

MEET THE ALLIES

Advancing diverse young leaders to strengthen communities, nonprofits and civic participation.



From left to right: (Back) Program Director Asha Loring, Richard Benitez, Francesca Menes, Katrina Rosemond, Devin Browne, Gila Yudewitz, Gina Ha, Nardia Dixon, Laurane Simon. (Front) Aaron McKinney, Andrea Baker, Keisha Gabiddon, Danielle King, Luz Agudelo, Nate Lettman, Chris Stephens. (Not pictured) Garris Nickle

Class of 2008/2009

Aaron McKinney

Project Hope

Aaron McKinney, born and raised in Miami, departed in the summer of 2005 to attend Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton where he would begin his studies in architecture. His engineering studies in high school at Miami Coral Park Senior High School sparked his interest in the field. After only a year in Boca Raton, Aaron found himself back in Miami, due to family financial setbacks, where he then attended Miami-Dade College to continue his studies in the field. Aaron's lack of passion of the facility and family problems forced him out of school and into the work force where he then had to learn to supply for himself, though he still desired to further his leaning. It took no time,

after being exposed to the "real world" that Aaron began to see the problems around him in his community and the dire need for change. He and a buddy co-founded an organization in which they hoped to begin to spark change amongst their closest friends and pray that it had a chain reaction across the community. The start of that organization made Aaron realized his true passion for public service through community outreach, and inspired him to join Public Allies and possibly run for a position in his city where he can make change in favor of the people. Aaron is now preparing to go back to school, switching his studies over to law or business and political science. After graduating Aaron hopes to continue his journey towards bringing real change to his city and its many communities.

Chris Stephens

PanZOU Project

Sak Pase! My name is Chris Stephens. I am twenty-two years old and originally from Daytona Beach, Florida. I graduated in June 2008 from Florida International University with a B.A in History with a minor in Anthropology. My placement is with the PanZOU Project, a non-profit program in North Miami Beach. With PanZOU, I am an Outreach Specialist. I work with youth who are in gangs or at risk for being in a gang. I counsel kids and try to get them involved in positive activities, such as job development programs. I also go with them to court and help them with their school work. I hope to learn more about non-profit work and about myself during my ten months



as a Public Allie and look forward to growing as an individual.

Katrina Rosemond

Alliance for Early Care and Education

My name is Katrina Elena Rosemond. I am a 22 year old AfroCuban American woman. I say it like that because I am very proud of my heritage. I am the daughter of a Cuban exile and a small town southern girl. I do not have any kids of my own but I do have four nieces and one nephew whom I love like my own. I am a huge sports fan but I can also discuss politics and other topics with ease. I am a published poet. Nothing spectacular but I won first place in the state and even got a different poem published in the newspaper. I had hoped one day to go into politics. My dream would be to actually run for President of the United States. I lost hope for that and decided that intelligence analysis would be a better route for me. In the light of the history making election, I have found my second wind and intend to continue my dreams towards The White House.

Nate Lettman

Take Stock in Children

Nathaniel Oniel Lettman is a young man with great hopes and dreams. Career-wise his dream is to open up a Children's Home for orphaned, abused and neglected children. On the journey to fulfill this dream he has had many experiences all over the world serving under privileged children, as well as adults. He has volunteered in numerous orphanages in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Jamaica. He has interned in group homes and went on to obtain his bachelor's degree in Social Work and a minor in Spanish from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. He is now is a part of an AmeriCorps program called Public Allies in Miami, Florida. Public Allies has served as his

official introduction to the non-profit sector and is simply the point of entry into the sea of service in which Nathaniel plans to spend the rest of his life exploring. Andrea Baker

South Florida Community Development Coalition

Andrea Baker is a Public Ally at the South Florida Community Development Coalition. In her role as Coordinator, Andrea works with the board of directors and its committees to promote networking and build the local community development field. Her activities include coordinating monthly meetings, following the development of local and regional policy, and keeping members informed of issues and opportunities. Originally from Oak Park, Illinois, Andrea graduated from Earlham College in Indiana, and has made her home in Miami for the past two years. An avid linguaphile, she studied French in college, is currently learning Spanish, and loves to expand her English vocabulary.

Richard Benitez

Miami Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Community

Richard Benitez is a committed member of his community making a difference everyday with his leadership and sense of duty. Born into a home of both Cuban and Bolivian ties has enabled Richard to look at things from a unique perspective, which he utilizes in his daily duties at The Miami Coalition for a Safe, Healthy and Drug-Free Community. As Special Projects Liaison, his role is to connect local issues with various initiatives in order to make positive things happen. Richard aspires to continue serving his community, building the bridges that connect Miami to the World.

Gila Yudewitz

YMCA

Gila Yudewitz spent six weeks on a bus traveling the length of Israel,

bringing original educational programs and activities to schools and after school programs with nine other Israeli, American, and British young adults. This was an amazing experience for her, but only one of many. Gila was born in Florida and graduated from Florida International University. She is now in the department of program services at the YMCA of Greater Miami. Unfortunately, the way adoption and foster care is viewed in America is a problem, and Gila hopes to work really hard to change the way America uses this system to help children with out homes.

Danielle King

The Human Services Coalition: Neighborhood Leadership Project

Born in a city of constant rain and occasional sun, I have been learning and living in Miami since my first breath. After developing a lessened sense of self and a greater appreciation of diversity and community in high school, I attended the University of Miami and majored in Political Science with a minor in Sociology. Post-graduation in June '08, I became a part of the Public Allies program. I was placed at the Human Services Coalition as the Neighborhood Leadership Program Coordinator, in charge of working with the various and simultaneous Study Circles and Study Circle projects.

