

MITAKUYE OYASIN

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTER



ALL MY RELATIONS

Happy holidays! It's truly a blessing to be healthy and to be able to present to you the sixth edition of my holiday newsletter. I hope that your family and you are well.

A few years ago, I hosted a staff retreat. I asked a few of my staff members to serve on a committee to help plan the retreat. I asked them to think of an appropriate theme for the days we would spend together at our retreat and to start thinking about how our collective work with students is interrelated. The theme they selected was **Mitakuye Oyasin** (pronounced Mee-tah-koo-yay Oy-yah-seen), a Lakota Sioux term, which is loosely interpreted as "all my relations or all my relatives." I was not familiar with the term, but after the committee shared with me a basic understanding of its meaning, I incorporated it into the agenda, and we went on to have an outstanding retreat.

Since the retreat, I have learned much more about the term, Mitakuye Oyasin. It's not just a term applied to family, friends, or coworkers; it's broader than that. Mitakuye Oyasin asks you to consider your relationships outside of your family, friends, and coworkers. It suggests that your actions, good or bad, have an impact on everyone in the universe. Nothing happens in isolation, and we must not ignore how we all are connected.

When we show unconditional love, generosity, and compassion for all living things, we all benefit and contribute to the prosperity and health of the world. When we love, give, and care, we are at our best, and others benefit.

Each of us is here for a reason, and we all have a purpose and a destiny. We are not exclusive, isolated beings-quite the opposite. We are related.

I dedicate this year's newsletter to all my relations-the ones I know, and the ones I don't. Blessings to you, always. Read on--at your own pace. WMG



Connections

Mom, relaxing on the front porch at the new Sewanee Inn. Above, mom with family, friend, and hometown neighbor, Pam London, during their week-long trip to Connecticut to visit me; in South Carolina visiting with the Peeler children; in Charlotte, NC at a dinner hosted by Rand and Addison Ayer, with former First Union banking friends; and my brother, Terry, in Georgia at his son's baseball game.

ALL MY RELATIONS

Getting Started

In October, I usually begin looking through the thousands of photos I take during my yearly journey to find the photos I'll use in the newsletter. By the end of October, I'd selected most of the photos and started inserting them into the newsletter.

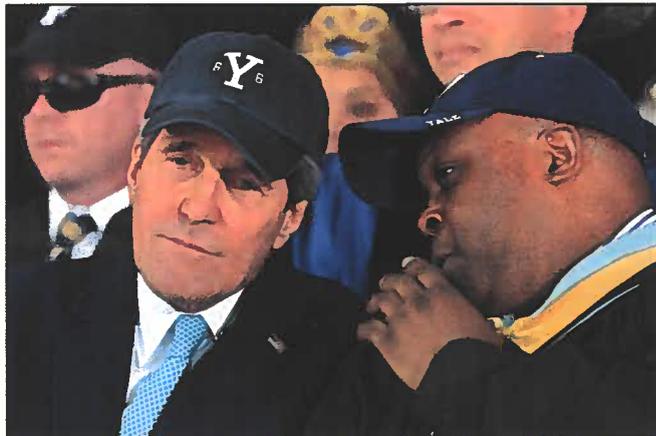
I normally don't start writing the text until after Thanksgiving. This year, with an increasing amount of work and other obligations, I got a later start than usual.

It's Friday, December 12, and I know I need to start writing tonight after dinner. I just got home from work. It's very cold outside, and as I entered my house, it started to snow.

Earlier in the day, I'd decided that I'd cook chicken on the grill. I didn't let the light snowfall change my plans. After living almost 16 years in New England, I think I've become accustomed to being here; the snow doesn't bother me as much anymore. I've adjusted.

As for work, I'm in my eighth year at Yale. Recently, I was named Associate Vice President for Student Life. My responsibilities have increased as a result of this new title. Along with my primary role of overseeing the experience of undergraduates, I now have been asked to think about ways to enhance the experience of graduate and professional students. My daily prayer is for wisdom, discernment, and patience to do my best in caring for "all my student relations."

Yale students are involved in many activities, and I get as many as ten invitations per week to attend their events. I attend as many events as possible; as a former basketball player, I enjoy going the Yale basketball games the most. I don't believe I've missed any home games in the past few years. This past year, the coach asked me to serve as the Faculty Liaison to the Men's Basketball team. Last year, they had a great season, and this year looks promising as well. They've already beaten UConn, last year's national champions. In January, they play Vanderbilt, and since I'll be in TN for the holidays, I'm planning to attend. I can't wait.



