Where your treasure is, there your heart is also. I believe our hearts are here at Spelman! May our service to her and our sacrifice for her continue to fortify this great thread that binds each of us to one another! Spelman thy name we praise, standards and honor raise. We'll ever faithful be throughout eternity!" •



Denise Thimes, C'84, Blue Note Theatre 2004.

Photo: Bud Smith



Photo: Bud Smith



Class of 1939



Class of 1954



Class of 1944



Class of 1959



Class of 1949

Reunion Photos: Bud Smith
Class Photos: By Invitation Only



Class of 1964



Class of 1969





Class of 1974



Class of 1979



Class of 1984



Class of 1989



Class of 1994



Class of 1999



In Memoriam

High School 1923

Mary Anna Jamerson Moore

Great aunt of Felecia Ward, C'85, Mary Moore's career in education spanned over 30 years. She taught in schools in Columbus, Georgia, and Tuskegee, Alabama. She was active in the Church Women United and the National Education Association. Though an avid bridge player, she also volunteered at the YMCA, Carver Museum and the Tuskegee VA. Medical Center as a "Gray Lady."

Died: August 2, 2004

Services: August 9, 2004, at the Greenwood Missionary Baptist Church, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

1934

Ethel Alexander Hudson

Grandmother of Melanie Washburn, C'93, Ethel Alexander Hudson was a former educator, social worker and commercial property investor who lived in Atlanta, Georgia. At the time of her passing, she was 91 years of age.

Died: April 23, 2004

Services: April 30, 2004, at the Hines Memorial Chapel, Atlanta

1936

Ruth Mae Westmoreland Hume

Sister of alumna Edwina Westmoreland Ford, C'37, Ruth Westmoreland graduated from Spelman with a degree in English. In 1931, while a senior at Atlanta University Laboratory High School, she broke the American record for girls in the high jump at five feet, 10.5 inches. She competed as a member of the Spelman track team in the Tuskegee Relay Carnivals where she was a competitor in the try-outs held by the American Olympic Committee to select a team to represent the United States at the X Olympiad in Los Angeles. She won first place in the running high jump. Ms. Hume was an elementary school educator and an active member of the St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, the Links, Inc. and the Canasta Club. She chaired the Tuskegee Institute Mother's March - March of Dimes in 1964 and was a volunteer for the Links-sponsored gift shop. She was the sister of the late Lt. Walter D. Westmoreland, a member of the 302nd Fighter Squadron of the Tuskegee Airmen and the niece of the late Walter F. White, former executive secretary of the NAACP.

Died: June 9, 2004

Services: June 12, 2004, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Tuskegee Institute, Alabama

1940 (Circa)

Vernice Chenault Gallimore

Upon graduation from Spelman College and the Atlanta University School of Social Work, Vernice Gallimore went on to be the first African American policewoman to serve with the Milwaukee Police Department. She later became a probation officer with the Children's Court until her retirement in 1989 at the age of 70. Instead of a retirement party, she asked that a contribution be made to the Northcutt Neighborhood House. Upon her passing, love gifts were used to establish the Vernice Chenault Gallimore Scholarship Foundation. She was active in her church and the Vel Phillips YWCA and was a charter member and chairwoman of the county's Human Rights Commission.

Died: August 14, 2004

Services: August 21, 2004, at the St. Mark A.M.E. Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1942

Celestine McCord Reeves

Grandmother of LaChez McCoy, C2002, Celestine Reeves was a retired librarian from the Birmingham City School System. Her service to education spanned almost four decades. Her passion for books and reading was matched only by her passion for people.

Died: September 5, 2004

Services: September 11, 2004, Sixth Avenue Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

1944

Ruth Virginia King Johnson

Mother of alumna Gaile Johnson Mynatt, C'70, the Forsyth, Georgia, native attended Spelman College after working for the Department of Defense at the Pentagon for several years. After living in New York, Mrs. Johnson returned to Forsyth where she taught for 33 years before retiring from the Monroe County School System in 1969. She was a member of the St. James Baptist Church where she taught Sunday School and served as the director of Vacation Bible School for many years before moving to East Point, Georgia. While in East Point, Mrs. Johnson became an avid Atlanta Braves fan and watched every game during the season. She received the Apple Award in 1994 from Spelman College for her work in the field of education.

Died: May 9, 2004

Services: May 15, 2004 at the St. James Baptist Church, Forsyth, Georgia

1960

Virginia Joan Clark

Mother of alumna Kimberlee Joan Clark, C'90, Virginia Joan Clark was a graduate of the Spelman Nursery as well as an art major and member of the Glee Club at her beloved Spelman College. She earned a

master's degree in social work from Fordham University and then worked at St. Mary's Hospital in New York, aiding those suffering from cancer and other terminal illness. She worked for the State of Georgia for 23 years in healthcare programs before retiring from the Department of Human Resources Division of Aging Services on May 1, 2003.

Died: October 22, 2003

Services: October 28, 2003 at the Antioch Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia

1962

Joyce LeConyer Pitts Rogers

Mother of alumna Alysa Story, C'86; sister of alumna Marian Pitts Coles, C'60.

Upon graduation from Spelman College with a degree in chemistry, Joyce Pitts continued along an atypical career path. She completed a master's degree in pharmacy from the University of Georgia and later attended American University in Washington, D.C. After 25 years as a professional chemist, she returned to Atlanta in 1994. She was active in the First Baptist Church and in civic and volunteer organizations including Mended Hearts and Newborns in Need. She loved gardening and genealogy. She was able to compile extensive research on her family as a result of her efforts.

Died: October 16, 2003

Services: October 19, 2003 at the First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia

1966

Janice Faye Mills Nelson

After graduation from Spelman College, Janice completed a master's degree in science from Emory University. She worked at the IBM Corporation for several years before retirement. She led a productive life in retirement before succumbing to a long illness.

Died: March 24, 2003

Services: March 27, 2003, Laurel Land Memorial Chapel, Dallas, Texas

2001

Misty Denise Carter

Upon graduation with a degree in psychology, Misty enrolled at Georgia State in the Public Administration department. She was employed by the S.T.E.P.S. Event Planning Company. She was interested in health and health disparities that led her to enroll as a student at the Rising Spirit Institute of Natural Health in Atlanta. Misty learned early the Spelman tradition of giving of her time and resources. As a recent graduate she annually participated in the New Student Orientation History and Traditions program as an alumnae facilitator and also volunteered with other local organizations.

Died: September 4, 2004



Photo: Brad Smith

Reunion In Memoriam service 2004.

Services: September 10, 2004, at the Lewis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Fayetteville, North Carolina

Posthumous recognition of Spelman alumnae

High School '00

Georgia Dwelle Rooks

See Take Note!

Former Student (Circa 1919)

Sarah McClendon Murphy (1892-1954)

Personal Achievement: Was inducted posthumously into the Georgia Women of Achievement, Inc. at the annual ceremony held at Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia. The former First Lady Rosalynn Carter founded the historic education nonprofit organization as a way to honor women who have made extraordinary contributions to the citizens of Georgia. "Mama Sarah," as Mrs. Murphy was called, started a residential school, the Sarah Divinia Murphy Home, in 1935. After Sarah died in 1954, the Home was taken over by the Women's Division of the Methodist Church in 1961 and re-named the Murphy-Harpst Children's Centers, Inc. The *Savannah Tribune* denotes her achievements in the article, "Sarah McClendon Murphy Among Georgia Women of Achievement Honorees."

Former Student (Circa 1942)

Esther Rolle

See Take Note!



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