

# Harvard Black Alumni Society

holiday newsletter 2009

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## MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE



**Seasons Greetings!!!** This year marks a pivotal time for our community, as many of us find ourselves facing greater challenges than we have in recent memory. While the circumstances, challenges and motivations that we face may be unique to us as individuals, we continue to come together to engage in powerful discourse which will have a positive impact beyond Harvard.

Since its founding in 2002, the Harvard Black Alumni Society (HBAS) has been committed to building and strengthening relationships among black alumni, students, faculty and administrators at the University.

As an organization, we continue to establish points of connection between our membership and foster black alumni participation in University policy and student initiatives. Through the Early College Awareness Program, we offer alumni the opportunity to serve as ambassadors and provide information about the college application and financial aid process to eighth graders who will likely become the first in their family to attend college. HBAS also continues to award fellowships to students who have proven their dedication to

sharing their talents and abilities with underserved communities and who plan to pursue careers in the public sector. Thanks to the generosity and support of the HBAS family, this year, we were able to award our 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Service Summer Fellowship. Finally, with the revitalization of Harvard Black Alumni Weekend, HBAS continues to attract record numbers of black alumni, students and faculty to campus to reflect on the ways in which we, as Harvard black degree holders, can contribute to the realization of success and advancement of economically disadvantaged minorities.

We each possess valuable gifts; during this holiday season, we sincerely hope that each of you will pause and take this opportunity to contribute your gifts, either your time or your resources, to the Harvard Black Alumni Society. The continued support and charity of alumni has been critical to our success to date and has allowed us to offer the programming and services you have come to know. Inside this newsletter, you will find more information about how you can get involved in and/or support our efforts. Again, we wish you and your family a joyous and prosperous holiday season and look forward to serving you.

# BLACK ALUMNI WEEKEND 2009

**Justin Alexander AB '04, BAW Co-Chair**

**Natalya Davis AB '04, BAW Co-Chair**

**Heather Johnston AB '86, BAW Co-Chair**

When the market took a major dive last September, some questioned whether it was appropriate to move forward with our plans to host Harvard Black Alumni Weekend (HBAW). Americans were losing their homes and jobs and a large number of alumni were out of work. We forged ahead, believing that a small number of alums would return to campus, but nothing was guaranteed.

**From start to finish, this year's HBAW was successful beyond our imagination.** Powerful, inspiring and great fun, more than 600 alumni, students and guests gathered on campus to celebrate the legacy of blacks at Harvard, reflect on their Harvard experiences and help influence the Harvard of the future.

**We would like to thank each and every one of you for your support.** Whether you were able to attend or not, we need you and we appreciate you. We would like to take this opportunity to share some highlights from the weekend.

The moving address from our University President contextualized the experiences of black Americans in the history of Harvard. President Faust spoke eloquently of both the peaks and valleys of our journey - from Richard T. Greener, the first black to graduate from the University in 1870, to the first black woman to apply for (and be denied) admission to the law school,



and now, to the current freshman class of 2013 with the largest percentage of blacks ever with 10 percent.

Our diverse panel discussions proved to be animated showcases for the passions and talents of participants and audience members alike. In addition, attendees took full advantage of the many opportunities for socializing and reconnecting with one another. The guided tour of the Sackler Art Museum, Chris Rock's "Good Hair" and Spike Lee's "Passing Strange" were extremely popular, and the meals, including our Sunday Brunch featuring The Kuumba Singers, offered time to sit down and break bread in fellowship.

On a very humorous note, "old school" and "new school" debated the entire weekend about whether forty was the new twenty and whether e-mail works better than picking up the phone. The battle was finally put to rest on the dance floor of the Boston Park Plaza ballroom, when Keynote Speaker Jim Johnson



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AB '83 JD '86 challenged Generation Y to a dance-off at the Saturday Gala. It was a photo finish, but "old school" took home the trophy for best moves, including "The Bump."

Most notably, Johnson's keynote address served as a powerful reminder to the weekend's attendees that as we continue to prosper and make advancements we must also continue to connect with and inspire economically disadvantaged blacks. Finally, the attendance of Alphonse "Buddy" Fletcher Jr. AB '87 allowed us the long-overdue opportunity to pay tribute to a man who has given our entire nation so much, including the extraordinary gift of African-American scholarship at the highest of levels.

For many, HBAW represented their first visit to Harvard in years. Indeed, most attendees had been students during the sometimes-difficult years between the establishment of the Afro-American Studies Department in 1969 and the ending of apartheid in South Africa in 1994. We are grateful that with the support of the Harvard Alumni Association and the Office of the President, HBAS could facilitate this re-

acquaintance with Harvard. It belongs to all of us.



