

## Duke University

### Electing a President

College campuses are wonderful places to be during presidential elections. Most undergraduates will cast their first vote for president during college, and they recognize the milestone as an exciting marker of adulthood and civic responsibility. This year Duke sponsored an early voting site in the Old Trinity Room on West Campus; for several weeks in October, voters registered in North Carolina could stop by (the lines were always short) and cast their ballot in the general election. New voters, including students, could register in North Carolina and then vote in a single transaction. Given the historic nature of this election, everyone knew that the youth vote would have significant implications for the outcome. Students on all sides – Republicans, Democrats, Independents and Libertarians -- talked politics, attended rallies, volunteered, and turned out to vote.

The election fell in the middle of our second interview round for the Baldwin Scholars. I was spending every day in the Baldwin office in East Duke, interviewing our 35 finalists along with Emily Klein and a number of wonderful volunteers from Admissions and the Women's Center. In between interviews I would catch up with current Baldwin Scholars hanging out in the office. The morning of November 5 Leah Hill '09 was working at the front desk. Leah hails from Charlotte and is both a Baldwin and a Reginaldo Howard Scholar. She had volunteered extensively on the Obama campaign and had stayed up late the prior evening, celebrating Obama's victory with other students in the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture. Dazed with fatigue and joy, Leah told



Leah Hill, Class of 2009

me that she couldn't really process what had happened yet, that she thought it would take weeks for the significance of this milestone to sink in. She told me about the party the prior evening, and we compared notes on what had moved us most, citing especially the televised shots of Jesse Jackson weeping quietly in the crowd. Later I heard another Baldwin Scholar tell Leah that she would always remember this moment, that she'd be able to tell her grandchildren where she was on the night the United States elected its first African-American president.

Smiling at the reference to future grandchildren, I thought about the messages this election had sent about the possibilities of change. Regardless of their political affiliation, our students saw a significant barrier fall on that night, a barrier that seemed insurmountable only a few years ago. They saw that the concentrated efforts of volunteers, working for a cause they believed in, could alter the course of a nation. They learned that the actions of individuals mattered, even an action as seemingly minor as stopping into the

Old Trinity Room en route to class to cast a vote. Indeed, when North Carolina was finally called for the Democrats a few weeks after the election, it turned out that the youth vote had made the difference, had turned the state from red to blue for the first time in forty years. We tell our Baldwin Scholars all the time that they need to decide what they're passionate about and work on those issues, regardless of convention or stereotype. Obama's election reinforced that message on the biggest stage in the world.

I spent the rest of the day on November 5 interviewing a wonderful group of first-year women and feeling fortunate to work in such a stimulating and inspiring environment. Two days later we announced our newest class; their profiles appear elsewhere in this newsletter. The week and month gradually returned to their normal rhythms, but I kept thinking about Leah, the rest of the Scholars, and all the students on our campus. May this election inspire them to work toward their own dreams – and may not too many years pass before we celebrate the election of the first *female* president of the United States in the Baldwin Scholars office.

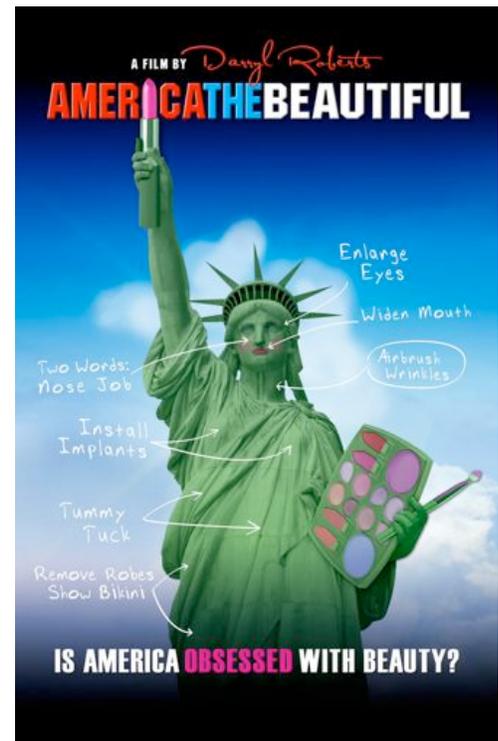
Donna Lisker, Co-Director of the Baldwin Scholars Program

### *America the Beautiful* by Ji Kwon, Class of 2011

What is beautiful at Duke? On October 28, 2008, Baldwin Scholars, ESTEEM from Healthy Devils, Pi Beta Phi, as well as staff from CAPS, Student Health, and the Women's Center organized a screening of the film *America the Beautiful* by Darryl Roberts to pose this question to the Duke community.

