the spelman

SPOTLIGHT

the voice of african-american womenhood since 1957

Diverse Roads Lead to Graduation

2011 Commencement Edition

SPOTLIGHT

Commencement 2011

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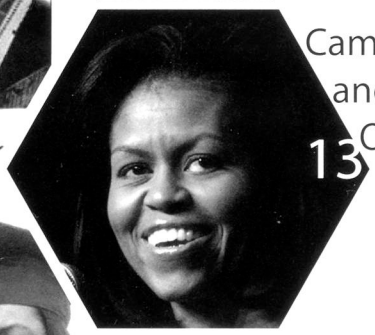

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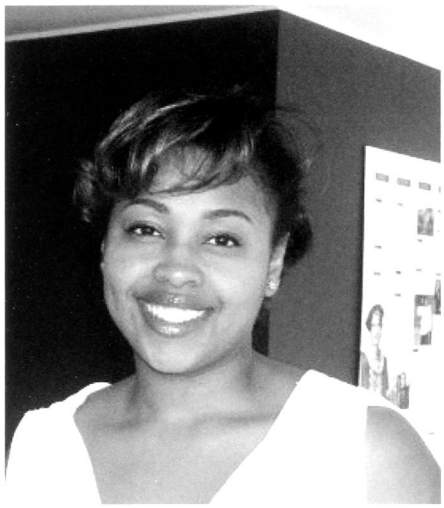
Final Salutations



"We have finally reached a point in our lives where we can hold our heads high as "

When I first entered Spelman in August of 2007, I wasn't sure what to expect or where I would end up; Just like the rest of my Spelman Sisters I was full of fear and doubt about what the future held and often wondered if I was cut out to be a Spelman Woman. Although at times my faith was tested, and there seemed to be no light at the end of my tunnel, but I made it and so have all of you graduating with the Spelman class of 2011.

We have succeeded beyond our own expectations and will soon be "Changing the World" one day at a time. Our journey through Spelman has taught us many valuable lessons and has afforded us the reality that some women merely dream us. We have finally reached a point in our lives where we can hold our heads high as Spelman Women.

Even though we have accomplished so much in such a short amount time, we have more to accomplish. Some of us will continue our education and become lawyers, doctors and professors, while others will go abroad and do other great things. No matter what path we take, we all have something amazing to contribute to this world.

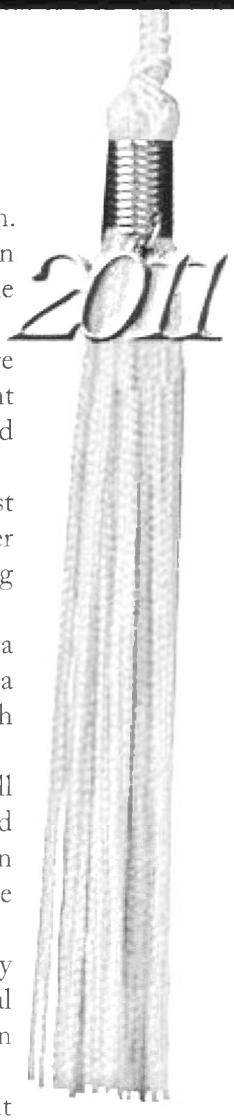
I have been given more opportunities than I ever thought were available, and have met some life long friends during my journey. I strongly believe my matriculation would not have been complete if it were not for the Spelman College Glee Club and the three tours I experienced as a member. For it was the Glee Club that taught me to keep pushing towards excellence. Also, my time as the Editor-in-Chief of the Spelman Spotlight has given me confidence in myself as a writer and leader.

The Spotlight has been an amazing part of Spelman experience, and I appreciate everything I have gained from it. It is with great sadness that I leave the Spelman Spotlight and everyone who has helped it become what it now is. I truly believe that the Spotlight would have completely faded if it weren't for my dedicated staff and the guidance of my advisers Sylvia Maddox and Renita Mathis. Although I must say goodbye to one of my favorite Spelman Experiences, I know that the Spotlight will continue to succeed with its next Editor-in-Chief, Kirstin C. Evans.

And so, as I begin the next chapter of my story, I wish you the very best. I want you to know that I'll always cherish the Spelman Sisterhood that was instilled in me during New Student Orientation 2007. And as you continue on your own journey stay true to yourself and our Spelman Sisterhood.

With warm regards,
Jasmine Andreza Leal-Taylor

The Class of 2011, Leaves a Memorable Legacy



The Class of 2011 raised approximately $2,500 this year, through their "Senior Legacy Gift" campaign. This year Senior Class Council led by Samantha Tulin asked each senior to donate $20.11 to Spelman College. While they did not expect 100% participation, they did expect the students who could make the donation to do so.

"I do understand that some seniors may not be able to make such a financial contribution to the College at this time. But I hope that this program inspires all seniors to carry with them the idea of how important it is to give back to Spelman as we transition into alumnae who will soon be in a position to give back," said a representative of Annual Giving.

