

The Challenger

for students, alumni and friends of The Memphis Challenge

*“The mission of
The Memphis
Challenge is an
idea whose time
has come.”*

– Darrell Cobbins

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A Message from our board chairman

Dear Friends and Supporters:

The French poet Victor Hugo wrote “... an invasion of armies can be resisted, but not an idea whose time has come.” The mission of the Memphis Challenge is an idea whose time has come. Founded in 1989 by Pitt Hyde with a handful of seniors from East High School, our efforts to date have helped more than 400 talented Memphis students realize their full potential and become productive citizens and community leaders. However, our work is not done. I am overjoyed to serve as Board Chairman of the Memphis Challenge this year. At no time in Memphis’ history have the doors to opportunity been so wide open, and we are focused on developing quality students who will seize these opportunities.

As we begin 2006, I would like for you to know that the Board of Directors and staff of Memphis Challenge are vigorously working to create a renewed vision for this organization that has opened doors for so many Memphis students. We have embarked upon a strategic planning process that will chart the course for the Memphis Challenge to be as relevant and viable in the

future as it has been for the past 17 years. We look forward to sharing this plan with you upon completion in the Spring.

This year’s Memphis Challenge class is the most robust of any other. Our efforts to serve 71 new students this year exemplifies our commitment to



Darrell Cobbins
*Chairman of the Board
The Memphis Challenge*

making a positive impact on the lives of as many students as we possibly can, while in turn broadening our ability to effect in the future leadership of Memphis and Shelby County. As you know, positive change does not happen overnight. We are committed to our students, our city, and our mission.

We ask for your continued support, encouragement and involvement as the Board and Executive Director Cassandra Webster work to enhance the

Memphis Challenge’s capacity to accomplish even more for years to come.

We look forward to a spectacular 2006!

Sincerely,

Winter 2006



Memphis meets Maine: The Bowdoin Invitation

by Brodrick L. Stigall, Senior, Hamilton High School, MC Class of 2006

MC Class of 2006

- Ajibade Adebayo
Ridgeway High School
- Torian Black
White Station High School
- April Blevins
East High School
- Sherie Byrd
Collierville High School
- James Cartwright
Hamilton High School
- Anthony Coleman
Germantown High School
- Marjorie Cowan
Ridgeway High School
- Aisha Ellerson
Middle College High School
- Lawrence Evans
Wooddale High School
- Melanie Fant
Central High School
- Nathaniel Frazier
Bishop Byrne High School
- Jazmyne Green
White Station High School
- Adam Haliburton
Craigmont High School
- Desiree Jones
White Station High School
- Mallory Jones
White Station High School
- Gerianna Kneeland
White Station High School
- Epernay Kyles
Lausanne Collegiate School
- Shawn LeSure
Ridgeway High School
- Joseph Long
Central High School

Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, invited around 200 students from around the country to preview their institution for four days. I had the pleasure of being one of the chosen ones. Before the visit, Bowdoin seemed to me to be a very prestigious school like that of a Harvard or Yale, but after actually being there I have a whole different opinion on it.

Though it boasts a strong academic program like Harvard and Yale, Bowdoin is a very close-knit community about the size of Rhodes College. The campus is beautiful. Current students volunteered to be our hosts, showing us everything there was to show about the campus. My dorm was wonderful; it even had its own bathroom. The food, which is ranked #1 in the country, is the best food you could imagine – I still miss it now.

Everybody knows everybody on campus so there is a strong connection between teachers

and students alike. The class sizes were small (only 17 students in a psychology class) and the teacher addresses every student by name. Everyone on the campus was extremely helpful and the environment of the college is very inviting. Bowdoin is an ideal institution for anyone who wants a place where there are no strangers, much like in high school.

As inviting as it was, Bowdoin does have the issue of diversity. Ironically, my host, who was president of the student body, was African American. Bowdoin, however, in general was not diverse. I suppose that's why the 200 some odd students invited

were such a diverse group. Despite its lack of diversity, the college was so enticing that many of us became very drawn to the idea of attending Bowdoin next fall, and establishing that diversity that it so desperately needs.