More than 500 people attended the film screening. Laughing at Eve Ensler's comments and gasping at plastic surgery scenes, the audience was fully engaged with the movie.

After the film, there was a panel discussion with Darryl Roberts.



One student asked him what kind of impact he wishes to see, and he responded that he hopes that the movie will redefine beauty. To keep the momentum going, there will be a blog and a series of discussions among student organizations about the definition of beauty.

# *An Up-Close Look at Hard Times in the Big Easy*

by Brooke Kingsland, Class of 2011

I was thrilled to participate in the alternative fall break service trip to New Orleans sponsored by the Baldwin Scholars program, of which I am a member, and the Duke Women's Center. As soon as I heard about the opportunity, I knew it would be a valuable experience, and it exceeded my high expectations. Over a month after my return, I think about what I saw in New Orleans every day.

As we drove out to St. Bernard Parish on our first workday, we passed by houses without front porches, and supermarkets still closed and deserted. Every building was scarred by the spray paint of the group that surveyed it and counted the dead, the pets, the time. My group worked on Ron and Darlene's house, two of the most interesting people I now know.



"Strong" doesn't even begin to describe their character. As I took breaks from painting mold repellent on every possible surface of the re-used wood frame, I was able to connect with both. Hearing their accounts of the hours leading up to their evacuation, of their losses, I could hardly imagine their reality.

Perhaps the most poignant moment of the trip for me was, twenty or so minutes into a conversation, asking Ron if he ever worried another storm would hit all over again. He replied, "No, I don't worry, because there's nothing else for it to take." That's when I knew why we were there and what we were doing was one of the most important things imaginable. After sadly saying goodbye to my new friends, we drove through the Ninth Ward to survey the damage that still lingers three years later. Standing by the levees, I was even more disturbed by their failure. But knowing that a remarkable woman, Liz McCartney, had pioneered the recovery effort in the parish where 100% of the houses were wiped out was inspiring. Over all, participating in Women's Rebuild Week was empowering for all of us.

We enjoyed our free time together, in the French Quarter, on Decatur Street and in the Garden District. Bonding with the eighteen other students on the trip, all passionate, civic-minded females, constructed another community for

me within Duke, and spending time with our adult advisors, Donna, Colleen, Ada, and Sheila was also important. I feel glad to have contributed what I did, and to have seen up close, and yet still removed, one of the biggest disasters yet in my nation and my generation.



Editor's notes:

\*Only three of the nineteen students on this fully-funded trip were Baldwin Scholars. The opportunity was designed to provide a Baldwin-like experience for other undergraduate women. Funding came from the Baldwin Scholars program, the Women's Center, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation.

\*Liz McCartney, co-founder of the St. Bernard Project, was honored in November as CNN's Hero of the Year.

## *Class of 2012 Baldwin Scholars profiles*

Meet the fifth class of Baldwin Scholars! The class includes 16 Trinity and two Pratt students, two varsity athletes, three OUSF Scholars, and two international students. This is also our most racially diverse class yet, with 13 women of color. The new Baldwin Scholars hail from eleven states and the countries of Colombia and Thailand. Their interests include debate, languages, politics, global health, opera, and theater.

**Chaele Arkfeld** is from Omaha, Nebraska. She is the vice president of Southgate house council and the Southgate representative to East Campus Council. She enjoys tennis, basketball, and golf. Academically, her interests include public policy and languages and she hopes to participate in DukeEngage.

**Khadijah Bhatti** is a BN Duke Scholar from High Point, North Carolina. She began a Muslim Youth Council in high school to better integrate Muslim girls into their communities and to challenge misconceptions. Khadijah is interested in prospective health care and considering pre-med.