Giving advice to the Secretary of State

John Kerry was the graduation weekend speaker at Yale this past year. Somehow, I was assigned to sit next to him (check out his security detail who is seated behind him in the blue hat and dark sunglasses, ready to kill should the Secretary of State be attacked). It was fascinating to spend two hours speaking to one of the world's most powerful and influential people. Kerry is a Yale graduate, and he had many questions to ask about student life. Here, he has asked me what is the most challenging aspect of my job. He listens intently as I respond. May 2014.



Spending time at Duke's Blood and Marrow Transplant Program with Dr. Joanne Kurtzberg and June Allison, former colleagues and two of my favorite people. June 2014.

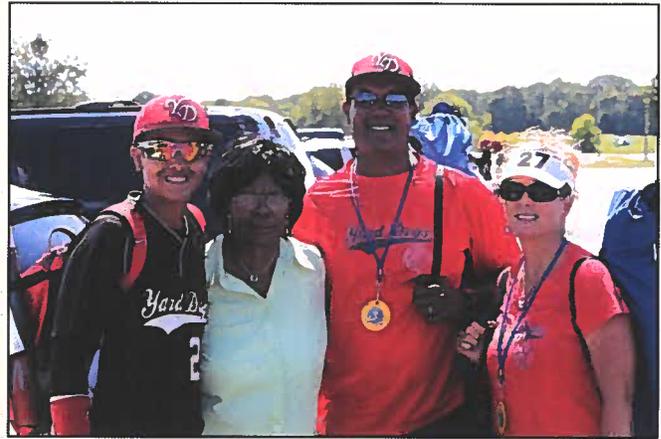
ALL MY RELATIONS

Terry, Taylor, O'Brien, and me

Last January started off well. I spent a fun-filled day with my brother and his sons at the Music City Bowl. Georgia Tech played Ole Miss. It was a very cold day, and we were bundled up in layers of clothing and blankets. Two of my former Yale colleagues work as athletic directors at Georgia Tech. The day before the game, my mom and I went to the Opryland hotel to visit with them. We met several of the Georgia Tech players. Ole Miss got the best of them that day, but it was good to be part of the fun.

Ellis and Capell Simmons

For several years in January, I can always look forward to receiving an invitation to dinner at the home of one of my college basketball teammates, Ellis Simmons, and his lovely spouse, Capell. They live in Nashville. With good music playing in the background, for us, it's a time for reconnecting and sharing stories, both old and new. Ellis is from Kentucky, where basketball reigns. I've not met many players who can pull up off the dribble, like Ellis. 😊



Take me out to the ball game

My soon-to-be 14 year-old nephew, O'Brien, is a rising star both in baseball and basketball. Here he is this past summer with his parents, Terry and Amy, and Nana at a multiple day baseball tournament in Georgia. Since I took this photo in July, O'Brien has grown at least three inches. You might be able to see how much he's grown in the photo of him on the next page (top photo), and especially on page eight in the photo with his basketball teammates taken a few weeks ago.

Finding Your Roots

Skip Gates is an author, documentary filmmaker, and professor. He graduated from Yale and currently teaches at Harvard. He's a brilliant scholar having written seventeen books. He currently is most known for his television show on PBS, called *Finding Your Roots*, a popular series where he uses genealogical research to find the family history of famous Americans, such as Oprah and Derek Jeter.

You might recall a few years ago that after he returned from a trip to China, the door to Skip's house was jammed. Someone called the police reporting a break-in. There was a confrontation between Skip and the police officer, and Skip was arrested. This incident made national news, and President Obama invited the officer and Skip to the White House to have a discussion about the incident and a beer. Later on, through his research, Skip learned that he and the arresting officer share a common ancestor. In actuality, they are related.



With Henry Louis 'Skip' Gates, Jr. at Yale attending a reception in his honor.

ALL MY RELATIONS

TRAVEL: By February, I usually have had enough of winter. When I lived in Vermont, there always was a conference in Florida that I attended, where, for a few days, I was able to enjoy warmer, sunny days. Now, as a board member at the University of Monterrey in Mexico, I've been able to go there for the past three years.

I've enjoyed working with the folks at the University of Monterrey. It's a relatively new university. They ask us to come to their campus so we can share some of the innovative programs we've developed, and so that they can implement them on their campus. Right now, I've shared with them a series of student leadership workshops that my office created, which they have found helpful.

FAMILY

This past spring break, I went home for a week. I continue to be thankful to Terry and Amy for caring for mom. God blesses angels.

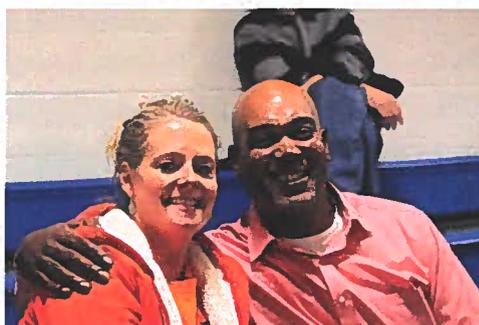
I was excited that mom was able to return to Connecticut with me; she stayed two weeks, and her stay gave a very small break to Terry and Amy.