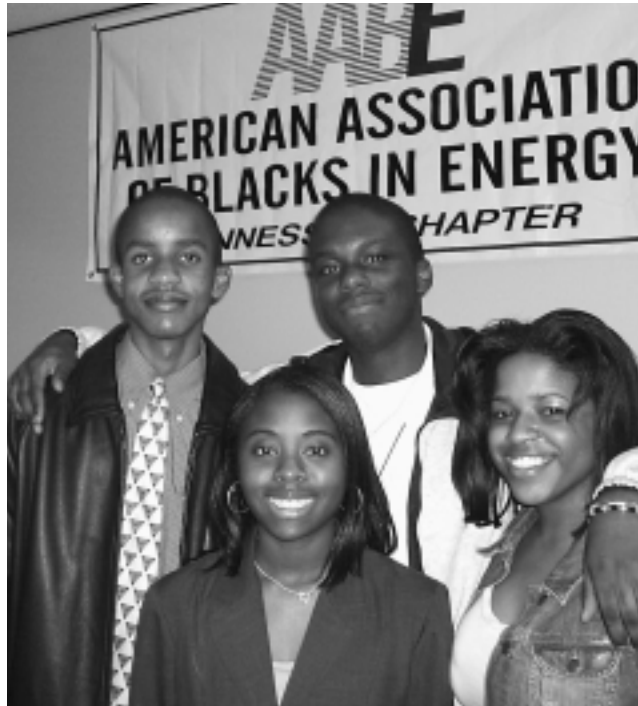
Brodrick Stigall



MC Class of 2006 students learn a little about each other at orientation.



Memphis Challenge orientation activity



Students attend an American Association of Blacks in Energy event.

Rwanda Revisited

by **Robert Kabera**, Junior, Kingsbury High School, 2006 Junior MC

I'm originally from Rwanda. I lived through the 1994 genocidal war massacre that took place there. At a very young age of five, I witnessed the most extreme atrocities that man can do to each other in an environment that was very much like hell at its very best.

On Wednesday, April 6, 1994, around 8 p.m., the radio announced that the former president of Rwanda was assassinated. We were told not to leave our houses until order was restored. It was unbelievable at first until we heard gunfire from a distance. At this point, roads everywhere were closed with roadblocks and barricades. A couple of hours later, the mass killings erupted. When the shootings started, there was no escape. Shootings were rampant and those who tried to flee were quickly shot and killed in the crossfire between the rebels and government troops. Thousands of dead bodies were lying in the street.

My father dug a tunnel to store his equipment but when the shootings intensified, my family and I went into the tunnel for hiding.

Family friends who were vulnerable to the massacre came to our home for refuge. In the tunnel, there were 17 people, including a two-week old baby girl. While in the tunnel, we could not cook. The only food we had was a small amount of sugar, uncooked rice, powdered milk and sorghum flour. To eat, we mixed flour and milk in water and drank it. We had to soak the rice in water all day to make it edible. We did not shower for over two weeks – not even wash our faces – because we had to use the little water we had for preparing food. After spending two weeks in the tunnel, we ran out of food and made the nearly suicidal decision of leaving our hiding place.

After two weeks of nonstop gunfire, the area was not as dangerous but we could hear some explosions from a distance. When we finally left the tunnel, the guards controlling the area told the few survivors to walk 75 kilometers east

towards Uganda. It was a long, painful, and tiresome walk. One could call it a "Trail of Sorrow." On the way, I saw some terrible things. I literally saw thousands of dead bodies rotting all over the road. I also saw people waiting to be rescued. I saw people who were too weak to survive or were so sick that they had to stop and wait for death. Unfortunately, during this time dogs were more ferocious than wild beasts. They were so used to eating the human flesh of dead bodies that they started coming after live people. They didn't care whether you were dead or alive.