The idea for this year's Senior Legacy Gift was inspired by the efforts made by the Class of 2010. Last year, Morgan Williams, a member of the senior class and president of The Power of Ten, an initiative under the Office of Institutional Advancement, the wing of the College aimed toward increasing alumnae giving created the program.

This year the "Every Woman…Every Year!" campaign was not able to reach its goal of 7,000 alumna contributors by Founders Day on April 7th, but Spelman was given an extension so that they can secure a $250,000 donation from an anonymous donor. Another anonymous donor announced that they will match the first donation if Spelman is able to secure 7,000 alumnae contributors.

The senior class is doing its part to help to build a pattern of giving amongst current students, which will hopefully encourage the graduates to give as alumnae. There is an increased responsibility for students and alumnae to give back to Spelman in a time where outside support is minimal because this is our institution and we need to show that we take responsibility for the up keeping of our school so that donors can see the evidence of our care.

This milestone for the senior class does not belong solely to the Senior Class Council. The "Senior Legacy Gift" campaign was a collaborative effort between the Senior Class Council, the Secretary of Institutional Advancement for SSG. By working together they made a decision to invest in their institution by taking on the responsibility of giving back.

"Students and alumnae always have the responsibility to give back to Spelman, no matter how abundant or minimal outside support may be provided. Spelman is an institution that stands on ideals of excellence. Most people do not understand this, but of all the women's colleges in the nation, Spelman stands as the lowest in alumnae contributions," said Jade Watkins, a senior who participated in the Senior Legacy Gift.

Members of the senior class seemed to take their gift to the college very seriously. Many approached this opportunity to make a difference with eager interest. Senior Legacy Gift participants, like Watkins, were thoroughly excited and proud about the donation and the reality that commencement is coming. Seniors stood by the decision to invest their money in giving back to the College, rather than a bench, tree, which have been typical Senior Class Gifts to the College. The money raised for the Senior Legacy Gift will be used to fund scholarships for matriculating students.

The Class of 2011 will leave their legacy behind for future graduating classes to continue for years to come. On Founders Day, the seniors wore their blue tassels in honor of the choice they made to invest in the future of Spelman College. With the choice already made to change their institution for the better, the Class of 2011 will be well on their way to making the choice to change the world.

More School or More Money?

Graduate/Professional Schools vs. Employment

As the spring semester comes to an end and the final days of college socials near, many 2011 graduates are faced with an important dilemma- whether to further their education by enrolling in a graduate or professional school, or to take some time off and enter into the workforce. With graduation approaching, many are feeling the pressure as to whether their decisions were beneficial. So what happens after the graduation caps have flown into the air in celebration and grade point averages have been forgotten?

According to Debra Stuart, President of the Council of Graduate Schools, "While undergraduate education is essential for a nation to participate in the global knowledge economy, graduate education is the key to establishing a leadership position in that economy". In the current economy, the amount of domestic undergraduates enrolling in graduate schools is not impressive. In the Higher Education Institute's 2005 study, more than 80% of students at HBCU's were more interested in making money while less than 80% were interested in preparing themselves to enter into graduate or professional schools.

Contrary to the negative statistics, those who do choose to enroll in graduate or professional schools are opening the gates to a world of endless opportunities. For many careers, such as legal or medical careers, an advanced degree from a professional school is essential. For others, a Master's or Doctorate degree can assist in the advancement of careers and in earning a larger salary. Statistics have shown that individuals with advanced degrees make far more than their colleagues with undergraduate or associate degrees. Advanced degrees and enrolling in graduate or professional schools increase job satisfaction, self-confidence, and hone certain skills in a particular area of the student's perspective field. Graduate and professional schools also allow the student to network with others in their field. As scholars and women who want to change the world, networking is imperative to our development as woman and career-driven women.

For others, employment and taking time off is a much more attractive option. Being employed helps to foster a sense of confidence and experience, while receiving a mental break from the rigorous coursework that school provides. Not only are these attributes of employment influential, but many graduate schools are now seeking students who have had work experience prior to their enrollment. This experience assists in grasping various concepts and contributes to a more impressive resume. Graduate schools look at more than essays, letters of recommendation, and exceptional GPAs. Students who choose to enter the workforce usually have graduate school plans in the near future and use this precious time as a way to prepare for tests and save money for tuition.

Aside from the attractiveness of independence and self-awareness, there are many factors that influence a student to enter the workforce rather than enroll in graduate school. These factors include debt, career development, and fear.

The decisions that Spelmanites have made greatly depend on the opportunities that are given. While some are going to graduate or professional schools to gain a head start on becoming the next Supreme Court Justice or the female version of Dr. Benjamin Carson, others are entering the "real world" and finding their perspective paths.

Either way, the 2011 graduates of *the* Spelman College will be highly successful. Congratulations ladies!

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT

When approximately 500 undergraduate seniors participate in Commencement on May 15, 2011, they will leave behind their years at Spelman College, and begin lives full of new and exciting experiences. All of Spelman's graduates have accomplished amazing things but the Spelman Spotlight has selected 10 seniors who have made lasting impressions on our beloved institution.

