



**Research Center for  
Leadership in Action**  
NYUWagner

## FELLOWSHIP FOR EMERGING LEADERS IN PUBLIC SERVICE ALUMNI CONNECTION

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### FELPS BOOK CLUB

**Thurs., Dec. 2, 6:00pm  
@ NYU Wagner**

Jersey Conference Room,  
295 Lafayette St.

RSVP: markliu1@gmail.com

#### HOLIDAY PARTY

**Mon., Dec. 13, 6:30pm  
@ NYU Open House**

528 La Guardia Place  
(W. 3rd and Bleeker)

Hors d'oeuvres and bar  
drinks will be served.

**Alumni are complimentary.  
Significant others are invited  
at a cost of \$20 to partially  
defray the cost of their  
attendance.**

To attend, you must RSVP to  
wagner.felps@nyu.edu.

### 2010-2011 ALUMNI BOARD

**Jeremy Coffey** ('09), President  
*The Clinton School for Writers  
and Artists*

**Mark Liu** ('08), Vice President  
*Memorial Sloan-Kettering  
Cancer Center*

**Sean Corlett** ('10)  
*Brooklyn Democracy  
Academy*

**Jessica Leavitt** ('08)  
*Per Scholas*

**Ly Nguyen** ('10)  
*Public Interest Projects*

**Taku Noguchi** ('07)  
*Goldman Sachs*

**Rhiannon O'Leary** ('09)  
*Teach For America*

**Samuel Pierre** ('09)  
*NYC Office of the Mayor*

### A MESSAGE FROM THE FELPS ALUMNI BOARD PRESIDENT

Dear Fellowship Alumni,

I hope you receive this edition of  
our quarterly newsletter well rested  
before the holiday season.

I would like to welcome Jessica  
Leavitt ('08) to the Alumni Board.  
Jessica is vice president of national  
expansion for Per Scholas, Inc., a  
nonprofit social venture committed  
to breaking the cycle of poverty  
through education and technology.

There are some fun ways to  
connect with alums coming up.

If you want to expand your  
knowledge about public service or  
love to read, you're invited to the  
kick-off of a new FELPS Book Club  
on December 2 at NYU Wagner. It  
will be a chance to decide on  
books, meeting times and more.

I also invite you to join the 2011  
Class, the Alumni Board, and your  
fellow alumni for the FELPS Holiday  
Party on December 13. This year the  
event will be held at the NYU Open  
House Event Space at 528  
LaGuardia Place between West 3rd  
and Bleeker Streets. Once again

we will be collecting donations for  
Toys for Tots.

The Alumni Board is planning a  
host of activities for the coming  
year, so please keep an eye out for  
information in the FELPS  
Classifieds in your inbox twice a  
month. I encourage you not only to  
read them, but also to send us new  
opportunities to share with the  
broader FELPS alumni community.

I hope to see you at the Holiday  
Party or another event soon!

Best, Jeremy Coffey ('09)

### FELPS WELCOMES THE 2011 FELLOWS



*Top: 2011 Fellows Cynthia Thaler,  
Chris Rominger, Tedde Tsang and  
Allie Bryan at Orientation.*

*Bottom: 2011 Fellows Phillippe  
Kleefeld, Hannah Robbins, Alison  
Ongvorapong and Matt Moran during  
the Orientation Scavenger Hunt.*

The 2011 fellowship year is now in  
full swing! On November 6, the 30  
Fellows of the 2011 Class completed  
an Orientation filled with team-  
building activities, including a  
scavenger hunt through Greenwich  
Village and happy hour with alumni.

In part due to alumni referrals, we  
received a record number of  
applications for this year's program  
and are excited to have such a  
dynamic group participate. In  
addition to their impressive public  
service accomplishments, several  
Fellows are avid runners, dancers  
and bicyclists; many enjoy cooking  
"overly ambitious" meals, creative  
writing or rooting for their favorite  
sports teams; and all have great  
stories and "hidden gems" to share  
from exploring in the US, around the  
world and throughout the five  
boroughs. We hope you will be able  
to meet them at the Holiday Party!

Two accomplished senior directors  
have joined the program as Career  
Guides this year: Jack Schnirman,  
vice president of Management  
Consulting at Bowne Management  
Systems, and Alexandra Sica, senior  
director at The Port Authority of New  
York and New Jersey.

