

The Challenger

for students, alumni and friends of The Memphis Challenge

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Cassandra Webster
*Executive Director
The Memphis Challenge*

March 2005



MC Class of 2005

Ivie Baker, IV, Ridgeway
 Rachel Banks, Overton
 India Brown, Ridgeway
 David Brown, Craigmont
 Alyssa Coleman, Cordova
 Bethany Copperidge, Ridgeway
 Dominique Dallas, Germantown
 Catherine Davis, Craigmont
 Kimel Fryer, Cordova
 Justin Glenn, Central
 Whitney Hubbard, White Station
 Larrica Hubbard, Ridgeway
 Tracy Igberaese, White Station
 Keon Jones, Craigmont
 Kristopher Leatherwood, Whitehaven
 Nathaniel Lewis, Craigmont
 Ryan Maxwell, Whitehaven
 Edie McCants, Bartlett
 Laura Moore, Ridgeway
 Gregory Mosby, Jr., Central
 Brittany Neal, Whitehaven
 Adeyinka Okunade, Germantown
 Stephanie Olds, Central
 Vincent Oletu, Ridgeway
 Angelina Pettes, Kingsbury
 Andrenette Sullivan, White Station
 Molisa Thomas, Overton
 La'Sandria Ward, East
 Michelle Wein, Westside
 Kristin Williams, Collierville
 Terrika Williams, Whitehaven
 Jessica Williams, Germantown
 Larry Wilson, Overton
 Nadia Winston, Harding Academy

Celebrating what our future holds at the holiday party

by Kristin Williams, Senior, Germantown High School, MC Class of 2005

The Christmas Holiday is all about fun with friends and family and the MC Holiday Celebration was no exception. Full of warmth (even though it was cold outside) and the spirit of the holidays, the MC Holiday Celebration, held Thursday, Dec. 30, 2004, allowed college students and high school seniors a chance to fellowship, mingle, and share common experiences such as the wonders of participating in Memphis Challenge. Although the winter storm initially postponed the fun, the delay was finally over as the evening opened with an icebreaker that allowed us to learn a little about each other through "networking." We learned our talents, favorite movies, and weird instances that have occurred in our lives.

After a few minutes of frenzied chatting, we quickly discovered who found out most about each other. The college students had the high school seniors beat (they were very talkative), but in the end we all discovered that the seniors could recite most of the people's names in the room, which won them a prize.

The highlight of the evening was a moving rendition of "Ave Maria" by Larry Wilson, a senior at Overton High School. Larry showcased his natural talent as he played the smooth rhythm of the saxophone. It was quite

entertaining. After eating, the college students shared their college experiences and offered words of advice. They reminded us to carefully choose the college that we wanted to attend and to get all the scholarships possible. One college student reminded me of the infamous disease that most high school seniors tend to get – "Senioritis!" Senioritis was prevalent among many of her high school classmates, especially the last semester of high school, and she warned me not to slow the pace.

Seniors were also able to see some of the products of the Memphis Challenge, which enabled us to picture where we would be in a couple of years. Like sponges, we soaked up all of the information the college students shared with us while having fun at the same time.

As Senior Class President, I was able to get to know my senior classmates more personally, network with others I haven't seen in awhile, and meet those I've never

seen. The MC Holiday Celebration was one to remember – it was a great way to end the year and start the New Year celebrating what our future holds.



Kristin Williams



Memphis Challenge college students (L-R) Erika Williams (2003), Jessica Hardy (2002) Eboni Gill (2002) Barry Vanderable (2002), LaVida Johnson (2003), LaKeshia Richardson (2003)



Class of 2005 members (Front, L-R) Gregory Mosby, Yinka Okunade, Edie McCants (Back, L-R) Larry Wilson, Molisa Thomas

Junior MC members mingle and learn

by **Shawn Turner**, Junior, Millington Central High School, 2005 Junior MC

The Junior Memphis Challenge Brunch was certainly an enjoyable event that set a precedent for future gatherings to follow. Held on Tuesday, December 21st, we started our brunch by partaking of delectable food followed by a game called "Mingle." I learned of this icebreaker through the Bridge Builders program; but I felt as though Junior MC students could use this game to loosen up and "break the ice!"