THE VALEDICTORIAN
THE ACTIVIST
THE PSALMIST
THE TOOTH FAIRY
THE COMEBACK KID
THE MEDIA MOGUL
THE HUMANITARIAN
THE WORLD TRAVELER
THE ARTISAN
THE SAGE

These Senior Stories were complied by Kirstin Evans, Jasmine Leal-Taylor and April Rushin.
Jordan Webber's Spotlight was taken from the Spelman website.

Jordan Webber The Valedictorian

Jordan Webber, the 2011 valedictorian, had her pick of colleges to attend. She received acceptance offers from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Brown, Columbia and Stanford.

Coming from a predominantly White girls' high school in Bethesda, Md., Webber looked forward to not only the academic rigors of Spelman, but also the cultural exploration that an HBCU distinctly offered.

"I was in for a journey, with my Spelman sisters, at a college that had been successful at developing women of African-American descent who would go on to do amazing things," said Webber a political science major with a 3.975 GPA. "This allowed for an academic experience that was unique and key in my personal development."

A Phi Beta Kappa and Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society inductee, Webber was one of 16 students in the United States to be named a Goldman Sachs Global Leader in 2009. That same year, she was selected to attend the Public Policy and Leadership Conference Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Toward the end of her junior year, Webber won an Arthur Liman Public Interest Law Summer Undergraduate Fellowship at Yale Law School, and that summer interned for the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C.

Webber intends to be a third-generation attorney with a career in public interest law. "I want to represent people who may not always know they are entitled to representation," said Webber, who will work as a legal assistant for the law firm McKenna Long and Aldridge LLP in Atlanta for a year before applying to law school.

Shayna Johnson The Activist

It is a long way to the top, but Shayna Johnson arrived there with class and style, in the true fashion of a Spelman woman. A native of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Johnson is the salutatorian for the 2011 senior class.

The journey was not always easy. Johnson was involved in many activities including A.C.T.S., Homeless Pets as a Site Volunteer, Partnership Against Domestic Violence as a Victim Advocate, and Relay for Life as a Publicity Committee Member. With the addition of financial burdens, academic responsibilities and leadership positions, she soon discovered that her toughest challenge at Spelman was time management. "I found myself taking on more responsibilities and finding less time to focus on myself," Johnson said.

The second step to analyzing a problem is to find a solution. Johnson overcame this obstacle by relegating an hour a day to doing something that made her happy and relaxed.

She also stayed confidant through the memory of her grandmother and support of her mother, remarking that she was raised to strive for both academic excellence and excellence through service. "As immigrants from Jamaica, my family understood the value of an education and the importance of helping others," Johnson said. "Because of their influence, I knew Spelman was the institution for me. Failure was never an option."

Johnson is also a member of the Spelman College honors program, ALD, Golden Key, NSCS, Phi Beta Kappa and Omicron Delta Epsilon (Economics Department).

Next year Johnson will be teaching secondary mathematics in South Carolina through the Teach for America program. After committing two years to the program, she will go on to earn her M.B.A and PhD in Economics. As motivation to undergraduate students Johnson tells us to remember that, " You were worthy enough to be chosen by Spelman, you have what it takes to succeed at this institution. All it takes is self-confidence, determination and hard work."

Ashley Herring The Psalmist

"Music makes the world go round and no one can deny it," is a quote taken from Ashley Louis Herring, an anointed senior from Lumberton, North Carolina. She developed her passion for music and love of the Lord at an early age, and these would both help guide Ashley to career that would utilize both.

Louis began piano lessons at age 5, and then learned to play the flute in middle school, and participated in her high school's percussion section. "I've always been so intrigued by the idea that music can make [a person's] emotions change instantly. It [music] can make you sad and then put the biggest smile on your face," explained Herring.

Her resume includes a number or church jobs and on-campus musical organizations. During her matriculation Herring was very involved with the Spelman College Glee Club. As a leader in the Glee Club, she served as stage manager, alto 1 section leader, alumnae liaison, and student conductor. She was also a member of the W.I.S.D.O.M. residential program, which "made her answer some deeper questions about myself and forced me to become more curious about the ministry."

Also, she was the student leader for Manifest, the Sisters Chapel praise team. "Between my love for God and love for music, Spelman taught me that I can operate in whatever capacity I desire," responded Herring.

Herring sends out a gentle reminded to all undergraduate students that Spelman's faculty is here to help us, but they are not our parents and that we must take responsibility for ourselves. "You have to desire excellence for yourself," added Herring.

Herring is a typical student but is planning to achieve remarkable things. Next year, Herring will be attending Emory University's Candler School of Theology to begin my Masters of Divinity with a concentration in Theology and the Arts. "You have to desire excellence for yourself," Herring said. "Reach for the stars so if you happen to fall, you'll land on a cloud."

Terrahney Quave Wilson
The Tooth Fairy

Terrahney Quave Wilson plans on changing the world one smile at a time, as a future Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon. Her passion to be an Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon began at an early age, while she was visiting her dentist.