**Jennifer Blocker**, from Orlando, Florida, aspires to be an Academy Award-winning actress. On campus, she is active with the Black Student Alliance, United in Praise gospel choir, and Karamu theater.

**Rewa Choudhary** is another Floridian, from Jacksonville. A Biomedical Engineering major in the Pratt School of Engineering, she is interested in global health issues and is pre-med. Rewa is a coxswain for the novice crew team at Duke.

**Precious Graham** hails from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Her academic interests lie in psychology and business. Precious is active with Business Oriented Women (BOW), the Black Student Alliance, and Cambridge Christian Fellowship.

**Maab Ibrahim** is from Richmond, Virginia, but grew up in Canada and Sudan. She is a Reginaldo Howard Scholar with interests in world culture, politics, medicine and theater. Maab registered 450 new voters this past summer!

**Catherine Joseph**, from Lewiston, Maine, is a civil engineering major interested in architecture. At Duke, she is on the leadership team planning the Duke-UNC basketball marathon fundraiser to benefit Bounceback Kids, an organization which helps children with life-threatening illnesses develop successful life skills through basketball.

**Bo Kyung (Jasmine) Kim**, was born in South Korea and went to high school in Bangkok, Thailand. She is interested in political science and languages (she is fluent in four already!). Jasmine aspires to practice international/immigration law.

**Lakia King**, from Indian Trail, North Carolina, attended the North Carolina School for Science and Math. She is considering an Evolutionary Anthropology major and is pre-med.

**Nusaibah Kofar-Naisa** hails from Tallahassee, Florida. She is involved with the Muslim Student Association, ice skating, and Project Change (a pre-orientation program focused on social justice issues).

**Nancy McKinstry**, from Lexington, Kentucky, is our first Baldwin sibling (her sister Lucy is in the Baldwin Class of 2010)! She rows on the Varsity Crew team at Duke and is passionate about environmental issues.

**Chantel Morey** attended an all-girls high school in Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan. Interested in biology and global health, she is debating between pre-med and research pursuits. Chantel also loves opera and ballet.

**Andrea Patiño** grew up in Colombia, South America and attended the United World College, an international boarding school, in Norway. She is interested in visual arts and literature.

**Ellie Proussaloglou** is from Clarendon Hills, Illinois. Her academic interests lie at the intersection between science and public policy. At Duke, she participated in the Genome Revolution Focus program and is involved with the Model UN organization.

**Cydney Ross**, from Saint Louis, Missouri, is a member of the Varsity Cross Country and Track teams. She is interested in politics and economics and worked on the Obama campaign this past summer.

**Maria Suarez** is a University Scholar from Pineville, North Carolina. She moved to the United States from Colombia when she was twelve. She loves chemistry and participated in the Prospective Health Care Focus program. Maria is also interested in visual arts.

**Ashley Terrell** is from Compton, California. She is interested in public policy and community service. In high school, Ashley participated in and eventually led an aviation program for students.

**Dania Toth** is from Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She is interested in public policy and global health issues. Dania has already created an initiative to begin a debate team at the Durham School of the Arts.



Class of 2012 Baldwin Scholars meet the older Scholars at a welcome luncheon in November.

## *Plans for Spring, 2009...*



We have invited Mariane Pearl to give a public lecture at Duke on Tuesday, March 24 as the fourth annual event of the Jean Fox O'Barr Distinguished Speaker Series. Ms. Pearl is a journalist and the wife of murdered *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl. She wrote *A Mighty Heart*, which was made into a film starring Angelina Jolie. Most recently, she has traveled the world for Glamour magazine, writing profiles of courageous women; her latest book is entitled, *In Search of Hope*.

Special thanks to Laura Ellen Muglia (T'76) for her generous sponsorship of this speaker series.

## *Gifts to the Baldwin Scholars Program*

We offer our sincere thanks to the following donors for their gifts; we appreciate their leadership and their belief in all that our Scholars can become.

Bonnie Corwin '82

If you are interested in making a gift to the Baldwin Scholars, please contact Donna Lisker at [dlisker@duke.edu](mailto:dlisker@duke.edu). Gifts can be targeted toward any area of the program.

## *Contact us...*

We'd love to hear from you!

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Best wishes for a happy new year!

Donna, Emily, and Colleen