Alumni

Kathryn Bigelow, Benjamin Jealous, and Other Alumni in the News

Winter 2012-13



Kathryn Bigelow (Wikimedia Commons / Sgt. Michael Connors)

Capturing Awards

The National Board of Review of Motion Pictures named **Kathryn Bigelow ’81SOA** best director for *Zero Dark Thirty*, her film about the killing of Osama bin Laden, which also won for best picture. Additionally, Bigelow recently won the best-director award from the New York Film Critics Circle, becoming the first woman ever to win it twice. She was also honored by the group in 2009 for *The Hurt Locker*.

Good Fortune

Two Columbias were included on Fortune magazine's 2012 "40 Under 40" list, which recognizes rising stars in the business world.

Binta Niambi Brown ’95BC, ’98LAW was ranked 35th for her work as a partner with the law firm Kirkland & Ellis, as well as for her reputation as one of the country’s top black fundraisers. The youngest trustee of Barnard College, Brown also has served as an adviser to New York governors Eliot Spitzer and Andrew Cuomo, as well as to Hillary Clinton during her senatorial term.

Benjamin Jealous ’94CC, who in 2008 became the youngest president of the NAACP, was 37th on the list. A Rhodes Scholar and fifth-generation NAACP member, he has increased the organization’s revenue by 10 percent annually and expanded programs in economic literacy, education, and health.

High-Tech Checks

Two Columbia Engineering professors were included on *Forbes* magazine’s list of “30 Under 30” notable science and health professionals.

Christine Fleming, an assistant professor of electrical engineering, has created optical-imaging catheters to get detailed images of the heart walls, which could help doctors to better diagnose disease.

Changxi Zheng, an assistant professor of computer science, was recognized for his work developing machines that make realistic natural sounds, helping to create an impressive virtual representation of our physical world.

Clifford Stein, the chair of the Department of Industrial Engineering and Operations Research, was honored with an Association for Computing Machinery Fellowship, which recognizes the highest achievements in computing research and development. Stein’s research has recently focused on developing innovative ways to help computer processors save energy.

Leading the Way

Sheena Wright ’90CC, ’94LAW has taken over as president and CEO of United Way of New York City, becoming the first woman to lead the organization in its seventy-five-year history. Wright was most recently president and CEO of the Abyssinian Development Corporation, where she managed an extensive network of community and economic-development activities in Harlem.



Dinaw Mengestu (Courtesy of the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation)

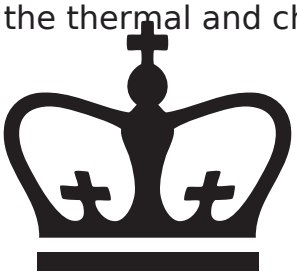
Big Macs

Three members of the Columbia community received $500,000 MacArthur Fellowships, or “genius grants” for creativity, originality, and long-term potential in their fields.

Maria Chudnovsky, a mathematician and professor of industrial engineering and operations research, will use the grant to continue her research on complex graph theory.

Novelist **Dinaw Mengestu ’05SOA**, who is the author of *The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears* and *How to Read the Air*, was recognized for his use of fiction to paint a powerful portrait of the African diaspora in America. Also a noted journalist, he has recently covered conflicts in Darfur, Uganda, and Congo.

Geochemist **Terry Plank ’93GSAS**, a professor in Columbia’s Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, is best known for her research on tectonic plates and the thermal and chemical forces that result from their collisions.



Guide to school abbreviations

All categories >