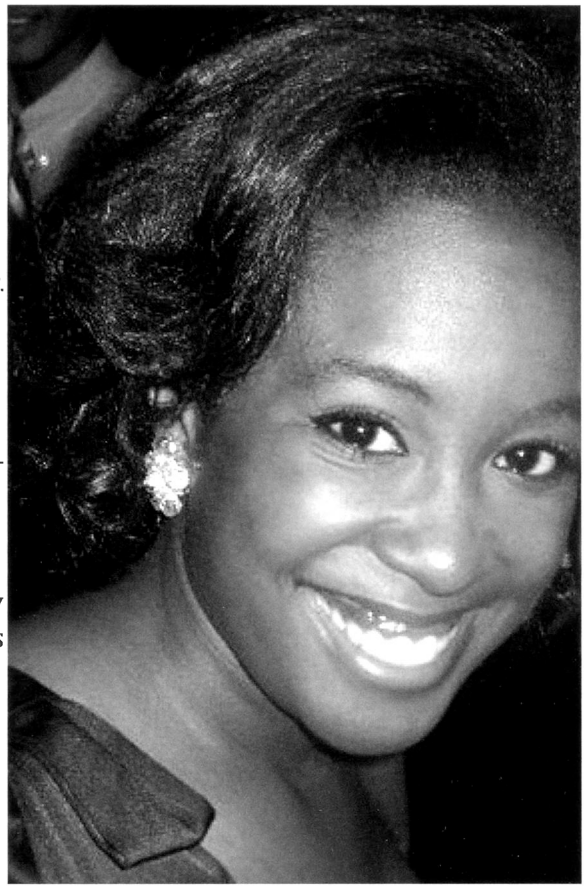
"After a series of visits to the oral surgeon, I noticed that my doctor had pictures in his waiting area documenting his time volunteering in underserved countries fixing cleft lips and palates for children," said Wilson. "This is what initially got me interested in dentistry as a career."

To help prepare her for her for a career in dentistry, Wilson majored in biology and participated in several dental summer programs.

In addition to preparing academically for her career dentistry, Wilson has participated in Spelman's Operation Smile Chapter, serving as the vice-president. As vice-president, Wilson created Operation Smile game night, which was a very successful fundraiser for the organization. She is also a member of Phi Beta Kappa honor society and is graduating Summa Cum Laude.

Post-commencement Wilson will be attending Columbia University's School of Dentistry, and aspires to become a part of the Operation Smile overseas and actually perform the oral surgeries.

Jhenna Louis The Comback Kid



Like many students across the United States, Jhenna Louis has experienced the headaches that are associated with paying for a college education. Unfortunately Jhenna was unable to secure loans to pay for the first semester of her sophomore year, and could not return to Spelman that semester. Instead of simply giving up, Jhenna worked at a bakery during her time off from school so that she could pay her tuition for next semester. "I was devastated," responded Louis. "But I worked for the semester and by the grace of God could afford it [Spelman] the next semester, and never again took this experience for granted."

Despite having a minor set back, Louis refused to give up and remained self-motivated. She cited her need to set an example for her younger siblings and her hunger for success as the reasons why she completed her degree.

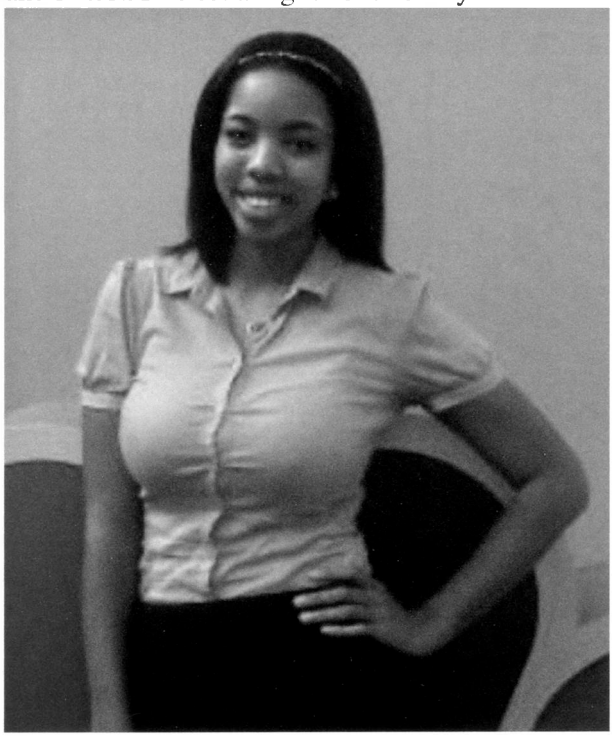
Later in her matriculation, Jhenna discovered her passion for entertainment and law after working for a non-profit performing arts camp. "My passion has always been the arts...and it saddens me that art programs are continually losing funding," commented Louis.

In the future Louis plans to attend Law School, become a lawyer and be an advocate for art programs. She hopes to begin a campaign that will raise money for the arts and protect the few art programs left.

