

October, 2008

Harmony

A Kiamsha Alumni Association Publication

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

What's up Kiamsha family!

It's a new year with a new face for Kiamsha! We've got a revamped web site, a revamped newsletter, and a revamped way of doing things! Exciting things are happening for the Kiamsha Youth and Alumni alike.

As the organization grows, so does it's members, and I'm dedicated to developing a Kiamsha Alumni Association that can accommodate the changes going on in our lives. It used to be we were just college students, grad students, or even fresh graduates. Nowadays, people are getting married, starting families, starting businesses, or just doing the dang thing. If we're going to continue blending these newly-entered generations, then we're going to need changes that make it doable. I'm on my Barack Obama, y'all!

To give a preview of what I'm planning, let's look at what I'm told the Steering Committee Directors are already doing. From what I hear, there will be monthly camaraderie building trip to replace the meeting for that week: bowling, skating, etc. No workshops. No fundraising. Just chillin'. Now, what better way to blend those generations than at a social mixer? Especially, when it's monthly!

NEW KIAMSHA WEBSITE COMING SOON!

Kiamsha's new web site can now be found at www.kiamshayouth.org. The web site has been in the works for a long time but on October 1, the organization will have its permanent online home.

The site will include photo galleries, a donations page, Kiamsha resume, information about the history of the program, a comments wall, alumni corner and much more.

Now, wherever you are, you can stay abreast of the organization's progress.

You will also be able to read "Harmony" online!

This kind of innovation is what I'm hoping will revive the sense of commitment and enthusiasm that we've all felt at some point during our time with Kiamsha. I'm sure everyone reading this can think of a friendships they made through Kiamsha, a lesson they've learned, and a memory they'll keep with them forever.

The good times don't stop there, y'all, and when you're mentoring a new generation, they only get that much more meaningful.

All that said, I'll be following the lead of our Steering Committee Directors, and, as it is with the Directors, camaraderie builders are just the beginning. If you want to know what comes next, please attend the **Alumni Meeting, December 21 at Calvern and Paula's house**. More information will be provided at a later date.

The Kiamsha Alumni Association: A Change We Can Believe In :-)

Enthusiastically,
Kepa Freeman '03
President, Kiamsha Alumni Association



THE PEN OR PENCIL PROGRAM KIAMSHA MENTORS BECOME IDEAL COUPLE

Carlvern and Paula Dunn, mentors of the Kiamsha Youth Empowerment Organization, explain how negative choices and incarceration affect family life. Today, they are using their experiences to teach others the true meaning of “Til’ Death Do Us Part” and motivate youth to choose the right path.

Kenneth Ledbetter, a group of young men at Challenger Juvenile Detention Center and youth from North Carolina, Washington, D.C., Arkansas and Memphis have chosen this path and vowed to live a life free of violence for 40 days. The initiative was sponsored by the Pen or Pencil program on the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.. It was a way for the young men and women in the program to showcase their commitment to King’s non-violent method.

“I had no where to live. I had nothing to eat, no water to bathe and clean with. I had no gas to help keep me warm, or air to cool me off or a TV to watch.

I turned to the streets because that’s the only place where everybody else like me was welcomed when I was going through all of this...” said Ledbetter, a graduate of the Pen or Pencil program.

Today, Ledbetter is not ashamed to tell his story to anyone who will listen. Although he stands up alone, Ledbetter speaks for thousands of youth in his predicament who are forced everyday to make difficult choices. Some are still living on the streets, some are locked up in juvenile detention centers, some are growing up in the foster care system, others are simply forgotten. All of them have a choice.

The choice is to choose the road that will provide education and a positive place in the community. The alternative is a road that will lead to destruction or the penitentiary. The goal of the Pen or Pencil program is to help these youth recognize that they have options and steer them down the correct path. Making the choice is not difficult, actually it is very simple.

“I’m a grown man,” said a youth currently locked down at Challenger Memorial Youth Center

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Bulletins

2008-2009 will be Tiffany & Renada’s 8th year leading Kiamsha. Boy time flies.