We hope that the 2009 celebration of our legacy will serve as a catalyst for renewed commitment

to participating in the Harvard Black Alumni Society's future, and encourage alumni to leverage their collective intellect and capabilities toward a course of action to address the issues of utmost importance to our community.

## SURVEY

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have not done so yet, we encourage you to complete the HBAW survey online at [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org) by clicking on the "Black Alumni Weekend 2009" tab, and provide feedback to the planning committee as soon as possible. The survey should take no longer than five minutes and will be extremely helpful to the HBAW committee in planning the next event.

## PICTURES

Pictures from the weekend and a transcript of President Faust's speech are now available online under the "Black Alumni Weekend 2009" tab.

## T-SHIRTS

We still have t-shirts from the weekend for sale. BAW t-shirts cost \$25 each or are free with

any donation to HBAS over \$50. Email [hbasmoston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasmoston@yahoo.com) with your size request. Please note size small is sold out.



# HBAS President Steps Down and Assumes New Role as Development Chair

**After seven years**

of remarkable service to the organization, **HBAS President, Chris-Tia Donaldson AB '00 JD '03** announced at this past Harvard Black Alumni Weekend that she was stepping down as national



President to become HBAS Development Chair. As President and a founder of the organization, Donaldson has overseen the growth and development of HBAS since its inception in 2002. She has been involved in every aspect of the organization from the development of local chapters, the writing of the bylaws, the planning of the past three black alumni weekends, fundraising for the public service fellowship, and the creation of the HBAS website. In a recent interview, Donaldson shared the following with the newsletter committee.

**Where do you find the time to be so committed to HBAS?** We founded the Harvard Black Alumni Society back in 2002, when I was in law school and had plenty of time on my hands. When I graduated from Law School in 2003 and started working for my law firm, we were trying to lay the foundation for the organization and create a sustainable operating model, so it was somewhat challenging at times to juggle HBAS while working 80 hours a week at my law firm. But now, after seven years, things have gotten to the point where the organization pretty much runs itself. I also have an amazingly dedicated board and extremely committed local representatives who have all helped to take the organization to the next level. We have also hired a virtual assistant and outsourced many of the administrative tasks that we used to do when we were younger.

**What is your fondest memory of HBAS?**

This past Black Alumni Weekend had to be my best memory of HBAS. It was great to see alums from the 1970s and 1980s expressing their desire to get more involved in the organization. It was also great to see alums from

all classes and generations interacting with one another, sharing advice, encouraging one another, dancing together, etc.

**What do you hope to accomplish as Development Chair?**

The first thing I would like to do is establish a fundraising committee. I am looking for two individuals to serve as my co-chairs, as well as a team of individuals to help with fundraising going forward. **My primary goal is to start building an endowment for HBAS, so that we can ensure that Harvard Black Alumni Weekend and the HBAS Public Service Fellowship remain funded. We also need to work to establish a reserve fund for operations to protect the organization against down turns in the economy.** I hope to accomplish this by increasing alumni annual giving and building relationships with corporate sponsors, in particular luxury good companies such as Tiffany & Co., Mercedes Benz, Four Seasons, etc.

**Why is alumni giving important? Doesn't Harvard provide financial support to HBAS?**

HBAS does not currently receive any financial support from Harvard. Alumni giving is important, because it helps us to ensure that we can continue to grow as a community as well as expand our reach beyond Harvard. In addition to funding Black Alumni Weekend and the Public Service Fellowship, alumni/ae gifts help to sustain local chapter activities and operations (e.g. BBQs, brunches, happy hours), support student activities and events and allow HBAS to make resources available

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to students, parents and high school guidance counselors interested in learning more about admission to the University.

**What do you hope to see HBAS to become in the future?** I definitely think we have managed to build a cohesive alumni community, but I am hoping we can leverage our collective resources to bridge that gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” and make Harvard and a college education, generally, realistic options for black and minority youth through alumni programming and events, such as the Early College Awareness Program.

## Finally, tell us about your new book, *Thank God I'm Natural*?

I just finished writing my first book, *Thank God I'm Natural: The Ultimate Guide to Caring for and Maintaining Natural Hair*. I wrote the book because I wanted to help dispel many of the myths and misconceptions about natural hair and help black women to make healthier lifestyle choices. You can check out my website online at

[www.thankgodimnatural.com](http://www.thankgodimnatural.com) or stop by my blog at <http://thankgodimnatural.wordpress.com>.

Books are available for purchase online at Amazon.com or at your local Barnes & Noble bookstore and make the perfect holiday gift for that special woman in your life.

