

# Posse D.C. Selects Record 61 New Scholars



Posse D.C. Scholars listen on stage as audience members offer congratulatory remarks.

On January 5, 2010, Posse D.C. held its annual Awards Ceremony at the Lansburg Theater in Washington D.C. to celebrate the new class of Posse Scholars. These 61 young leaders won over \$8 million in four-year, full-tuition scholarships from six partner institutions: Bucknell University, Grinnell College, Lafayette College, Pepperdine University, Sewanee: The University of the South and University of Wisconsin-Madison. The investment of each university partner is approximately \$140,000 per Scholar.

“There was so much talent in that room [of finalists], I have no idea how the staff at Posse came to their decision to pick me,” said Demisse Habteselasia, Peppedine Posse 1. Indeed, selecting 61 Scholars from over 103 local high schools, including all D.C. public schools, as well as 47 community-based organizations was a huge but worthwhile endeavor. Nearly half of the Scholars selected will be the first generation in their family to attend college.

Over 480 guests were in attendance including family members who looked on as Posse staff and university representatives presented the awards to their respective Scholars. The new class of Posse D.C. Scholars is a truly impressive group of the most accomplished young leaders in the D.C. metro area. This

group includes the very first Posse to attend Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, and UW-Madison’s second Posse from D.C., which has 11 students. “I wish we could have picked two Posses,” said Sandy Ain, a D.C. lawyer and UW alumnus who helped select the second UW-Madison Posse.

## THIS GROUP INCLUDES THE FIRST POSSE TO ATTEND PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY IN CALIFORNIA

In addition to over a dozen members of the National Honor Society and several Student Government Association presidents, this newly selected group of Scholars includes young business owners, student representatives to the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council, published writers and dedicated volunteer tutors. “It is truly an honor to receive such a prestigious scholarship that bridges the gap between education and equality,” said Demisse.

WJLA News Anchor Leon Harris made a guest appearance at the event, offering a heartfelt message to Scholars and their families. Harris later mentioned the event on the 11 o’clock news. “Tonight,

See **“AWARD CEREMONY”** on Page ii

## Posse D.C. Welcomes Class of 2010

### Bucknell Posse 6

Felix Afriye, Michel Ajjan, Passion Artis, Daniel Bonilla, Joseph Ferguson, Erica Horne, Yessica Martinez, Monique McCants, Laura Razzuri, Raissa Sorgho

### Grinnell Posse 6

Gregory Armstrong, Vilma Castaneda, Javon Garcia, Milton Garcia, Helen Hinkson, Nicole Huffman, Mekdes Kebede, Lana Maghoub, Matheos Mesfin, Rocio Safe

### Lafayette Posse 5

Abdul Dopson, Ciera Eaddy, Fredy Flores, Matt Nguyen, Danyelle Smith, Torre Thomas, Claudia Umana, Alemneh Woretaw, Robert Young, Annie Zheng

### Pepperdine Posse 1

Jason Allen, Brandon Cruise, Demisse Habteselasia, Kristopher Hibler-Smith, Sarah Houston, Ingrid Maravilla, Demi McCoy, Rafaello Sampang, Karl Simpson, Taylor Smith

### Sewanee Posse 4

Anna Alikhani, Antoinette Barbour, Cedric Djikegoue, Alamarefa Doherty, Excy Guardado, Joshua Hirakawa, Brianetta Norris, Waleska Solorzano, Diana Webb, Rafael Woldeab

### Wisconsin Posse 2

Will Baker, Jordan Chacon, I-Sha Davis, Gleanza Industrious, Jeremy Letournel, Jaafar Mohamed, Gwendolyn Omolabi, Chika Onwuvuche, Gabriel Parker, Stephanie Parris, Long Tran

# 2010 Graduates Create Legacy of Leadership



Langston Tingling-Clemmons, Bucknell Posse 2, is the first Posse D.C. class president at Bucknell University.