After what seemed like an endless and extremely tiresome walk of long hours, we finally made it to a refugee center, where the Red Cross gave us some assistance. We were given enough food to barely keep us alive, and we had to walk for miles in war zones to get water. In the refugee center, there were 27 of us living in one small room, about half the size of a classroom. After three months of struggling to survive there, the war came to a ceasefire.

Although it seemed okay to return home, it was very unsafe for some like my family. Due to these insecurities, we were forced to flee the country. We took refuge in the neighboring Uganda where we spent three painful years. Since it was equally unsafe there, we traveled through three countries to Botswana. The Botswana government denied us asylum and placed us in a refugee camp located 450 miles from the nearest town in the middle of the Kalahari Desert. We survived in the refugee camp for another three painful years until finally the U.S government, by means of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), accepted our asylum through a resettlement program. This is how my family and I ended up in Memphis, five years ago, after six hopeless years. I would like to personally thank the Memphis Challenge for enabling me to briefly share my life story.



Robert Kabera

Class of 2006 (cont.)

- Maria Marion
Central High School
- Deidra Maxwell
Kirby High School
- Karmen McPherson
White Station High School
- Erin Moss
Ridgeway High School
- Ashley Nelson
Frayser High School
- Katherine Nelson
Kingsbury High School
- Meredith Robinson
St. Mary's Episcopal School
- Paul Rogers, II
Germantown High School
- Michael Shaw
East High School
- Salama Shelton
Whitehaven High School
- Brodrick Stigall
Hamilton High School
- Jonathan Toles
Bishop Byrne High School
- Dorian Townsend
Bolton High School
- Kamille Washington
Craigmont High School
- Carleen Woodard
Central High School

Holiday Celebration



by **Jazmyne Green**
Senior, White Station High,
MC Class of 2006

The MC Holiday Celebration was brimming with excitement and anticipation. The setting was very different from the Junior MC Brunch last year. Many relationships were formed as the current MC Class of 2006 networked with college Challengers. Ms. Dozier and Ms. Webster introduced various "ice breakers" that enabled everyone to become relaxed and comfortable with each other. As expected, the college Challengers are successful and active in their schools and surrounding communities, and all of them acknowledged that their involvement with the Memphis Challenge has served as a precedent for their success. In addition to academic achievement, some college Challengers had other things to boast about. For example, one has become a disc jockey and masseuse! Besides the stimulating conversations, we enjoyed the excellent food and received a much-needed journal complete with the Memphis Challenge logo on the front. The night was indeed a wonderful celebration of food, fun, and fellowship.

Junior MC brunch

by **James L. Cartwright, IV**, Senior, Hamilton High School, President, MC Student Council, MC Class of 2006

On Thursday, December 22, 2005, Memphis Challenge hosted its annual Junior MC Brunch. We enjoyed great food, great music, and a great presentation by Reverend Derrick Joyce, an engaging and successful businessman and community leader. During the event, we did a number of interesting "icebreakers" that helped us all get to know each other a little better. As a Senior Challenger, I don't know many of the juniors, and it's not often enough that I get to be in their company. I tried my best to take advantage of the situation and introduce myself to all the juniors I didn't know. Did I mention how good the food was?

There was also plenty of 'food for thought', as to be expected at any MC gathering. Mr. Joyce gave a great motivational speech basically on the mission of Memphis Challenge, though he didn't state it quite like that. He gave us a few keys to success and encouraged us to return to be the next generation of "movers and shakers" in Memphis.

A few phrases that stuck in my head were "Don't sit in three legged chairs," "Don't buy unless there's blood in the streets," and "Be

willing to jump off cliffs." "Don't sit in three legged chairs" was his suggestion that, as we rise in position and authority, to remain grounded in our morals and principles because, essentially, that's all we really have. "Don't buy unless there's blood in the streets" is an investment tip that I've heard before. What it means is "sell high and buy low." The market moves in cycles so there is greater potential for growth if you see a company with low current worth but great promise and invest in it.