"Mingle" requires its players to get out of their seats, cross their arms in an awkward manner known as "bumpers up," and walk around the room saying, "mingle, mingle, mingle" until instructed to stop. Once stopped, players are to sit in small groups of three to ten individuals and ask spontaneous personal questions to get to know one another. We repeated this game for a total of four rounds, which resulted in us learning a lot about each other.

Later, Michael Harris, our keynote speaker, spoke to us about the interesting world of Information Technology and how our lives will revolve around computers in the future.



Junior MC President Shawn Turner addresses his fellow classmates.



Shawn Turner

Mr. Harris is a Senior Systems Engineer for Trammel Crow and President of You Can Do IT, a non-profit organization that he founded to assist students and adults with their computer training needs. He also reflected on the challenges he experienced as teenager without guidance and direction, and wished there had been a Memphis Challenge in his hometown of New Orleans, LA while growing up.

He emphasized the importance of programs like Memphis Challenge and encouraged us to take advantage of all it offers.

As the Junior Class President, I learned how to assemble a group of people, assist them in getting to know one another, and learned interesting facts about technology. Overall, our holiday brunch was

most enjoyable and a great success.

P.S. I urge your participation in upcoming events!



Junior MC members listen as Michael Harris discusses Information Technology and his non-profit organization, You Can Do IT.

2005 Junior MC

William Baxley, East
Torian Black,
White Station
Jacqueline Boyland,
Melrose
Sherie Byrd, Collierville
Sheryl Byrd, Collierville
Ciara Conway, Cordova
Marjorie Cowan,
Ridgeway
Angela Denman, Melrose
Jazmyne Green,
White Station
Cartier Gwin,
Whitehaven
Mallori Harrell,
White Station
Brittany Holmes,
Wooddale
Erica Hudson, Ridgeway
Angelica Ibezim,
White Station
Seema Janga, Cordova
Ashley Jeans,
White Station
Jerica Jones, Melrose
Jared Lockhart,
Whitehaven
Karmen McPherson,
White Station
Sitra Mekonnen,
Hutchison School
Kiara Rainey, Central
Courtney Robertson,
Melrose
Salama Shelton,
Whitehaven
Danielle Towns,
Whitehaven
Darnell Towns,
Whitehaven
Shawn Turner,
Millington Central
Jonathan Wright,
Lausanne

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by Marcie Graham
*Sophomore, New York
 University,
 MC Class of 2003*

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Making the right college decision for you

by **Jamal Fulton**, Freshman, Yale University, MC Class of 2004

As my taxi turned onto College Street and dropped me at the place that I would call home for the next four years, a million questions filled my head. At that moment, rolling my bag onto the Yale campus and nervously looking for my building, I could never have imagined how interesting, rewarding and challenging my first semester in college would really be.

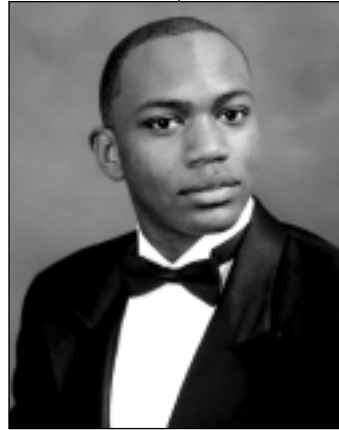
After one of those late night conversations in a common room that Yalies are so prone to having, my friends and I realized something: there is nothing better than finding a college that suits you. In addition to all of the things that I knew I would love about Yale, the real joy came in discovering the things that I hadn't even thought to look for. I had never stopped to think how cool it would be to live in a college housing system (think Harry Potter), or that my proximity to New York City would allow me to see Jay-Z perform in Madison Square Garden on the same day that I made my first visit to the

Metropolitan Museum of Art. It never entered my mind that I would get to go skiing in Vermont or spend spring break in Puerto Rico. The guy who lives in the room next door is the national debate champion, and the girl upstairs is fluent in five languages. I can cite case law adjudicated by my "Blacks and the Law" professor because his other job is as a Supreme Court justice for the state of Connecticut. Very few days went by without me stumbling upon one more reason that I was sure that I had made the right decision.

It may be trite, but it's true that one of the first things that really sank in was the fact that my time in college truly belonged to me. I could decide how much time to spend working, when I wanted to leave for class (or whether I'd go in the first place), and how long my nap would be in the afternoon. I was also allowed to focus on

activities that really interested me. I was elected to the Freshman Class Council and am currently the chairman of that body. During election season, I was an activist in the Democratic Party, campaigning for local candidates and listening to speeches from national figures. Every day was a "tabula rasa," ready to be etched with whatever I deemed important.

