

King Scholarship Award Winner

# Olivier Sees Market for Scholarship, Service

BY MELISSA BEECHER,  
STAFF WRITER

From selling sugar and candy in a tiny general store in Saint Lucia to brushing elbows with financial titans on Wall Street, Gerrel Olivier, '10, has already experienced the great many facets of the finance world.

"A lot of people think you go into this industry for the money and that's not really my motivation," said Olivier, winner of the 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Award. "I actually love it. I like reading the *Wall Street Journal*. I consider it a hobby of mine. If I can work doing a hobby, than that would be greatly beneficial. It will help me obtain my longer term goals."

A combination of service and scholarship helped Olivier rise to the top of an extremely competitive finalist pool for the award, which he received from University President William P. Leahy, SJ, at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Committee's 27th Annual Award Banquet on Feb. 11.

Olivier grew up in Randolph, Mass., and spent summers with his grandmother in a small village in Saint Lucia, an island nation in the Caribbean. When he wasn't playing with his cousins, he was helping in his grandmother's shop, one that has since expanded to a thriving "mini-Walmart" thanks to a family loan.

"It spurred an interest in microfinance," said Olivier. He credits a managing director at a developing bank in Saint Lucia with helping him understand the

capital market system in Caribbean countries, a topic that is now the focus of his senior thesis.

Olivier admits that he came to BC reluctantly, after being rejected from University of Pennsylvania. He attended Black Family Weekend and decided that being an Eagle might not be so bad after meeting some "highly motivated" peers.

"I am a different person today because I made the decision to come to BC," said Olivier.

During the last three years Olivier served as the Director of the AHANA Leadership Council Volunteer Corps, participated in the Turkey Creek service initiative and took part in the Mustard Seed Community program in the Dominican Republic. Olivier also remained active in the Boston Public Schools Homeless Student Initiative, a program run by his aunt, Mary William, and one he has volunteered with since he was a boy.

Olivier decided to give up his summers in Saint Lucia to pursue competitive internships. As a freshman, he interned at Wellington Management in Boston and as a sophomore, watched the stock market sputter and crash as a sales and trading intern at Goldman Sachs.

"I was on the trading floor right after Bear Stearns collapsed, Lehman Brothers was on its way downward...I was able to learn about the technical issues that effect stocks in that setting," said Olivier. "It was an exceptional experience."

This summer, Olivier has se-

cured an internship at Morgan Stanley and hopes to be accepted to Harvard Business School during his senior year. He envisions a career developing micro-financing programs for small businesses to fuel economic development both in this country and in Caribbean nations.

That aim was one that may have set Olivier apart when applying for the MLK scholarship. Olivier said although he applied for the prize — 75 percent of his senior year's tuition — as he researched, he was more interested in the spirit of the award.

"To be honest with you, I knew about Martin Luther King Jr. through school, but never took the personal time to really study his philosophy and ideals," said Olivier. "Somewhere in researching, I started to realize that I wanted the scholarship, not for the perks that came with it, but for the honor to be a scholar in his name."

"I bought his autobiography and read through it within a week of the application date and...realized I was passionate about similar issues: being a scholar before being a humanitarian. Martin Luther King Jr. focused on understanding issues before he spoke about them. He focused on education first."

King's longtime friend, Walter C. Carrington, former US ambassador to Nigeria and Senegal, was the keynote speaker at the ceremony on Feb. 11 in the Welch Dining Room. Carrington — who founded the first Harvard chapter of the NAACP — recalled watching his fraternity brother King



Gerrel Olivier, '10, speaks at the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Banquet after receiving congratulations from his parents Elizabeth and Ludolph (below) for winning the 2009 Martin Luther King Jr. Scholarship Award. (Photos by Justin Knight)



deliver a speech on the Washington mall, and then making an emotional return to that very spot on Barack Obama's inauguration day.

"It's been a long road to get to where we are today. The number of black students in this audience tonight probably exceeds the number of black underclassmen in all the colleges of New England in the 1940s," said Carrington, who

introduced his guest, Tom Simmons, the oldest living African-American graduate from Boston College Law School.

Carrington said King's principals of education, nonviolent resistance and international diplomacy are lessons "like the Olympic torch, passed from one generation to the next."

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## Boston College Helping Hands-On Relief Effort in Haiti



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"There is nowhere for people to put the mud except for the middle of the streets. Houses are covered, some with two or three, others with up to six or seven feet of mud," said Law. "People there lost everything and have nothing."

For two weeks, Law and Galinsky lived in a former hotel HODR had secured. In the yard outside the building, volunteers constructed concrete wells to rebuild clean water sources. Each evening, volunteers gathered to

eat a dinner of rice and beans together and talk with local volunteers or participate in community events.

Each day, however, was all business. The HODR model does not charge volunteers a participation fee, but rather asks people to simply show up and be willing to work. In exchange, food and lodging are provided. In Haiti, work means an eight-hour day where volunteers do the backbreaking work of mud removal and infrastructure rebuilding.

To date 130 volunteers from 14 countries have cleaned enough houses to allow 1,000 residents to return home. More than 12 well platforms have been built and HODR has led efforts to clean and paint the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Apparition School, which serves 600 orphan children, and the Sisters' Community Center and Medical Clinic.

"One day we went to the tent

camps to see the displaced families, and that was very difficult because for them, there was no end in sight," said Law. "The children had so much energy and were so excited to see people who wanted to play with them."

"Twenty local (Haitian) volunteers would come with us and work the whole day helping the people in the community. Getting to know them and the volunteers from other countries was a really meaningful part of the trip," said Galinsky.

HODR has pledged to remain in Haiti until the end of March, and in that time hopes to help as many families as possible.

"What we are doing might only be clearing one room in one house on a given day, but it's a start," said Howard. "Neighbors and other residents come out and help because they know where to begin rebuilding. Sometimes that's what a community needs most: a place to start."

For more information on Hands On Disaster Response, visit [hodr.org](http://hodr.org).

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—Lauren Galinsky, '09 (left)