Probably the most useful advice he left with us was "Be willing to jump off cliffs" (and associate with people who are also willing to jump off cliffs). The most successful people in this country and on earth are risk takers who believed in a dream. Taking calculated risks can benefit almost anyone in any situation. Without this pivotal trait, you will find it difficult to progress and make your wildest dreams today, the realities of tomorrow. So, overall the Junior MC Brunch was a great success and a great experience. I left equipped with a few memorable quotes, a full stomach and a few more new friends.



James Cartwright



Beth Copperidge (2005), De'Anna Woodson (2004), Justin Glenn (2005), Kristin Williams (2005), Sherie Byrd (2006) pose at the MC Holiday Celebration.



Derrick Joyce speaks to 2006 Junior MC members at the holiday brunch.

Searching for Memphis gold ...

by **Yolanda Dozier**, Program Manager, The Memphis Challenge

"Discoveries are often made by...trying the untried."
– Frank Tyger

Have you ever searched for a needle in a haystack? What about a four-leaf clover? There are moments of excitement and moments of frustration. Well, that's what it's like trying to find over 250 Memphis Challenge alumni ... searching for Memphis gold.

In July 2005, Memphis Challenge started searching with its first Alumni Phon-a-Thon. Several alumni, along with former board chair Dr. Nancy Hardt, board member Maggie Harris and Executive Director Cassandra Webster, attempted to reach 286 Memphis Challenge alumni. A very special thanks to Time Warner Cable, who once again opened their doors to the Memphis Challenge, and to our dedicated alumni **Roshun Austin, Kenya Bradshaw, Chassie O'Neal** and **Christopher Owens**. We couldn't have done it without you!

So, where do you begin? Thankfully, Memphis Challenge maintains original files from all students. We started with the last known address and phone number. If we were lucky enough to get a live person, we "interrogated" them for details. But the best tool so far has been Google ... in my humble opinion, the world's best search engine!

We mostly reached disconnected numbers, but we did speak to a few parents and obtained new phone numbers. It was evident this would be a labor-intensive process. Fortunately, **Molisa Thomas**, MC Class of 2005 and summer intern, continued the process, making substantial progress. Here are the numbers to date:

Updated records:	161
Pending:	87
No Contact:	38
Deceased:	2

Despite these great numbers, we still have quite a journey! We need your help!!! We've included a list of alumni who we have contacted but haven't heard back from them **or** we have no current information. Recognize a name on the list and know how to contact them? Let them know we're looking **or** ask them to contact us at (901) 312-9621 or by e-mail, ydozier@memphischallenge.org.

To celebrate our small victory and help them rediscover Memphis, we hosted an Alumni Mix 'n Mingle on Friday, December 23, 2005, at Dish Restaurant in the heart of the Cooper Young district. Over 15 alumni came to meet and greet fellow MC alum and kickoff their Christmas holiday in Memphis. It was truly an event for Memphis' finest.



Andrea Wheeler (1999) and Danielle Mitchell (1999)



Traci Freeman (1999) and Eric Freeman (1997)



Keith Story (1989), his wife, Brooke, and Faith Marshall (1999)



Aren Cowan (2001), Shayla Green (1997), Chassie O'Neal (2001) and Executive Director Cassandra Webster

2006 Junior MC

Brittney Bibbs

Arielle Fair

Bishop Byrne High School

Jocelyn Blake

Booker T. Washington

Jessica Bowen

Kalisa Dorse

Clytisa Drinkwater

Wynter Foley

Dustin Fulton

Melanie Jones

Jelisa Lewis

Santa Patton

Central High School

Aftan Barber

Damon McGuire

Craigmont High School

Breonna Davis

Jade Wallace

Germantown High School

Cordera Wooddard

Hamilton High School

Catherine Smith

Immaculate Conception

Antonio Graham

Robert Kabera

Kingsbury High School

Chelsi Bullard

Alondra Hunt

Scheherazade Roddie, Jr.

