Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship 25th Anniversary

For a quarter century, Boston College has awarded the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship to juniors whose service and dedication to the community reafﬁrms the life and works of the civil rights leader. To help commemorate the 25th anniversary of the King Scholarship, Chronicle invited past recipients to reﬂect on the award’s impact and meaning on their lives.

Darcey Clark
Year Awarded: 1992 (First recipient)
Name: Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York

“Winning the Martin Luther King Scholarship caused me to ponder my life after Dr. King and his dream. I dedicated my life to public service just as he gave his life serving others. I have personally given my life to God and ask Him now to be a voice for the voiceless. My career in law has given me the power and opportunity to speak out against injustice, and at the same time, to seek and achieve justice and equality in my community.”

Rufus L. Caine
Name: Government Relations Consultant with Ross Real Estate, which helps non-proﬁt secure federal support for funding and regulatory needs

“As a scholarship recipient I was reminded of how Martin Luther King’s life and death illustrate that while no nation can ever fully realize perfect justice, perfect equality, or perfect liberty, leadership in public interest recognizes that we can and must do better to tangibly advance those ends. Dr. King used his voice and actions as a testament to the power and potential to influence the momentum of history and all diverse cultural backgrounds.”

Saya Hillman
Year Awarded: 1996
Name: Owner, Digital Editor for Mac ‘n Cheese Productions

“When I first read the Martin Luther King Scholarship application, I knew I wouldn’t be selected. When I sat in a most intimidating interview session, at the head of a seemingly 50-foot conference table, I feared that the questions of seemingly 50 committee members, I knew my answers were simple and less profound than those of my peers. At the banquet, when I read the basis of the other nominees, with their extensive activities, volunteers, and accolades, I knew I didn’t measure up. When Fr. Leahy called my name, when friends on either side of me urgently whispered to get up so I sat down, I knew there was a mistake or another Saya in Lyons Dining Hall.

Yet here I am, nine years after that magical evening, so thankful that I dismissed what I knew and allowed myself to dream. When confronted with a challenge or the daunting, I peer backwards to pull motivation from past success. I chose two years ago to leave behind such nine to ﬁve perks as guaranteed paychecks, paid vacation, and affordable health insurance for the scary world of self-employment. It turned out to be one of my best decisions.

Now, as I ﬁnally transition from day dreams andBlueprints to concrete steps towards realizing a professional dream, producing a documentary on children from a low-income Chicago neighborhood whom I’ve grown to know over the past four years as a volunteer at their school, I am nervous and questioning. Goals for the project – PBS airtime, a sweep of the ﬁlm festival circuit, and most importantly, catalyzing outsiders to eradicate the gang violence, homelessness, and atrocious academic environments faced by these admirable small beings – perhaps are bit a high, perhaps even into the unrealistic realm. But the MLK banquet and its aftermath gave me conﬁdence to aspire for what I know will never happen. Because sometimes it does.”

Candace Nichols Carter
Year Awarded: 1997
Name: Producer: “The Oprah Winfrey Show”

“The Martin Luther King Scholarship award was an amazing honor for me to receive. I remember the dinner and giving me my acceptance speech. I also fondly remember all of my friends and family who gathered to watch me accept the award. I am committed personally and professionally to helping people live their best lives. That was my intention when I started the tutoring program at BC and that is what I do every day.

I am currently teaching toddlers and preschoolers through a children’s educational TV show, “It’s Hip Hop, Baby!” I developed a series where children learn key developmental concepts while they’re having fun. It’s edutainment at its best! The Martin Luther King Scholarship award is one of the most profound honors in my life since Boston College. Martin Luther King Jr. lived his life to serve all of us — and I am honored to have been recognized in his name.”

The Scientific Method

Scholarship winner envisions King’s dream in the fields of science

By Stephen Gawlik

Martin Luther King Jr. ’s most famous speech is one that detailed his dream of racial harmony. Now, Jacqueline Grant ’83 — this year’s winner of the annual Boston College scholarship named for King — hopes to help young people spin their own dreams.

“A native of Mill Valley, Calif., who is planning a career in the biotech industry, Grant would like to develop a “mentorship program between biotech companies and academic institutions to expose students of color to the various ﬁelds of science at an early age.”

Grant, who will pursue a doctorate in neuroscience before heading into industry, credits King with giving her an inspiration to move toward her goals.

“He thought so highly of the work and thought we need to do it so that I can too make a difference in society, especially in the scientiﬁc and educational communities,” she said.

Grant received the honor at the annual Martin Luther King Schol- arship Award Banquet held Feb. 13 in the Welch Dining Room of Lyons Hall. Faculty, administra- tors, students and alumni gathered for the event, which marked the scholarship’s 25th anniversary.

“The Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship, an award, which provides 75 per- cent of a year’s tuition, is presented each year at Boston College to a junior who reﬂects Dr. King’s philosophy in his or her life and work.”

Grant and the other 2007 scholarship recipients, Trevor Bass, Martin Francois, Brittany Macklin and Lauren Weaver were honored at the ban- quet.

Stephen J. Pemberton ’89, a former senior assistant direc- tor of undergraduate admission at BC who is chief diversity ofﬁcer and vice-president of diversity and educational communities, called Grant the winner of the annual Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Award.

University President William P. Leahy, S.J., presents the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship to Jacqueline Grant at the Feb. 13 King Scholarship Awards Banquet in Lyons Hall. (Photo by Suzanne Camarata)

John Mahoney Jr., Prof. Andrew Buni (History), Bookstore Branch Manager Brenda Osborne and others from the ranks of faculty, administration and even custodial staff with whom he used to serve with at BC.

“It is an honor to come back here,” said Pemberton. “Boston College will always be my home.”

He said that corporate America is beginning to embrace the no- tion of diversity in the workplace and that it is now a “mainstream” value, no longer “the sideshow.”

Interviewed recently, Grant, who says she was left “speechless” by the award, expressed her color, she said, “For me, being multi-racial...I don’t see myself belonging to one racial group and so I think that I do allow me to reach out not only to the AHANA community but to whites as well.”

In her future, Grant wants to work at giving opportunities to young people of color. “I want to go into a biomedical or biotech company and man- age projects, but first I also want to have a strong scientiﬁc back- ground,” said Grant, who is inter- ested in the interplay of biology and psychology in the ﬁeld of neurobiology.

“My career goal is to enter the biotechnology industry because it is at the forefront of bringing new scientiﬁc discoveries to clinical use that have the potential to inﬂuence and improve many lives,” she said.

Grant has already got- ten a lot of help from people through her scientiﬁc endeavors. She is working with Austr. Prof. Elizabeth Kensinger (Psychology) in her Cognitive and Af- fective Neuroscience Laboratory in McGinley Hall.

This past summer she served in a lab at California Polytechnic University studying Huntington’s disease.

“She was really, really good and a lot of fun,” she said, crediting the program with helping steer her toward her goals.

Grant says she is planning to study for an MBA to go along with a doctorate in neuroscience. A combination she hopes will help her attain a leadership position in industry.

“I hope to inspire other scientists and other students of all diverse cultural backgrounds to actively work against racism while pursuing their passions and dreams.”

“Dr. King’s philosophy and work in- spires me to believe that I too can make a difference in society, especially in the scientiﬁc and educational com- munities,” says Grant. “I hope to in-spire other scientists and other students of all diverse cultural backgrounds to actively work against racism while pursuing their passions and dreams.”

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