As a lover of the arts Louis gravitated to Spelman College Glee Club during her freshman year, and has remained a dedicated member throughout her tenure at Spelman. To her the Glee Club is more than just a class; it is an organization that serves as the ambassador for the college.

Louis loves her soon to be Alma Mater and hopes that in the future there will be publicity for financial aid, scholarships and grants " I don't think anyone should have to go through what I went through [in reference to her taking a semester off], and I think Spelman should work towards preventing that."

Spelman has helped Louis to realize what a better person she has become and assisted in strengthening her to overcome all obstacles. "Spelman has allowed me to come into my own," explained Louis. "It [Spelman] has set the bar high, and in turn I've set a higher one for myself."



Charnese Green The Media Mogul

When Charnese Green left Philadelphia and enrolled at Spelman College in 2007, she had no idea where she would end up or that she was destined to be a great Spelman woman. However four years later, Green is graduating Magna Cum Laude, and will be working as a Teach for America Corps Member, in Atlanta, Georgia.

During her time at Spelman, Green has served as the Publicity Chair of the Black Public Relations Student Society, a member of the Spelman College Event Envoys and is a member of the Emma L. Bowen Foundation, which has allowed her to intern for Comcast Corporate. She is also the president of Alpha Lambda Delta honor society, a member of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars and the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society.

"Spelman has prepared me for anything I do in the future, by providing the resources and experiences that have shaped my womanhood and strengthened me as a person of color," added Green when describing her Spelman experience.

Stacey Mason

The Humanitarian

Stacey Mason credits Spelman College for helping her discover her passion to make a difference in the field of public health. She has completed research showing that young African Americans are among the highest group of underrepresented minorities who are suffering from health disparities and wants to be a positive influence and make a change.

From East St. Louis, Illinois, Mason transitioned well into life at Spelman. She was very active on campus and was involved with Student Health Associates and Peer Educators organization (S.H.A.P.E.) serving as secretary, was a Student Ambassador, worked as a part of the HBCU Substance Abuse Workforce intern program and was co-publicity chair for the miss Spelman Advisory board in addition to many other activities and honor societies.

When asked to give advice to her underclassmen sisters Mason stated, "To underclassmen who are feeling discouraged about finishing their matriculation, do not worry about not finishing but worry about the things they can and will do to finish." She believes that it is important not to stress about the little things and to surround yourself with positive people who have your best interest at heart.

Mason also believes that Spelman helped her to grow and develop as well as gave her the determination to go after her dream. Next year she plans to receive her Master's in Public Health concentrating in the area of behavioral science and health education. "The thing that kept me motivated and focused throughout my matriculation at Spelman were the support my friends and the push I received from different faculty, staff, and other alumnae," said Mason. "Without constant words of encouragement, faith, and drive, I would not be where I am today."

Sean Fling

The World Traveler

Sean Fling has taken to heart Spelman's mantra "A Choice to Change the World," because next year she plans to teach English while learning Mandarin Chinese in Shenzhen, China. Following that, attend medical school at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health.

While at Spelman, Fling was heavily involved with her Class Councils and with the Spelman Student Government Association. She served as the Freshman Class Council vice-president, the vice-presidential advisor during her sophomore year, and most recently she served as academic advisor on the senior class council.

Also, she participated in the Coca-Cola mentorship program, Health Careers and the Health Careers Opportunities Pipeline Preparation Program and is a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated. She also has an impressive resume, which includes being a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, the Golden Key International Honour Society, the Alpha Epsilon Delta Pre-Health Honor Society, the Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and Phi Beta Kappa.

Fling highly values the sisterhood and connections that are associated with Spelman College. She described Spelman as the "Networking Mecca" and knows that Spelman offers alumnae connections in every profession imaginable.

"That [Spelman's] network has benefited me in innumerable ways, beginning at finding summer experiences, to interviewing with various medical schools, and connecting me to people in places as far as China." Fling said.

Fling advises underclassmen to seek help, when help is needed. "Spelman prides itself on its familial atmosphere and the close ties between students, professors, and administration. Do not be afraid to tell someone that you are struggling because there are people who are here who want nothing more than to see you reach for the stars and be successful," added fling

"Being recognized as a Spelman woman has undoubtedly put me in all of the right places to accomplish my goals and appreciate the various opportunities I have received throughout my matriculation," stated Fling.

The Artisan

Kendra Hyson

Kendra Hyson a native of Washington, DC knew once she entered Spelman's gates that she was destined for greatness. However, she was unaware on where she would end up or the woman she would become. Hyson began her tenure at Spelman as an economics major but quickly changed her major to art when she discovered that art was her passion.

During Kendra's junior year, her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, which dually served as Hyson's inspiration and source of sadness. "My mother has influenced my passion. My love of art comes from watching her work so diligently," stated Hyson.

Although Hyson has achieved both inside and outside the classroom, her senior year proved to be the most difficult for many reasons. This year she was forced to overcome the adversities of working two jobs, completing school, in addition to graduating and being a support system for her mother. "Due to [my mother's] illness she had to leave her job and because of the economy she is still out of work. Although she has won her battle with cancer things are still difficult because of this economic strain," said Hyson.