We also have five incredible Alumni  
Guides: Jeremy Coffey '09, Jessica  
Leavitt '08, Mark Liu '08, Aden  
Munassar '10, and Ly Nguyen '10.

See the complete list and bios of  
the 2011 Fellows and Guides here:  
[wagner.nyu.edu/felps](http://wagner.nyu.edu/felps)

If you have questions or ideas for  
alumni programs or would like to  
say hello, please stay in touch!

Warmly,  
Colleen SchwartzCoffey & Mo Coffey  
colleen.coffey@nyu.edu and  
wagner.felps@nyu.edu



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: NEIL BLUMENTHAL

"If you think about it, the best business ideas are ones that solve everyday problems," Neil Blumenthal ('06) says. He knows firsthand. The company he co-founded, Warby Parker, sells high-quality, fashionable eyewear for less than a quarter of the price of comparable frames bearing the name of a luxury brand.

The idea behind Warby Parker is to give customers a better deal for a product of the same, or better, quality. Ever wonder why a plastic eyeglass frame at a store costs \$400+? As Neil explains, a couple of multi-billion dollar companies have had a stranglehold over every phase of the production of eyewear and lenses – from manufacturing to licensing to the retail shops where we shop. As a result, they have the ability to inflate prices with artificial fees and generate astronomical profit margins.

"We're trying to transfer wealth back to the consumer," Neil says.

Warby Parker partners with a manufacturer, lens maker, and assembly plant to produce its custom glasses, while removing the excess fees. For \$95,

customers get a stylish, exclusive design acetate frame fitted with prescription polycarbonate, anti-reflective lenses. Shipping is free.

For every pair that is bought, one is donated to a nonprofit that will distribute it to a person in need. To date, they have distributed glasses to 24 countries.

Neil's path to eyewear entrepreneurship isn't entirely out of the blue. After graduating from Tufts in 2002, he worked for VisionSpring – a social enterprise whose goal is to make eyewear affordable for people in need across the world. The company had one employee when Neil started. He worked in El Salvador and then helped the program expand to ten countries with a team of 20.

Neil saw firsthand the impact that a pair of eyeglasses could have on a person's ability to live and work in developing countries. He also saw the dire consequences of not being able to correct poor vision for farmers and workers whose livelihoods depended on the ability to see well. By the time Neil entered the



Wharton School of Business in 2008, he had not only become passionate about the cause, he had learned the workings of the eyewear manufacturing industry.

In his first semester at Wharton, Neil met the three future co-founders of his company. Through their conversations, the idea for Warby Parker soon crystallized around visions of high-quality product, a consumer-friendly culture and an overarching desire to create positive change.

Four weeks after launching out of an apartment in Philadelphia in February 2010, Warby Parker sold out of their top 15 lines and had a 20,000-person waitlist. The founders (still students at Wharton), their families and girlfriends found themselves working around the clock to fill orders.

Today, Warby Parker has an infrastructure to support its online sales model, having invested in innovative "virtual try-on" Web technology, a free home trial system and extensive customer service. The company moved into an office in Union Square and is poised to launch more designs.

The company has also been named one of *Entrepreneur* magazine's Annual 100 Brilliant Ideas and has been featured by media outlets including *GQ*, *Vogue*, and Daily Candy.

They recently partnered with the Susan G. Komen for the Cure foundation to create an exclusive pink frame, and \$50 of each sale goes toward breast cancer research and education. Warby Parker is also looking to increase its partnerships with nonprofits.

As Neil talks about product expansion and the future of his company, he asks, "How can we do more?" – for the product, consumers, employees and causes around the world.

For more, visit [warbyparker.com](http://warbyparker.com)  
- By Taku Noguchi ('07)

## PUBLIC SERVICE BOOK REVIEW: *THE PRICE OF STONES*

Over the past few years, a new genre in books has emerged. Memoirs in social entrepreneurship such as *Three Cups of Tea* and *Mountains Beyond Mountains* have climbed the bestseller lists and, in the process, enhanced popular awareness of some of the world's most intractable problems and innovative solutions.