I think it goes without saying that Chris-Tia has done an excellent job as President. We have been extremely lucky to have her. If you would like to contact Chris-Tia, she can be reached at [cdonalds@post.harvard.edu](mailto:cdonalds@post.harvard.edu).

## THE HARVARD BLACK ALUMNI SOCIETY OF NEW YORK ADDRESSES THE HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT CRISIS



Less than a week after our historic alumni weekend, the Harvard Black Alumni Society of New York co-sponsored a dynamic panel with the Scholastic Corporation, America's Promise Alliance and Woodside Press event titled, “Working to Address the High School Dropout Crisis: The Civil Rights Issue of Our Generation.” The event sold out less than week after its first announcement, and engaged well over 400 attendees in deep dialogue around the crisis. The discussion convened an esteemed panel of experts who stood at the nexus of policy and practice, representing academia, national service, teaching and policy-making. Dean Kathleen McCartney of the Harvard Graduate School of Education moderated the panel, which included:

- Assistant Secretary Russlynn Ali (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights)
- Michael Brown, CEO and Co-Founder (City Year)
- Chancellor Joel Klein (New York City Department of Education)
- Dr. Pedro Noguera (Peter L. Agnew Professor of Education at New York University)

For more information or to get involved in future chapter events, please email HBAS New York's leadership: Enoch Woodhouse AB '07 at [ewoodhouse@post.harvard.edu](mailto:ewoodhouse@post.harvard.edu) and Saratu Nafziger JD '05 at [saratugrace@gmail.com](mailto:saratugrace@gmail.com).

# HBAS Expands Its Service Commitment

HBAS has expanded its service commitment through new initiatives and programming centered around education. This year, the organization joined forces with various Harvard Clubs across the nation to participate in the Early College Awareness Program (ECAP). The goal of the Early College Awareness Program is to encourage middle school students and their parents to consider and plan for a college education. ECAP targets families from communities of limited means, who may not be aware of the options available to them. In many cases, these students will be the first in their family to attend college. ECAP also aims to alleviate the challenges of learning the academic requirements and navigating the application and financial aid process that many families face. The annual program takes the form of a half-day seminar and includes the following segments:



A panel that included a college student, a high school counselor, an admissions officer from St Johns College, a speaker on financial aid, and a substitute teacher in middle schools, talks to 7th and 8th grade students and their parents on how best to prepare for college.

- **ACADEMIC OVERVIEW**—an introduction to basic academic requirements for attending a four-year college or university
- **FINANCIAL AID**—an overview of the financial resources available to help fund a college education
- **LOCAL SUCCESS STORIES**—a discussion with college students or recent grads about the challenges and opportunities they encountered on their path to college
- **MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER**—a presentation from a local business, sports, media, or community member emphasizing the value of a college education

We also introduce families to various community resources (tutoring, mentoring, scholarship, creative writing, extracurricular, etc.) that can help them on their journey to college. For more information or to get involved in ECAP, please email HBAS Recruiting Chair Victoria Shannon AB '03 JD '07 at [hbasboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasboston@yahoo.com).

## ADMISSIONS

If your son, daughter, family member or mentee is applying to Harvard and has questions about the admissions process, then please contact HBAS Recruiting Chair, Victoria Shannon AB '03 JD '07 at [hbasboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasboston@yahoo.com).

For a list of dates where Harvard College Admissions will be in your area, please visit <http://exploringcollegeoptions.org/> and/or [http://www.admissions.college.harvard.edu/utilities/travel\\_schedule/index.cgi](http://www.admissions.college.harvard.edu/utilities/travel_schedule/index.cgi) for additional details or more information.

# GET MORE INVOLVED

## GET INVOLVED IN YOUR LOCAL CHAPTER

Every year, each local chapter hosts a variety of events, from an annual Holiday Party in December to panel events for the HBAS membership. If you are interested in joining your local chapter's executive board or helping to plan an event in your area, please email HBAS Alumni Affairs Chair Lawrence Adjah AB '06 at [adjah@post.harvard.edu](mailto:adjah@post.harvard.edu).

## JOIN THE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

We are looking for enthusiastic alumni/ae to help HBAS continue to raise funds for the next Black Alumni Weekend, the HBAS public service fellowship and local events. **The committee will focus on reaching out to both alumni and corporate sponsors, specifically luxury goods companies.** To learn more, email Chris-Tia Donaldson AB '00 JD '03 at [cdonalds@post.harvard.edu](mailto:cdonalds@post.harvard.edu).

## JOIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE

Every year, HBAS awards students interested in pursuing internships in the public sector or areas of social enterprise a stipend for summer living expenses. We are looking for enthusiastic alums to get more involved in the selection process as well as choosing the final candidates for the fellowship. As we enter a new year, we remain committed to global service as a cornerstone of our efforts and one of our key initiatives. If you have any thoughts or suggestions on how HBAS can better serve the community at large or would like to join the public service committee, please email HBAS Student Affairs Chair Kimberly Marshall AB '03 at [hbasboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasboston@yahoo.com).

## BECOME AN EARLY COLLEGE AWARENESS REPRESENTATIVE

The Harvard Black Alumni Society and the School's and Scholarship's Committee of the Harvard Clubs have launched the Early College Awareness Program (ECAP), a new initiative to provide information about the college application and financial aid process to inner-city eighth graders, who will likely become the first in their family to attend college. For more information, email HBAS Recruiting Chair Victoria Shannon AB '03 JD '07 at [hbasboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasboston@yahoo.com).

## HELP WITH RECRUITING

We are always looking for alumni to help interview perspective applicants to the College. These interviews help the admissions office understand the intangible qualities about an applicant that may not be apparent in the application. As a local alumnus/a interviewer, you may have additional information about the local high school or the student's accomplishments, because of your involvement in the community. Furthermore, it is very important that prospective students have the ability to ask questions of and meet a diverse group of Harvard alumni/ae. For more information about alumni interviewing, please contact Marcia Morgan at [mmorgan@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:mmorgan@fas.harvard.edu).

## PLAN THE NEXT HARVARD BLACK ALUMNI WEEKEND

If you are interested in becoming a co-chair or serving on the planning committee for the next HBAW, please email HBAW Co-Chair Heather Johnston AB '86 at [hbasboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasboston@yahoo.com).

# HBAS Announces

## 2009 Summer Public Service Fellowship Winner

HBAS is pleased to announce the winner of this year's HBAS Public Service Fellowship is **Jenna Lester AB '10**. This summer, Jenna volunteered as a medical assistant and teen outreach leader at The Dimock Center in Roxbury, MA. Founded in 1862, The Dimock Center is an urban community health center that has a long history of providing care to underserved members of greater Boston and in particular African-Americans who are from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Throughout the summer, Jenna was able to interact directly with the patients as an intern in the OB/GYN clinic, to perform medical tests and microscopic examination of specimens, and shadow health providers. Many of the patients Jenna worked with had limited knowledge about their own health care needs, and so she assisted in the creation of prenatal information for expectant mothers that contained basic nutrition information and details the progression of a typical pregnancy. In her own words, Jenna writes:



*A resounding theme throughout my time at Dimock was the need for basic education for each patient we were serving. Many did not know simple physiological functions of the body. One prenatal patient in her late teens who visited the clinic did not know what a uterus was. I was able to answer all of their*

*questions and gained an understanding about presenting information in a manner that was appropriate for people who often had limited educational attainment. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to have a role in educating these young women so that they could become more informed patients and make better decisions about their health care.*

Jenna also worked with an area teenager to develop a public service announcement on teen pregnancy prevention, which entailed sketching ideas onto storyboards and writing a script to present to the Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN), the organization that filmed and produced this message. Thanks to the HBAS Public Service Fellowship, Jenna says her experiences at Dimock increased her knowledge and skills in the medical setting exponentially. She writes that she is now able to identify clue cells and budding hyphae taken from vaginal specimens. She is comfortable leading patient education sessions and has gained the skills that are needed to teach patients about basic body functions and contraceptives. She also strengthened her leadership skills while working as a teen outreach leader and is proud of her role in developing an important message on teen pregnancy prevention that will potentially reach thousands of teens in the Boston area.

\*\*\*\* Jenna's summer internship was made possible thanks to the generosity of donors to the HBAS Public Service Fellowship Award. While this fellowship program is only one of several transformative initiatives, it is representative of the HBAS mission to connect and support alumni and students in both their personal and communal endeavors and our motto of "Community Building for Our Future." If you would like to join the HBAS Public Service Fellowship Committee, please email [hbasmoston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbasmoston@yahoo.com). To donate to the Fellowship, please contact Christia Donaldson AB '00 JD '03 at [cdonalds@post.harvard.edu](mailto:cdonalds@post.harvard.edu) or click on "Giving to HBAS" online at [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org).



# GIVING TO HBAS

Each year a number of alumni and friends pledge their commitment to the Harvard Black Alumni Society's future by donating to the HBAS Annual Fund. Alumni donations to the Annual Fund make it possible to host events like Harvard Black Alumni Weekend, award Public Service Fellowships to students interested in pursuing summer internships in the public sectors, make resources such as the HBAS Guide to Applying to Harvard College available to prospective students and host local activities and events that bring alumni together for networking and fellowship. The following giving categories may assist you in making your annual donation.