In 2009, Posse D.C. had its first two graduating Posses from Bucknell University and Grinnell College. This year Posse D.C. celebrated the first graduating Posse from Lafayette College along with Posses from Bucknell and Grinnell. Langston Tingling-Clemmons, Thelma Bernal and Romeo Urias are three Scholars who made their impact on campus and are now ready to face life after graduation.

Langston made a powerful impression on Bucknell's campus. In his senior year, he was elected president of the Student Government Association.

As SGA president, Langston was concerned with how national issues impacted Bucknell's community. One

of the first issues he turned his attention to was how the Obama health care legislation impacts diverse racial and ethnic populations.

## LANGSTON VOLUNTEERED AT A SOUP KITCHEN RESURRECTED BY A FELLOW BUCKNELL POSSE SCHOLAR

Langston also worked hard to promote a spirit of cooperation and community service among students. The Academic Affairs committee, which he chaired, established a new mentoring

See "GRADUATION" on Page iii

## "AWARDS CEREMONY" from Page i

61 young men and women now know that they are going to college, thanks to an incredible foundation," he said. "I was honored to deliver the closing remarks at tonight's Awards Ceremony."

Walter Lohmann, partner at Kirkland & Ellis in Washington, D.C., expressed, "We at Kirkland share Posse's commitment to the goal of achieving equity in education and thank Posse for inviting us to be a part of this inspiring journey." ✨

## Awards Ceremony Sponsor

**KIRKLAND & ELLIS LLP**



TOP: University of Wisconsin-Madison alumni Harvey Borkin and Sandy Ain (back center) and UW Posse 2. BOTTOM LEFT: Demisse Habteselasie, (second from left) and fellow Pepperdine Posse 1 members before the Awards Ceremony. BOTTOM CENTER: WJLA News Anchor Leon Harris congratulates the Scholars on their achievements. BOTTOM RIGHT: New Bucknell 6 Scholar Daneil Bonilla will join Bucknell Posse 5 Scholars Cleveland Cunningham and Angel Hernandez on campus in the fall.

“GRADUATION” from Page ii

program to serve as a supplement to the existing advising program on campus. He also volunteered regularly at the local soup kitchen, Community Harvest, which was resurrected by another Posse Scholar, Emily Haley, the year prior.

Langston implemented successful “senior nights” to raise funds for campus activities. And under his leadership, the association gave careful attention to planning Bucknell’s commencement ceremony.

As a recent graduate, Langston has been collaborating with the Alumni Association to bring back Bucknell alumni to participate in innovative events. He has been offered various positions in the education field and will return to D.C. as a teacher in the Teach For America program. He wants to make a difference for kids from his community in Ward 8. Last summer, he gave four university mentors a tour of D.C. and the street where he grew up.

“I’m proud of the neighborhood I grew up in,” says Langston. “I still know all of my neighbors. My parents were focused on my education, so I took the Metro across the city to school since I was 5—and by myself since I was 7. I’d like more kids to get a quality education in their neighborhood so they don’t have to go quite so far at such a young age.”

**ROMEO WAS ON THE DEAN’S LIST FOR SEVERAL SEMESTERS AT LAFAYETTE**

Lafayette Posse 1 Scholar Romeo Urias, a chemical engineering major, excelled academically and was recognized on the dean’s list for several semesters. But he has not limited his love for engineering to the classroom. Romeo was an active member of the Lafayette Engineers Without Borders (EWB) club since freshmen year. In his sophomore and junior years, Romeo volunteered and traveled to Honduras to implement gravity-fed water systems to provide access to clean water for local residents.

Pursuing a minor in music, Romeo also cultivated his talents as a saxophone



LEFT: Romeo Urias, Lafayette Posse 1, has been an active member of the Lafayette Engineers Without Borders since he was a first-year student. RIGHT: Thelma Bernal, Grinnell Posse 2, is majoring in both Spanish and sociology while maintaining a high GPA.

player. As a part of the Lafayette musical community, he participated in several music ensembles, most notably the Lafayette Jazz Combo. And if this wasn’t enough to keep him busy, Romeo was also the Leader of the Lafayette Christian Fellowship Praise Team and coordinated intramural sporting events for the Lafayette American Institute of Chemical Engineers (AICHE) club.