Among the genre's newest additions is Twesigye Jackson Kaguri's *The Price of Stones*, an account of the development of the

Nyaka AIDS Orphans School in Uganda. The work is distinguished within the genre by its native, first-person authorship; Kaguri writes about himself as benefactor, entrepreneur and beneficiary community member.

We meet Kaguri during his childhood in Uganda, a destitute existence of study and labor. Still, Kaguri excels academically and eventually becomes a human rights scholar in the US. Upon his return to Uganda,

Kaguri is horrified by the ravages of AIDS and vows to open the country's first free school for AIDS orphans. Despite enormous obstacles, Kaguri relentlessly pursues and ultimately realizes this vision.

Kaguri relates his story in an intensely personal manner, vividly illustrating firsthand experiences and private emotions. This inward focus renders the book fresh and enjoyable, but it also limits the work's breadth, as Kaguri

foregoes serious effort to connect the personal to the global. Kaguri is intent on simply telling a story. *The Price of Stones* leaves the reader to relate the story to broader questions about global problems and solutions.

- By Andy Felder ('09)  
**Love Books?**  
Join the FELPS Book Club at 6:00pm on December 2 in the Jersey Conference Room at NYU Wagner. The get-together will be a chance to decide the types of books to read, meeting dates, etc. Email: [markliu1@gmail.com](mailto:markliu1@gmail.com)



## SERIES ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: PRESIDENT'S SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND

Amid political controversies, many people might have missed a new effort from the Obama Administration to put federal funds in the hands of social entrepreneurs. In July 2010, the White House, in partnership with private foundations, awarded \$123 million to 11 different nonprofits across the country. The new initiative is aptly titled the President's Social Innovation Fund (SIF), and will be run out of a new office in the White House. Of note to New Yorkers should be the large amount of money awarded to the Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City, which totals about \$5.7 million.

The SIF is dedicated to addressing increasing healthcare needs, closing the gap in achievement for low-income children and taking on economic challenges. To that end, the fund will be awarding money to a portfolio of organizations selected through a rigorous process that demonstrate the desire and ability to find solutions for problems in healthcare, education, youth development and personal financial management. The portfolio's efforts will reach across 20 states.

"This portfolio is a collection of extraordinary organizations with an unparalleled body of knowledge and expertise on growing what works," said Patrick Corvington, director of the organization managing the SIF. "They are all driven by the search for bold solutions and recognize that we must use evidence to

target limited resources where they will have the greatest impact."

The grants include \$74 million in private donations, which, when combined with federal funds, total \$123 million.

Of that remarkable sum, \$7.7 million will go to Jobs for the Future, an organization that provides training and technical education to unemployed adults to provide them with marketable job skills. The two-year grant will be used to expand the organization's operation, allowing it to work with more than 23,000 low-income individuals while addressing the skill needs of more than 1,000 employers.

Other organizations receiving grants include the National AIDS Fund, which will receive \$3.6 million, and the Edna McDonnell Clark Foundation, which will receive \$10 million. Of the 11 organizations receiving funds, eight will be selecting subgrantees.

Paul Carttar, director of the Social Innovation Fund, said the program "offers an avenue for community-driven solutions to grow and demonstrate their value."

Funding will be awarded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The CNCS was established in 1993 to meet the needs of the United States' most vulnerable citizens.

- By Meghan McCormick ('09)

## CAREER GUIDE SPOTLIGHT: LETICIA SMITH-EVANS



When you read Leticia Smith-Evans's bio, the instant reaction is "Wow." Leticia's career has spanned sectors – from government to elementary and post-secondary education to the private sector to civil rights – and along the way she has earned several degrees and received numerous awards.

Currently, Leticia works at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) as assistant counsel, where she focuses specifically on education-related cases and initiatives. Her work encompasses a wide range of issues, from desegregation of schools to school disciplinary policies and practices. For Leticia, the best part of her job is working with people who are all passionate about racial justice.

She says, "Although my colleagues here come from all different backgrounds, at the end of the day that's what they all care about."

Dedicating her life's work to racial justice comes from a deep connection to issues of race and inequity that Leticia has cultivated since she was young, having grown up with many strong civil rights advocates.