Even though there were some trying times Hyson, refused to quit and is proudly graduating with the Class of 2011, and thanks her friends for supporting her throughout her matriculation. "Although they don't always know what exactly is going on in my life, they are always there for support and to give me a good laugh when I'm feeling a little down in the dumps," Hyson added.

After graduation Hyson plans to take a year off and focus on her art. As a student Kendra served as the Director of Publicity and Creative Director of P.U.L.S.E., captain of the softball team, a member of the Diverge art club, and a lifeguard for the Wellness Center. And is a member of Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society and the National Society of Collegiate Scholars.

While reflecting on her Spelman memories, Hyson said "I think that Spelman has helped me accomplish my goals by instilling a greater level of confidence in me, and has made me feel more empowered."

Michelle Fench

The Sage

Michelle R. Fench is a Pauline E. Drake Scholar from Detroit, Michigan. She is also a member of the Spelman College staff where she works full time as a Sergeant for Spelman's Public Safety. Fench's journey to earning a degree is not typical because she had to postpone getting her degree when she was younger because of numerous roadblocks. Like many traditional students Fench had financial problems and was forced to postpone her education.

In addition, to financial problems Fench has overcome several challenges including living with Lupus, which is a collection of diseases that can affect many different body systems including joints, skin and heart.

Also, her Spelman career was almost interrupted when she was diagnosed with Breast Cancer, however her cancer was diagnosed early and Fench was able to continue with her education. "It was a very hard time for me but my trust in God and the support of the faculty, staff and fellow students helped during my trying time," said Fench.

At the age of 43, Fench has completed her Bachelors of Art degree at Spelman and plans to pursue a Master's of Business Administration with a concentration in Public Administration at Keller Graduate School this fall. As a student at Keller Graduate School Fench will prepare herself for a career with the justice system. Eventually Fench wants to work in the juvenile court system as a Juvenile Probation Officer.

"I always promised myself that I would finish [school] so that I could be an example for someone else and enhance the lives of troubled youth," said Fench.

In addition to being a PED student, Fench is also a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success and she was elected Miss Pauline E. Drake Scholar 2010-2011.

She accredits Spelman College to improving her writing skills as well as enhancing her critical thinking. "I would encourage underclassmen to continue to strive for excellence," said Fench. "There will be roadblocks and problems, but I would advise them to find someone who has been a positive influence and a 'talk to' person if they ever feel discouraged."

2011 Honorary Degree Recipients

As the 2010-2011 academic year draws to a close, the date on which members of the class of 2011 receive their diplomas rapidly approaches. However, graduating seniors are not the only individuals who will be honored with a degree on May 15, 2011. This year, Spelman College honorary degree recipients include First Lady Michelle Obama, actress Phylicia Rashad, and dance pioneer Debbie Allen. Wendy Kopp, the CEO and founder of Teach for America, will be receiving the Community Service Award.

First Lady Michelle Obama was born Michelle LaVaughn Robinson and was raised on the South Side of Chicago. She attended Princeton University and Harvard Law School before returning to Chicago to work at the Sidley Austin law firm. It was there that she met her future husband, current President Barack Obama. Later, she worked on the staff of Chicago mayor Richard M. Daley and for the University of Chicago Medical Center. During the Presidential campaign of 2007 and 2008, she helped campaign for her husband's presidential bid. She also delivered a keynote address at the 2008 Democratic National Convention. She is the mother of two daughters, Malia and Sasha, and is the sister of Craig Robinson, men's basketball coach at Oregon State University. First lady Michelle Obama is often viewed as a fashion icon and is often compared to Jackie Onassis Kennedy. Even more impressive than her impeccable style is her desire to improve the health of people in the United States through her campaign promoting physical activity and healthy food choices.

Phylicia Rashad, formerly known as Phylicia Ayers-Allen, was raised in Houston, TX. Rashad is an American Tony Award winning actress and singer but is best known for her role as Claire Huxtable on the popular NBC sitcom *The Cosby Show*. Rashad became the first African-American actress to win the Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Play, for her role in the revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*. She played the same role in the 2008 television adaption of *A Raisin in the Sun* and won the 2009 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actress in a Television Movie, Mini-Series or Dramatic Special. Rashad was dubbed "the mother" of the African American community at the 42nd NAACP Image Awards, and will forever be thought seen as a positive portrayal of black motherhood.

Deborrah "Debbie" Allen is a woman of many talents. She is an acclaimed actress, dancer, choreographer, television director, television producer, and a member of the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities. Although Allen has made many notable accomplishments throughout her lifetime, she is best known for her work on the 1982 musical-drama television series *Fame*, where she portrayed dance teacher Lydia Grant, and served as the series' principal choreographer. Allen is also the younger sister of actress/singer Phylicia Rashad.