A few months ago, he was an avid participant and workshop assistant in the Lafayette College PossePlus Retreat (PPR). Romeo and his Posse inspired the other 130 participants to engage in dialogue about race relations in America and on campus. “This PPR will be my most memorable because after four years, I was able to see the impact and influence that Posse Scholars can have on campus and on younger Scholars,” he says.

Romeo’s Posse was the first from Washington, D.C. to graduate from Lafayette College, and crossed the stage alongside the New York Posse 4 Scholars on May 22. Romeo will soon begin a two-year rotational program with Olympus America, which will allow him to work in different departments within the company.

“I’m very thankful for the Posse blessing,” he says. “My dream of obtaining an education from a prestigious institution came true thanks to the Posse Program. Posse is, for me, a marvelous avenue where I’ve been able to cultivate meaningful, life-

long friendships with my Posse and Posse staff.”

Thelma Bernal, Grinnell Posse 2, is a first-generation college student. Though she was born in the United States, Thelma lived most of her life in El Salvador until she moved back to the States as a teenager. She maintained a high GPA at Grinnell College while pursuing a double major in Spanish and sociology.

**IN HER SPARE TIME THELMA TUTORED YOUNG GIRLS IN GRINNELL, IOWA IN THE SCIENCES**

In her spare time, Thelma tutored young girls in Grinnell, Iowa, in the sciences. She also taught a class at the local prison during her junior year. Thelma recently returned from El Salvador, where she studied on a travel grant to examine human rights through Grinnell’s Peace Studies Program.

“This year has been a great year,” says Thelma. “This whole adventure at Grinnell has been amazing, and I am so glad Posse has supported me in all possible ways and has had faith in me since the first day. Posse D.C. staff, Grinnell and my Posse have always been there for me, in the good and not so good moments. I might be graduating and leaving Grinnell, but I will never leave my Posse family.”\*

Posse D.C. has moved to a new office! We are now located at 1319 F Street NW, Suite 604, Washington DC 20004.

# Posse Campus Leaders Transition into the Workforce

Posse D.C. is proud to announce that 100 percent of its 2009 graduates are either gainfully employed or full-time graduate students. Given the current job market, this is a true testament to these Alumni's abilities and achievements and one of the many reasons we are so proud of them.

In June 2009, Posse D.C. celebrated the graduation of Grinnell Posse 1 and Bucknell Posse 1 at a ceremony on the rooftop of Citibank. However, this celebration was juxtaposed against the stark landscape of a rapidly declining job market. It is estimated that over 2.5 million U.S. jobs were lost in the first four months of 2009. Companies reported that they were also hiring about 25 percent fewer recent graduates. Nationwide, less than 20 percent of seniors in the class of 2009 had secured jobs upon graduation—the lowest reported numbers in decades.

Despite the dismal picture, Posse D.C. graduates continue to find employment in a range of fields. Molly McArdle, Grinnell Posse 1, is a public relations manager at Seeger Weiss LLP



(from left) Bucknell Alumni Lyndon Thweatt, Odinakachi Anyanwu, May Naldo, and Nygel Knighton are just a few of the graduates that are currently working in full-time positions.

in New York City. Fellow Posse member Jaysen Wright is pursuing his master's in theater and drama at the University of Indiana. May Naldo, Bucknell Posse 1, is the most recent addition to the Posse D.C. staff. Other employers include Accenture Management Consulting, Organization of American States (OAS), Sodexo and the Washington Technology Group.

Many graduates are also pursuing careers in the field of education. Bucknell Alumna Loretta Miller is enrolled in the counselor education master's program at Virginia State University, while her fellow Posse member Odinakachi Anyanwu is working at West Elementary School in Washington, D.C. Congratulations graduates! ✨

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- Bucknell University
- Grinnell College
- Lafayette College
- Pepperdine University
- Sewanee: The University of the South
- University of Wisconsin-Madison

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