

Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship 25th Anniversary

The Scientific Method

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

BY STEPHEN GAWLIK
STAFF WRITER

Martin Luther King Jr.'s most famous speech is one that detailed his dream of racial harmony. Now, Jacqueline Grant '08 — 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 neurobiology before heading into industry, credits King with giving her an inspiration to move toward her goals.

"Dr. King's philosophy and work invigorates me to believe that I too can make a difference in society, especially in the scientific and educational communities," she said.

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

The Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship award, which provides 75 percent of senior year tuition, is presented each year at Boston College to a junior who reflects King's philosophy in his or her life and work. Grant and the other 2007 scholarship candidates, Trevor Bass, Marvin Francois, Brittany Macklin and Lauren Weaver were honored at the banquet.

Stephen J. Pemberton '89, a former senior assistant director of undergraduate admission at BC who is chief diversity officer and vice-president of diversity and inclusion at Monster.com, was the featured speaker. University President William P. Leahy, SJ, and the 2006 MLK Scholarship winner Alex Bradshaw '07 also offered remarks, as did the inaugural scholarship winner, Darcel Clark '83.

Pemberton discussed his experiences as both student and administrator at Boston College, remarking that his presence on campus felt like a homecoming. He thanked many of those in attendance, including Undergraduate Admissions Director



University President William P. Leahy, SJ, 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 notion of diversity in the workplace and that it is now a "mainstream" value, no longer "the sidecar."

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 the work that I do has allowed me to be able 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 manage projects, but first I also want to have a strong scientific background," said Grant, who is interested 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 gotten a start on helping people through her scientific endeavors. She is working with Asst. Prof. Elizabeth Kensinger (Psychology) in her Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory in McGuinn Hall. This past summer she served in a lab at California Polytechnic University studying Huntington's disease.

"It was really, really hard 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," she said.

gratitude at being cited alongside classmates with such impressive credentials and abilities.

"I was just honored to be a finalist," said Grant. "Having both my parents there and all my friends there to see me win meant so much."

For Grant, applying for the scholarship made her realize how her own work at BC as a student, AHANA scholar, resident assistant, volunteer with Teach for America and involvement in other activities was closely aligned with that of the legendary civil rights leader.

"Dr. King spoke to the entire community, not just people of

For a quarter century, Boston College has awarded the Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship to juniors whose service and dedication to the community recalls 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.

Darcel Clark

Year Awarded: 1982 (first recipient)

Now: Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York

Winning the Martin Luther King Scholarship caused me to pattern 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 to use me 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.

Suzanne Camarata



2002 photo



Rufus L. Caine

Year Awarded: 2002

Now: Government Relations Consultant with Russ Reid Company, which helps non-profits 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 reach the heights of 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's audacious vision, pragmatic commitment to results, resistance to indifference, resilience, and courage, provide a great example of how to lead for the benefit of the common good—lessons public servants can ill afford to forget.

Saya Hillman

Year Awarded: 1999

Now: 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, in front of the firing 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 bios of the other nominees, with their extensive activities, volunteerism, 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 as I sat dazed, 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 life decisions.

Now, as I finally transition from day dreams and blueprints to concrete steps towards realizing a professional dream, producing a documentary on children from a low-income Chicago neighborhood whom I've gotten 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 adorable small beings — perhaps arch a bit 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: 1990

Now: 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 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 everyday.

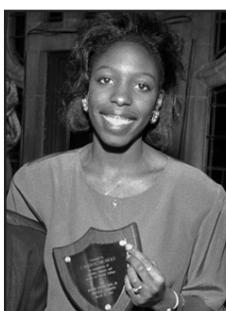
I am currently teaching toddlers and preschoolers through a children's educational DVD called, "It's Hip Hop, Baby!" I developed a series where children learn key developmental concepts while they're having fun.

I believe winning the Martin Luther King Jr. award really set the stage for this project and all of the service 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.

1999 photo



1990 photo



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