Another thing that I learned was that students at Yale work hard, and it didn't take long for me to realize that I was playing a whole new ball game. Soon I adjusted to working well into the morning. Many nights, my statistics problem set showed me who was the boss, and I soon became comfortable with writing a 10-page paper and reading 100 pages rather quickly. But, for every hour of hard work, there were many more of deep conversation, study breaks and plain old goofing off. I cannot recall the number of times I've spent at 1:00 a.m. laughing endlessly and playing around with new friends. This



Jamal Fulton

combination of work and play is one of the things that most impressed me. There was rarely a shortage of good times to be had every weekend, but the same person with whom I party hopped on Friday night would be in the library early Saturday morning.

When I returned to Memphis for break, I found myself grinning uncontrollably whenever anyone asked me if I enjoyed school. For a number of reasons, some of which I cannot adequately express and others that I myself have yet to realize, my first semester of college was nothing short of incredible. New people, new places, new ideas and new experiences intrigued me, challenged me and made me think of things in new ways. All told, it was an unforgettable experience that will neither soon fade from memory nor lose the glow of fondness as I attempt to recall it to others.

Making a lasting impression – MC Winter Workshop

by **Meagan Tate**, Junior, Christian Brothers University, MC Class of 2002

In today's job market there is tremendous competition. With the sharp increase of minority students who are attending college and graduating from prestigious universities, it is imperative that one has the communication skills, motivation, and knowledge of the ABC's of networking to be successful. The ability to sell yourself by promoting your personal and professional attributes, and by thinking/speaking on your feet, creates a foundation for making a lasting impression. On Dec. 28, 2004, Memphis Challenge hosted a Winter Workshop to help Memphis Challengers refresh these skills. At the workshop, we focused on four areas that are essential to professional development – communication skills (verbal/nonverbal), networking/engagement, interview skills and public speaking. During the workshop, Challengers also worked as a group to explore solutions to “sticky situations” in the workplace.

Communication is key to developing good personal and professional relationships. Challengers were encouraged to use both their verbal and nonverbal skills when introducing themselves to the facilitator, Ms. Lisa Smith. After all of the introductions, Ms. Smith offered critiques and told us where improvements were needed. Some of the nonverbal skills that she suggested we practice were positive facial expressions, poise, fluid hand movements, posture and eye contact. She also suggested that we pay close attention to verbal techniques such as articulation, volume, pronunciation, pitch and rate of speech. Although many of the Memphis Challengers laughed about their less than perfect communication skills, the session proved to be very successful. After a little practice, the introductions improved dramatically and we were able to focus on our communicative strengths and weaknesses.



Meagan Tate

The next topic presented was networking. Networking is an area where we all needed help. Ms. Smith explained that networking help to achieve business and personal targets and to prepare for future personal advancement. During the workshop, she spoke of the ABC's of networking which include –attitude, be active, ask questions, be yourself, be specific, commit to networking, collect business cards, and follow up!!! To practice these skills, we simulated a networking atmosphere and each Challenger talked to at least six other people in the room and introduced him or herself, stated what school they attended, their major and minor areas of study, career goals and internship experience. The goal of this networking exercise was to relate some kind of story or fact by which we could remember. After “working the room,” we were asked to recall one thing we remembered about each person, to see if the exercise was effective.

To brush up our interviewing skills, Ms. Smith asked each person various questions such as – Tell me about yourself. What skills do you have? Why do you feel that you would be good for this job? Tell me about a situation when you had to ...? Some of the methods she encouraged us to use were listening carefully so that our answers and comments were appropriate, assertively expressing strengths and accomplishments, speaking confidently and enthusiastically, and asking well-thought out and relevant questions. Also, we were given tips about what not to do for an interview such as, show up late, act defensive or intimidated or bring social lives into the interview. The key words to remember during an interview are Research, Rehearse, and Relax. Again, to practice these skills, we were asked to present a five-minute spiel and answer interview-focused questions from Ms. Smith.