Teach for America founder and CEO Wendy Kopp was an undergraduate in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University. In 1988, Kopp proposed the creation of Teach for America in her undergraduate thesis. She was advised by senior sociology professor Marvin Bressler. Kopp believed that many fellow college graduates were "searching for a way to assume a significant responsibility that would make a real difference in the world and that top college students would choose teaching over more lucrative opportunities if a prominent teacher corps existed." She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton in 1989 and was a member of Princeton's Business Today. Upon graduating from Princeton, Kopp founded *Teach for America*. She also serves as the Chief Executive Officer of *Teach for All*, an organization that seeks to apply the methods of *Teach for America* to the education systems of foreign countries. Kopp wrote of her experiences as *TFA*'s founder and CEO in her book, *One Day, All Children: The Unlikely Triumph of Teach for America and What I Learned Along the Way.*

Operation Spelman Blue Brings First Lady to Spelman

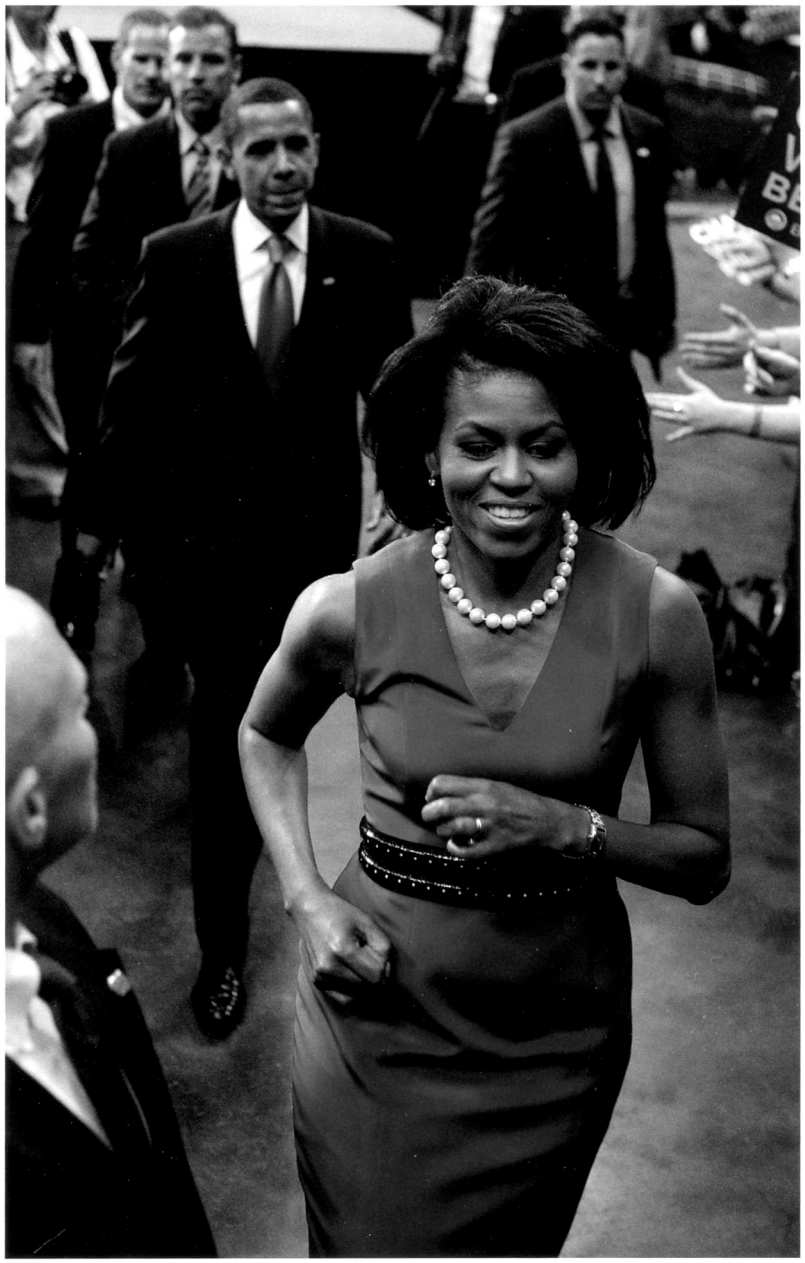
After tireless months of strategically campaigning for First Lady Michelle Obama to become the Class of 2011 commencement speaker, the senior class' "Campaign Blue" received word that their efforts paid off.

In April, Spelman College officially announced that Mrs. Obama was going to be the scheduled speaker. It was not long before word got out about the First Lady's upcoming appearance at Spelman spread around the campus and the Atlanta University Center. Senior class president Samantha Tulin was speechless when she found out that the campaign team secured the First Lady.

"I just couldn't believe that all of our hard work paid off! This was definitely a group effort, and I can't believe that our commencement speaker will be none other than Michelle Obama," said Tulin.

A collaborative creation of the senior class council and various faculty-led campaigns on campus, Campaign Blue was a strategic initiative to secure Mrs. Obama as the commencement speaker. For several years, Spelman's senior classes have attempted to secure Mrs. Obama as the speaker to no avail. However, the dedication of the Campaign Blue team finally melted the wall of reach so that Mrs. Obama would agree to serve as the speaker.