Kiamsha facilitates its 8th Youth Day at ASALH’s 93rd conference in Birmingham, AL (October 3).

Akil Dickens ‘98 named Youth Minister for Ebenezer AME Church!!!

CONGRATS Newlyweds Aaron ‘01, Riche ‘94 and Renada ‘98

Kacey ‘01 opens for Raheem Devaughn

Ask Shanae ‘03 about her trip to CHINA!!

Kiamsha needs help decorating it’s NEW office space!!!

KIAMSHA PARTNERS WITH CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS FOR YOUTH SUMMIT 2008

Kiamsha is actually a partner in the planning of the Friday, September 26, 2008, Youth Summit moderated by Jeff Johnson of BET, THE TRUTH. Pen or Pencil will be introduced as a movement that will go down in history like the civil rights movement. Kiamsha is an integral part of this movement. For more information visit <http://www.cbefinc.org> or contact Mrs. Barbara Dunn at 301.336.4586.



Cousin Jeff Johnson

NEWS IN BRIEF

Upcoming Alumni Event:

Come ROCK with us on Thursday, October 23, 2008 at Artmosphere Cafe for SoulCity Unplugged led by Kacey Williams '03 and her band Black Alley.

To see the band lead open mic night check out www.livemusic4you.com/soulcity.php

Artmosphere Cafe
3311 Rhode Island Ave,
Mt. Ranier, Md.
8 p.m. - 11 p.m.
\$10 cover charge



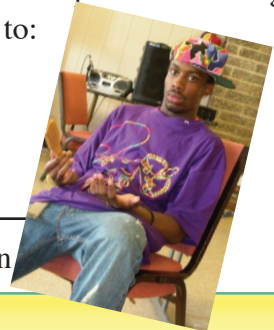
Melvette Melvin-Davis '98, became editor of the recently released study guide for the acclaimed book "The Mis-Education of the Negro" by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Her work will be featured online at www.asah.org soon.

The Kiamsha Alumni Association welcomes five new members: D'Andre Bynum, Dwight Jones, Jr., Kenneth Minor, Dominique Toles and Raven Howell.

Kiamsha Alumni support the 2008-2009 Steering committee as eight members attend first meeting of the year: Sulaiman Harris '00, Candyce Jones '03, Tiffany Spriggs '01, Kacey Williams '01, Japera Croom '04, Kara Williams '04, Marygale Akpam '06, Monique Beach '06.

Philip Jackson '08, passed away on Saturday, Sept. 20, in Southeast, Washington, D.C. Philip was a member of the 2006-2007 Steering Committee and was preparing for college in hopes of becoming a nurse. Cards may be sent to:

Ms. Christine Jackson
2509 Domingo Court
Byrans Road, Md. 20616



Philip Jackson

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in LA County, California for the fourth time. 'It's not hard. I make whatever decisions I want to make for myself.'

After enrolling in the Pen or Pencil Program at the detention center, he now feels that his life is going to change. Despite the pressures he faces behind bars, he is ready to leave the center in a few months, graduate high school and eventually go to college; leaving the life of a gang banger behind.

After entering the Pen or Pencil Program, the Kiamsha Youth Empowerment Organization has been asked to provide students with first-hand support and training. The Kiamsha training will arm them with the skills to maintain their convictions in the face of modern-day slave masters who will attempt to leer them from the positive course they have chosen.

"I've been where you are," Carlvern said to the youth at Challenger Memorial Youth Center. "Reduced to nothing more than an inmate number. This is not living."

The Dunns now represent the family unit and the importance of marriage as the premier couple of

ALUMNI:

Tell us where you are and what you are up to. We would love to feature you in the next newsletter.

Send updates, stories or pictures to japera.ain@gmail.com.

Staff:

President, Kepa Freeman
Vice President, Candyce Jones
Secretary, Jendayi Croom
Treasurer, Don Matthews
Harmony Editor, Japera Croom

the Healthy Marriage Initiative. Both the Healthy Marriage initiative and the Pen or Pencil Program are organized by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ). The programs are used collaboratively to attempt to finally solve many of the issues apparent in the community. ■