Like many of us, Leticia's passion for public service comes from an inherent desire to help people. Service, she says is "just part of her core." To fulfill her personal mission of helping others, Leticia initially thought she would pursue medicine. After one class

in college, however, History of the 1960s, she had a change of heart.

As a Career Guide for the 2010 and 2011 FELPS classes, she offers this advice to those just beginning their careers in public service: "Take advantage of every opportunity, whether that opportunity is what you thought it would be or not. Learn all you can, network, think about what you're passionate about, be humble and kind, and always remember to give back."

Leticia also believes it is important for those starting their careers in public service to understand that change won't happen immediately and if and when it happens, it may not be exactly the change you want to see. These victories shouldn't be taken lightly, however; they still signify an important impact.

What's next for Leticia? For now, she is enjoying her work at LDF and intends on staying put. She is also excited about continuing to serve as a Career Guide. In the future, you may find Leticia on TV or radio; one of the things she would love to do is host her own broadcast program. With a career as diverse as hers, this next step would be no surprise.

- By Ly Nguyen ('10)

Stay in touch! Visit the FELPS Web site and click on the alumni connection link to update your information and see what the alumni network has to offer: <http://wagner.nyu.edu/FELPS>





## Fellowship for Emerging Leaders in Public Service

### Upcoming Events

#### FELPS Holiday Party

December 13, 2010, 6:30 – 8:00pm

NYU Open House Event Space

528 Laguardia Place

Join us to connect with fellowship alumni and current fellows! Hors d'oeuvres and drinks will be served. In the spirit of the holidays, we invite you to bring a new and unwrapped children's toy or book to donate to Toys for Tots.

Significant others are invited to join us at a cost of \$20 to partially defray the cost of their attendance.

RSVPs are required. Please RSVP by December 7 to:  
[wagner.felps@nyu.edu](mailto:wagner.felps@nyu.edu)



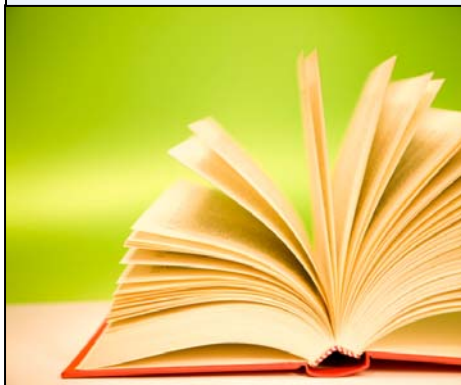
#### FELPS Book Club

December 2, 2010, 6:00pm

Jersey Conference Rm., NYU Wagner

295 Lafayette Street

Want to expand your knowledge about public service, read fascinating books and connect with current fellows and alumni? The new FELPS Book Club, an alumni-led initiative, is holding an informal planning meeting to determine the types of books to read, meeting dates, times, etc. To participate or get more info, email Mark Liu: [markliu1@gmail.com](mailto:markliu1@gmail.com)



#### White House Fellows Program Information Session

December 9, 2010, 5:30-7:30pm

Rudin Conference Room, NYU Wagner, 295 Lafayette Street

The White House Fellows Program is one of America's most prestigious programs for leadership and public service, offering first-hand experience working at the highest levels of the federal government. Learn more about the program at an event featuring former White House Fellows, including Diane C. Yu, Chief of Staff and Deputy to the President of New York University. RSVP to:

<http://www.wagner.nyu.edu/events/rcla-12-08-2010>



#### Young Nonprofit Professionals Network Professional Development Fair

December 10, 2010, 5:00-8:30pm

University Settlement 273 Bowery @ Houston St.

Come and learn about fellowships, certificate programs, and networking organizations that can help further your career! The Research Center for Leadership in Action will be hosting a table to share info about FELPS – come swing by! You can also meet representatives in areas ranging from public policy to social entrepreneurship and everywhere in between. The event will also feature a panel from 6:00 - 6:30pm on “Leadership and Your Professional Development.” Event is \$5 for nonmembers and free for YNPN members. <http://ynpnyc.org>



To learn more about events and resources for FELPS alumni, please visit: [wagner.nyu.edu/felps](http://wagner.nyu.edu/felps) and click on Alumni Connection or check the FELPS Classifieds. You can also email us any time: [wagner.felps@nyu.edu](mailto:wagner.felps@nyu.edu)