Derri Weeks

Melrose High School

Clement Oigbokie

Memphis University School

Pavielle Goodner

Millington Central

Ashley McGill

Northside High School

Tameka Hubbard

Jasmin Jackson

Ridgeway High School

Ariel Laws

St. Agnes Academy

Brea Bowers

St. Benedict at Auburndale

Dawn Bowen

Cassidy Brown

Jamal Ferby

Charles Shannon

Cicely Sharp

White Station High School

Dana Bynum

Keadrea Wilson

Whitehaven High School

MC board members*Board Chair*

Darrell T. Cobbins
Commercial Advisors, LLC

Vice Chair

David Gillespie
Parker Hannifin

Finance Chair

Corie Rivers
Pittco Management

Fund Development Chair

J.R. "Pitt" Hyde
J.R. Hyde Sr. Foundation

Marketing Chair

Maggie Harris
Time Warner Cable

Dr. Esmond Arrindell
East Memphis Neonatology
Associates, P.C.

Roshun Austin
Homecomings Financial

George H. Brown, Jr.
Retired, Circuit Court
Judge, Division 6

Leslie Coleman
FedEx

Dr. Wisdom F. Coleman
UT College of Dentistry

Callie Herd
FedEx Services

Odell Horton, Jr.
Memphis Light Gas & Water

Chris Peck
The Commercial Appeal

Charlie Pleas, III
AutoZone, Inc.

Kristi M. Robinson
First Horizon National
Corporation

Dr. Darryl S. Tukufu
Memphis Urban League

Shawn Welch
Kellogg, Frozen Foods
Division

Missing Alumni ... help us find our Memphis gold**MC Class of 1989**

Sonja Brittenum
East High School
Yulanda Gatewood
East High School
Chandra Mack-Murray
East High School
Lisa Massey Holbrook
East High School
Derrick Odom
East High School
Nicole Parker
East High School
Carol Price
East High School
Carol Taylor
East High School
Eric Thomas
Catholic High School

MC Class of 1990

Greg Austin
White Station High School
Christi Bell
White Station High School
Torvia Bradley
East High School
Rosland Briggs
White Station High School
Kevin Crawford
Central High School
Illeshia Embry
White Station High School
Kulleni Gebreyes
Germantown High School
Elkie Griffin
White Station High School
Mary McCallum
Whitehaven High School
Jesse McClure III
Marcos de Niza High School
(*Tempe, AZ*)
DeShandre Odom
White Station High School
Minerva Phiifer
Central High School
Natasha Seymour
Central High School
LaQuita Simmons
East High School
Benita Thompson
Overton High School

LaChelle Veals
East High School
Tamara Wheeler
East High School

MC Class of 1991

Lischa Barrett
East High School
Cordell Brown
Central High School
Charles Gray II
Central High School
Monica Harris
White Station High School
Trevon Holliday
Matthew Holmes
East High School
Felicia Irby
East High School
April Jones
Central High School
Tamara Mathis
Whitehaven High School
Alexis Smith
White Station High School
Teresa Smith
Whitehaven High School
Felichsa Thomas

MC Class of 1992

Eric Baker
Central High School
Gerald Bentley
East High School
Chronda Blocker
East High School
Stephanie Bowles Mason
Whitehaven High School
Cortney Brown
White Station High School
Sean Carpentier
Central High School
Lanita Conley
Sherrye Cosby
East High School
Heather Evans
Quintin Jones
White Station High School
Shari Maxwell
Central High School
Kendrick McIntyre
Ruth Morgan

Erica Nevilles
East High School
Content Nightingale
East High School
Charles Perkins Jr
Central High School
Erin Pickens
White Station High School
Benjamin Sanders
Marcus Wimberly
East High School

MC Class of 1993

Brenda Ayers
Central High School
Shameka Banger
Central High School
Carla Cartwright
White Station High School
Felecia Cole
Lisa Dale
Germantown High School
Ian Gaillard
Memphis University School
Allyson Gray
Shagonda Green
Germantown High School
Tijuana Harris-Saulsberry
East High School
Allison Horne
Whitehaven High School
Danielle Jean-Pierre
St. Agnes Academy
Rushelle Jones
Central High School
Tyson Pratcher
White Station High School
Danielle Spears
Central High School
Sheryl Stevenson
Whitehaven High School
Kenneth Thompson
White Station High School