Although she is an international icon for her impressive background and down to earth charm, Mrs. Obama was so sought after because of how much of a role model she is for Spelman students.



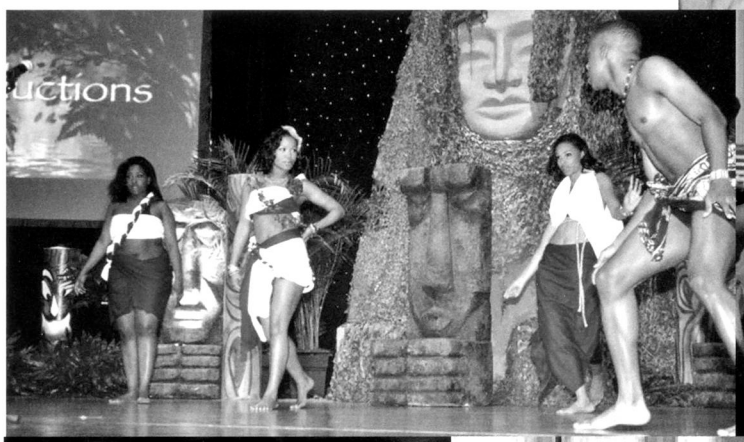
"The First Lady is the perfect choice for our commencement speaker because she embodies all of the qualities that we would like to be: successful in our careers and personal lives while still giving back to the community," shared Tulin.

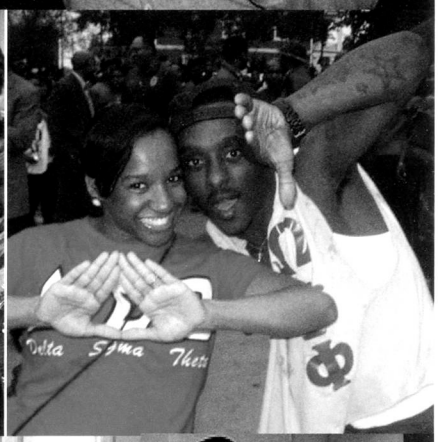
The First Lady's top aide, Kristen Jarvis, is also a Spelman graduate from the class of 2003, and many students believe that she also played a role in encouraging the Mrs. Obama to agree to speak at the graduation. However, as Tulin shares, much of the efforts came in collaboration of numerous Spelman-supporting groups.

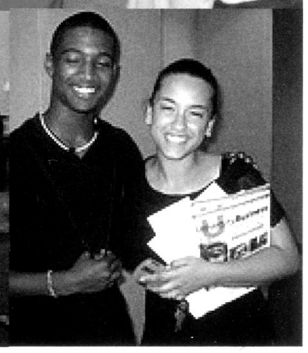
Since previous efforts to secure the First Lady had failed in the past, this time the senior class devised the Campaign Blue team to ensure that Mrs. Obama would be able to see how deeply the Spelman community desired her presence at the 2011 commencement. The senior class created a video that included personal messages to Mrs. Obama in addition to a group shot at the end telling her how much they loved her and that they hoped that she would be their commencement speaker. Also, they generated numerous letters and petitions and the class council created one unified cover letter that highlighted all of the reasons why Mrs. Obama should finally come to Spelman. Dr. Beverly D. Tatum, president of Spelman College, coincidentally was going to a conference in Washington, D.C. and was well-connected enough to get the cover letter, petitions and video delivered directly into the First Lady's hands.

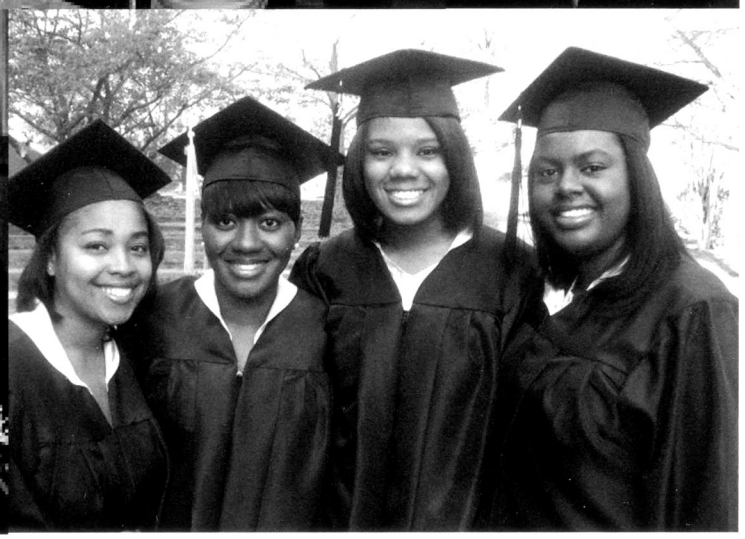
After watching and reading the heartfelt student responses and taking into consideration the faculty initiatives over the past several years, Mrs. Obama officially stated that she would accept Spelman's offer to speak at the 2011 Commencement on Sun., May 15, 2011.

Memories of The Class of 2011









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