<b>Friend:</b>	<b>\$1 – \$249</b>
<b>Donor:</b>	<b>\$250 – \$499</b>
<b>Patron:</b>	<b>\$500 – \$999</b>
<b>Sponsor:</b>	<b>\$1,000 – \$2,499</b>
<b>Benefactor:</b>	<b>\$2,500 – \$4,999</b>
<b>Trailblazer:</b>	<b>\$5,000 – \$9,999</b>
<b>Visionary:</b>	<b>\$10,000+</b>

Checks should be made payable to the Harvard Black Alumni Society and mailed to:

Harvard Black Alumni Society  
c/o Chris-Tia Donaldson  
910 West Van Buren  
Box #204  
Chicago, IL 60607

You can also donate online at [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org) by clicking on "Giving to HBAS."

**Donations in any amount are 100% tax deductible and will be recognized in our annual newsletter and on our website.** We would also ask that you keep HBAS in mind if your company offers a matching gift program.

## Subscribe to Our List Serv / Update Your Contact Information

HBAS notifies alumni about events and guest speakers in their area using the email address and mailing address you have provided. In an effort to keep you informed about upcoming events, please make sure your contact information is up to date. If you are a new user, you can subscribe to the list serv by going to <http://hbasonline.org/en/users/selfadd.asp>. If you are an existing user, you can edit your user information and mailing list preferences by going to [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org) and logging in using your member ID. If you have forgotten your membership ID, you can retrieve it by following these simple steps:

Click on the "Member Login" button at the left hand side of the page

Click on the "Forgot your password" link

Enter the email address to which this email was sent and wait for your temporary password

Change your password to something you can remember for easy future access

## LOCAL EVENTS

HBAS will be continuing its tradition of hosting events to strengthen our alumni communities across the nation. For more information, please contact your local chapter president:

### **HBAS Atlanta**

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stacyeb@gmail.com

### **HBAS Chicago**

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### **HBAS Washington D.C.**

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Ahimsa Hodari MPP '08  
ahimsa.hodari@gmail.com

## HBAS INAUGURAL COCKTAIL CELEBRATION

This past January, over 400 black Harvard alumni came together for an evening to celebrate the historic election of President Barack Obama HLS '91 as the 44th President of the United States. The HBAS Inaugural Cocktail Reception was held at Clyde's Restaurant in Washington, D.C. Pictures from the event are now available online at [www.hbasonline.org](http://www.hbasonline.org).



# DONORS

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# CONTACTUS

For more information, please feel free to contact the Harvard Black Alumni Society or any of the following black organizations/institutions on campus.

- **Harvard Black Alumni Society (HBAS)**

Website: <http://www.hbasonline.org>

E-mail: [hbaspboston@yahoo.com](mailto:hbaspboston@yahoo.com)

- **Harvard Black Students Association (BSA)**

Website: <http://www.harvardbsa.com/web/>

E-mail: [president@harvardbsa.com](mailto:president@harvardbsa.com)

- **The David L. Evans Scholarship Fund**

Contact: Andrea Karls at the Harvard University Development Office  
[andrea\\_karls@harvard.edu](mailto:andrea_karls@harvard.edu) or  
(617) 496-6369

- **HBAS Chat/David L. Evans List Serv**

Email: [HBASChat-subscribe@](mailto:HBASChat-subscribe@yahoo.com)

[yahogroups.com](mailto:yahogroups.com) to be added to HBAS Chat. HBAS Chat is a forum where alumni can freely discuss topics relating to current events and University happenings and post employment and other pertinent information of interest to Harvard black alumni. Senior Admissions Officer David L. Evans also keeps alumni regularly updated of events affecting black alumni at the University.

- **The Harvard Foundation**

Director: Dr. S. Allen Counter

Website: <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~harvfoun/index.html>

Phone: (617) 495-1527

- **W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African-American Studies**

Director: Dr. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

Website: <http://dubois.fas.harvard.edu>

Phone: (617) 495-8508

Harvard Black Alumni Society  
c/o Chris-Tia Donaldson  
910 W. Van Buren, Box #204  
Chicago, IL 60607

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**\*\* This list reflects the names of donors who had given to HBAS as of October 1, 2009. If we have not included your name in this list, please email HBAS Treasurer Desi Duncker AB '99 at [duncker@post.harvard.edu](mailto:duncker@post.harvard.edu).**