Gina Ha

The Human Services Coalition: Parent Leadership Training Institute

Being the last child of six and only daughter of immigrant parents does not define me. I break glass ceilings as a woman, Asian-American and product of poverty. I was born in Miami, and although I went to the University of Florida and loved Gainesville, I understand the importance of giving back to your community and embracing your



roots. I joined Public Allies to do so. I am the Parent Leadership Training Institute Coordinator at the Human Services Coalition and I assist in the implementation of a program that helps adults realize their leadership potential on behalf of children.

Luz Agudelo

ACCION

I came from a small town surrounded by big mountains, a magical land full of folklore and legends. A place where everyone knows their neighbors and children play without shoes outside. As a child, I was taught to work hard and study hard if I wanted to have a better future. So, I did, I study hard and worked hard, however one day I noticed that that "magic formula" was not completely working. I understood that things are doing fine for me, but around me, a lot of work needs to be done. There are different social issues, such as peace, food, water, security, justice, and equal opportunities for all that we have to accomplish. I questioned myself about what could I do to participate and improve our society, and the Public Allies program gave me the answer to my questions. Through my work as the Little Havana Public Ally, I realize that getting civically engaged, listening to each other, and sharing leadership, is the best "magic formula" that is helping us to design our future and build the communities we always dreamed to live in.

Francesca Menes

Florida Immigrant Coalition

I was born and raised in Little Haiti, a small, but growing community within Miami, Florida. I am of Haitian descent for which I am very proud. During my freshman year of high school I moved from Miami to Kansas City, Missouri. I spent 4 wonderful years there and then moved back to Florida for my college education. I am a recent Cum Laude graduate of Florida International

University in Miami, Florida. I majored in Political Science and Women's Studies; I had a minor in Philosophy, and earned a certificate in National Security Studies. Public Allies is my new life, and boy is it interesting and fulfilling. I was very active in college and thanks to Public Allies I now have the opportunity to be active in my community. My placement is the Florida Immigrant Coalition, which is located right in the heart of Little Haiti, and I am the Volunteer Program Manager.

Nardia Dixon

Phyllis Wheatley Elementary School

My name is Nardia Dixon. In 1996, I immigrated to Miami with my mother from the island of Jamaica. After studying at Miami-Dade College, I continued to Florida International University (FIU) where I earned a B.Sc. in Computer Science in December, 2003. Currently, I am again at FIU pursuing my Master's in Public Administration. For the past 3 years I have worked as a tutor in mathematics and science at the elementary and secondary levels. Through Public Allies I work at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Overtown, a neighborhood of Miami, FL. As a Parent Involvement Specialist, I am responsible for recruiting and training parents to serve as leaders in the school community (particularly the Parent Teacher Association); I provide support for school activities to increase parent involvement; and I also promote and will facilitate a Phillis Wheatley Study Circle as part of the Neighborhood Leadership Program.

Laurane Simon

FAMN Haitian Women of Miami

Laurane Simon is a 2008-2009 Public Ally assigned to FANM/Haitian Women of Miami Inc. FANM is a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower Haitian women and their families socially,

economically, and politically. Born here in America, Laurane is a 2nd generation Haitian. Both her mother and father are from the beautiful island of Haiti also known as the pearl of the Antilles. Along with being a full time Public Ally, Laurane is also actively pursuing her graduate degree in Public Administration from Florida International University in sunny Miami, Florida. Before enrolling into FIU, Laurane attended the illustrious Florida A&M University on the highest of seven hills in Tallahassee, Florida. One quote that sums up who Laurane Simon is is simply stated by Lou Holtz "Ability is what you are capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it." With those three attributes Laurane Simon is destined for success.

Garris Nickle

Neighborhood Housing Services

My name is Garris Jurdine Nickle and I was born as a native of Jamaica on October 14, 1980. I moved to Miami at about the age of six which was very good in terms of opportunity. As I grew older I went to several different schools throughout Dade and Broward County. Due to some difficulties I didn't graduate but later got my G.E.D through a vocational program. I am currently a public ally placed at Neighborhood Housing Services of Dade as a Community Liaison assisting with Community Revitalization. The way I came about this position is that as a Christian Rap Artist and Motivational Speaker I've had a lot of past experience in the Non-Profit work. I applied through a referral from a friend and this is now my current status in life. I love this line of work because I learn the ins and outs of how to be a helpful hand throughout the community on a larger scale. My future goal is to eventually branch out and to start an organization of my own in the field of prison reentry and homeless assistance.



Devin Browne

University of Miami Department of Family Medicine

My name is Devin Browne. I am from Miami born and raised. I have one brother and two sisters. My oldest sister is Delasie. She is a model and a real estate agent. The second oldest is Trudy. She is a real estate attorney. My younger brother is about to graduate from Florida A&M in pre-med Biology.

I graduated from Miami Christian High School where I played basketball for the legendary Art Alvarez. Our team was ranked fifth in the nation. We played forty games in a season in which we traveled to Hawaii and California so sports is my passion. I had perfect attendance my whole academic career but that stopped in college. I graduated from Barry University with a degree in Broadcast News. I am now a Public Allies and I work at Booker T. Washington High School. I coordinate events for the Overtown Cookbook and am helping jump start the mentorship program. I am a pretty outgoing, positive thinking guy. I am a friendly guy I get along with pretty much anybody. I just like to have fun and have a good time because you never know if you will wake up the next day so I try to enjoy every second of the day.