Continued on page 6

2005 Opportunities

Sallie Mae Fund American Dream Scholarship

- ♦ Incoming freshmen and undergraduate students
- ♦ Financial need
- ♦ \$500 – \$5,000
- ♦ Deadline Apr. 15, 2005
- ♦ www.salliemafund.org

Summer Junior Executive Institute

- ♦ High school students interested in business
- ♦ College experience at Indiana University
- ♦ Deadline May 1, 2005
- ♦ www.kelley.iu.edu/ugrad/diversity/jei/home.html

Hattie G. Watkins Scholarship

- ♦ Incoming freshmen and undergraduate students
- ♦ Financial need
- ♦ \$800 renewable
- ♦ Deadline July 1, 2005
- ♦ *Contact Steve Spencer at (800) 445-4903 to request an application*

The Gloria Barron Prize for Young Heroes


- ♦ Ages 8-18
- ♦ Show leadership and courage in public service and our planet
- ♦ \$2,000
- ♦ Deadline Apr. 30, 2005
- ♦ www.barronprize.org

Jackie Robinson Foundation Scholarship


- ♦ High school senior
- ♦ Financial need
- ♦ Deadline Apr. 1, 2005
- ♦ www.jackie-robinson.org

Congressional Black Caucus Fund

- ♦ High school seniors
- ♦ Applications can be submitted year round
- ♦ <http://cbcfcinc.org/Scholarship.html>

MC board members


Roshun Austin
Orange Mound
Development Corporation

The Honorable
George H. Brown, Jr.
Circuit Court Judge 

Shannon Brown
FedEx Express

Darrell T. Cobbins
Commercial Tennessee


Wisdom F. Coleman, DDS
UT Health Sciences Center

David Gillespie
Parker Hannifin
Corporation

Mike Golub
Memphis Grizzlies

Dr. Nancy Hardt
Institute for Women's
Health

Maggie Harris
Time Warner Cable

Odell Horton, Jr. 
UT Health Sciences Center

Pitt Hyde
J.R. Hyde Sr. Foundation

Larry Jensen
Commercial Tennessee

Chris Peck
The Commercial Appeal

Charlie Pleas, III
AutoZone, Inc.

Corie Rivers
Pittco Management

Kristi M. Robinson
First Horizon National
Corporation

Dr. Darryl S. Tukufu
Memphis Urban League,
Inc.

Shawn Welch
Kellogg Company

Winter workshop (continued)

Continued from page 5

Lastly, we learned the art of public speaking and impromptu speaking. When applying for any job or when taking on leadership roles in a field, it is important to be convincing and clearly communicate with the audience. According to Ms. Smith, public speaking is something that few of us could escape and it is important to gain the skills necessary to become an effective speaker. Some tips include know the room, know the audience, turn nervousness into positive energy and visualize. Next, Ms. Smith allowed us to select from a list of topics for impromptu speeches. We then had about two

minutes to prepare before we had to deliver our impromptu speeches. This activity incorporated all of the skills we learned throughout the day and allowed us assess our progress from our first introductions that started the workshop. What a difference a day makes!

The Winter Workshop was very interesting and beneficial. The critiques Ms. Smith and other Challengers offered really helped improve some of the common mistakes we made upon starting the workshop. This workshop truly enhanced the skills we have, and allowed us to be more confident about our professional development.

Logistical Tips for your college visit

If you haven't already, you may be visiting colleges during the next few months. Here are a few tips to get the most out of your tour!

1. When planning a visit, call ahead to schedule a student-guided campus tour.
2. The tour fills in the details that give each school its humanity. Many smaller schools will record your name when you schedule a tour. The benefit is that they will often hold up a tour for a few minutes if you are running late. Parking may be a problem, so allow extra time to find a legal space. And don't assume the tour always leaves from the Admissions Office.
3. A number of colleges provide an information session by an admissions officer either before or after a tour. Inquire about this. Telephone personnel do not always remember to volunteer this information. Should you have an interview, try to schedule it after the tour and information session, so you can speak knowledgeably about the school.
4. Colleges are anxious to accommodate prospective students. If you have a special request such as meeting a department chair, conferring with a coach, sitting in on classes, or staying overnight on campus, necessary arrangements can be made if you provide sufficient advance notice.
5. Assume it is going to take longer to find the campus and park than a map suggests.
6. Make sure to drive around the outskirts of the campus before starting back. This could be your home for the next four years; the surrounding neighborhood can make a difference.
7. The whole family should wear comfortable shoes. You will probably be doing a lot of walking both up hills and up stairs. Dress neatly. If you are scheduled for an interview, dress for the interviewer. It is human nature to judge people by their appearance, so an opinion is being formed about you before a word is said. If your parents accompany you, introduce them to the interviewer before the interview begins.
8. Don't forget to pick up a course catalog. Colleges are trying to control costs, so catalogs are not automatically mailed with applications and viewbooks. It will be a valuable resource in researching a major or deciding on a particular school.