MC Class of 1994

Angela Earle
Overton High School
Michelle Robinson
East High School
Tracee Roderick
White Station High School
Tabitha Smith
East High School

Missing Alumni – continued

Hollie Washington
Central High School

MC Class of 1995

Taryn Carter
Central High School
Eric McIntyre
Whitehaven High School
Charlie Phelps
Memphis Catholic High School
Aqueelah Rashada
Central High School
Nicole Walker
White Station High School
Melissa Woods-Grant
Central High School

MC Class of 1996

Kelley Adams
Kirby High School
Corissa Benefiel
White Station High School
Vanessa Bowles
Whitehaven High School
Shannon Johnson
Central High School
Horace Nelson
Central High School
Wendi Parker
East High School

Ulani Prater
Central High School
Edgar Williams
East High School

MC Class of 1997

Angel Gooden
Whitehaven High School
Rodriguez Gray
East High School
Terraun Jones
White Station High School
Hubert Roberts
Central High School
Jamien Sills
East High School
Toni Wesley
East High School

MC Class of 1998

Esmonique Arrindell
St. Mary's Episcopal School
Margaret Beth-Woods
East High School
Jeweline Franklin
St. Mary's Episcopal School
Fanta Gibson
Craigmont High School
Lakesha Hines
East High School

LaCoya Katoe
Germantown High School
Taura Long
Whitehaven High School
Rafael Mason
Phillips Academy
Bellynzia Robinson
Central High School
Maisha Robinson
White Station High School
Nuriya Robinson
White Station High School

MC Class of 1999

LaToya Allen
Central High School
Ashley Gaillard
St. Mary's Episcopal School
William Johnson
Memphis University School
Christopher Jones
Germantown High School
Darnita Mims
Overton High School
Rosalyn Porter
Germantown High School
Haneef Rashada
Central High School

MC Class of 2000

Brandon Brooks
Whitehaven High School
Jillion Harris
Central High School
Alette Howard
Central High School
Lauren Madlock
Central High School
Kevin Spragling
Whitehaven High School
Robbin Williams
White Station High School

MC Class of 2001

Erica Johnson
Houston High School

MC Class Unknown

Terence Brown
Ajaypreet Kamra
G. Allen Stanley



Kelle Chatman (2003) and David Brown (2005) learn to network at the internship workshop.



Students eager to improve their ACT scores attend an MC-sponsored workshop on how to do just that.



MC alumni Kia Davis (1999) and Larita Webb (1999)



Academic Advisor Steve Leake provides tips and tricks for taking the ACT.



Parents attend orientation to find out more about the benefits of the program.

Contact information

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Preparing for the summer internship

by **Edie McCants**, Freshman, UT Knoxville, MC Class of 2005

The MC Internship Workshop was, in my opinion, fantastic. On Wednesday, December 28, 2005, not only did myself and fellow Challengers learn the basics of public speaking from Lisa Smith, but we also learned about ourselves as individuals. Ms. Smith taught us to believe in ourselves and be confident in our strengths. She also explained how we can transform our weaknesses into strengths. We gave impromptu speeches and tried exercises to practice both formal and informal speaking. We also participated in a fun exercise to teach us how to network at social gatherings. She even had us walk around with plates and cups to make the experience more real (and challenging).

During lunch we had the privilege to listen to Dennis Bowen, an IBM Manager and Junior MC

parent. He detailed the importance of “bringing your tools to the table.” He informed of us how competitive the business world is and that “tooting your own horn” every so often is not bragging, but necessary for survival. He was extremely motivational, and it was interesting to hear his success story.

The second part of the workshop was just as interesting and informational. We read, analyzed and discussed case studies, which provided examples of how to conduct ourselves professionally and solve problems with our co-workers. We finished the day with plenty to think about

between now and the start of our internship. Overall, I truly enjoyed the workshop and thought it was great. I learned quite a bit and it was fun at the same time.



Edie McCants



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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