Source: article by Cliff & Sami Kramon ,
Independent College Advisors, www.lunch-money.com

Alumni Network off to a great start

by **Christopher Owens**, Program Associate, Hyde Family Foundations, MC Class of 2000

"I think the Memphis Challenge social was long overdue. It was wonderful not only to reconnect with fellow alum, but also to see goal-oriented individuals in so many different disciplines. I'm excited about the potential of the MC alumni program and I want to encourage more alumni to become active in the future. Great job Chris!"

– Kia Davis, MC Class 1999

"I found it very rewarding and humbling to see and hear about the beautiful strides that fellow alumni of the Memphis Challenge have and are continuing to make. I'm very glad I attended."

– Andrea Wheeler, MC Class 1999

Gathering all Memphis Challenge alumni together is quite a feat.

It takes lots of research, phone calls and e-mails, and luck to find 15 years worth of Challengers.

But on Dec. 21, 2004, the Memphis Challenge Alumni Network took the first steps of uniting alumni by hosting a holiday social at Swig Martini Bar, located in downtown Memphis.

The festive meet-and-greet allowed recent alumni to fellowship with seasoned Challengers established in their fields. Many had

not seen each other since their undergraduate days, while others met for the first time.



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The Memphis Challenge Alumni Network plans to mentor to Memphis Challenge high school seniors while providing a professional network and cultural outlet for alumni. Our primary goal is to make the alumni network the first stop for employers seeking applicants for new positions in the Memphis business world. Our objectives include compiling a directory of all alumni, serving as a fundraising arm for the program and increasing the visibility of Memphis Challenge through recruitment of up-and-coming high school talent.

Within days of the mixer, The Memphis Challenge alumni donated \$300 towards the sustainability of current Memphis Challenge initiatives. The network continues to seek

alumni residing in Memphis and in other parts of the country. Kia Davis, alumna class of 1999 and a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, immediately spread the word about the alumni portion of the Memphis Challenge when she was called.

"I've contacted a few people in my class that I still keep in touch with and asked them to send me their contact info and that of anyone else they might know," said Kia.

As Challengers, we are canvassing the professional landscape in Memphis. The Alumni Network extends a call to action to Memphis Challenge classes from 1989-2000: We need to hear from you! Be engaged and an active participant in the next phase of your professional development. Pick up the torch of leadership and pass it on to your fellow alumni.

E-mail me at alumni@memphischallenge.org for more information on how to become involved.



Christopher Owens



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Mark Your Calendars – upcoming dates

Contact information *The Memphis Challenge*

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Yolanda Dozier
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ydozier@memphischallenge.org

Academic Advisor

Stephen Leake
501.256.3552
steveperi@aol.com

March 9

Spring Workshop

March 10

Networking Workshop
(seniors only)

March 12

KIPP Tutoring
KIPP Diamond Academy, 2109 Howell Ave.

March 21

Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program
BRIDGES, 477 N. Fifth St.

March 23

Junior MC Workshop

March 24

Interview Skills Workshop
(seniors only)

March 28

Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program
BRIDGES, 477 N. Fifth St.

March 30

Board Meeting

April 2

KIPP Tutoring
KIPP Diamond Academy, 2109 Howell Ave.

April 4

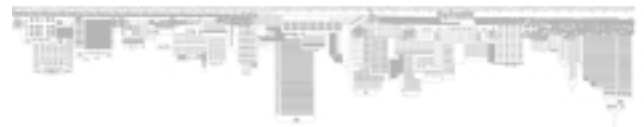
Toastmasters Youth Leadership Program
BRIDGES, 477 N. Fifth St.

April 12

Time Management Workshop

April 16

KIPP Tutoring
KIPP Diamond Academy, 2109 Howell Ave.



Mission: The Memphis Challenge endeavors to reach outstanding Memphis-area minority students, assist them in attaining admission to nationally recognized colleges and universities, and place them in internships with Memphis-area firms. The ultimate goal is for these students to accept the Memphis Challenge and return to Memphis in the future as community leaders.

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