Our very dear family, friend, and neighbor, Pamela London, (on cover page) traveled with mom and me. While I was at work, mom and Pamela hung out in New Haven,

shopping, eating, and having a good time. They picked me up from work each night, and I was able to join in on their fun. During their visit, among many activities, we also went to a Yale Symphony Orchestra concert and took the train to NYC to see the Yale men's basketball team play Columbia University. They also were able to meet many of my friends and colleagues from work, as well as folks that I see in my daily life, including some of my church friends, the kind folks at the dry cleaners, and at the pharmacy.

After week one, we had to say our goodbyes to Pamela; she returned to Lewisburg to get back to her job as a schoolteacher. Our longtime friend of the family, George Greer, (page 5) traveled to Connecticut to be with mom during the second week of her visit. We were fortunate to have George join us. While I was at work, George and mom found time to shop and to eat breakfast at IHOP. We also took in a movie at the local theatre. George escorted mom back to Tennessee. I enjoyed having the presence of their company.

Above: With family on Thanksgiving; Mom with the Taylor family; Terry and Amy at O'Brien's basketball game; and my nephew and college student, Taylor, with his dog, Bruno.



ALL MY RELATIONS

SUMMER 2014

In May, I travelled to North Carolina after Yale's Commencement. The 100 Men in Black (www.100meninblack.org) a community-based male gospel chorus, held a reunion and invited all former members to participate in the concert. I'm also on the advisory board. I was hosted by my dear friend, Marlon West. After participating in the concert, which attracted nearly 1000 people, I then was able to visit many of my other NC and SC relations.

I started with an overnight stay in Hillsborough, NC with longtime friends, Gil and Nancy Ciocci (page 6). The next morning, I went to breakfast with former Duke colleague and friend, Carmen Pennington (page 6), followed by a visit to Duke to see many former colleagues.

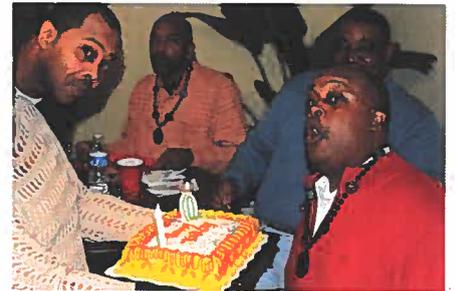
I traveled to Charlotte, NC and spent the afternoon with Mr. and Mrs. Phil and Lisa Tappy, my friends since 1986. We were joined for dinner by their youngest son, Lee, and his two young children, Izzy and Brannon. I spent the few nights I stayed in Charlotte with Skip and Jeanne Tappy and

their sons, Owen and Greyson. They are great hosts, allowing me the flexibility to visit with them and others while I was there.

My former Charlotte banking colleague, Addison Ayer, and her husband, Rand, invited me to their home for dinner, and several members of the *Loan Stud and FUNBunny* group came, as well (see us on the cover page).

The following day, I had some free time, so I traveled down to Due West, SC to pay a surprise visit to the Peeler family, Mark, Maggie, and their four children. As many of you know from previous newsletters, Mark and I were basketball teammates at Sewanee. While I was there, I held a secret; little did Maggie know that Mark had arranged a surprise trip to NYC for Maggie's birthday, and he'd planned for them to stay with me a few days during their trip. It was great to see them twice within a few weeks.

That's all the news I have room for this year. May God bless you and your relations richly. I look forward to seeing you, soon. Come see me, too! Love, WMG for Last Say So Productions.

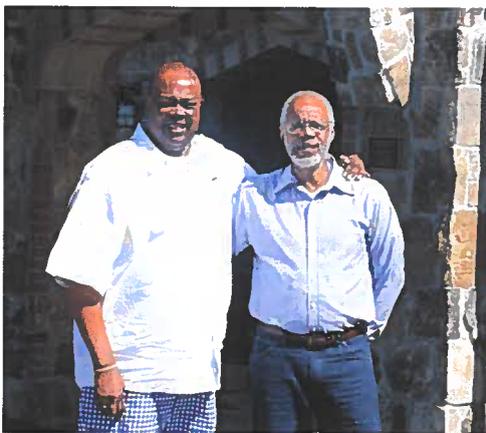


Above: NC sunset, celebrating my 50th birthday with friends; and at a staff retreat at the Yale Conference Center with members of my team.

Below from left to right: With high school band director, Mr. Quarles, mom and George in Connecticut, mom with Sewanee friend, Betty, and with Maggie on the back deck at my house.



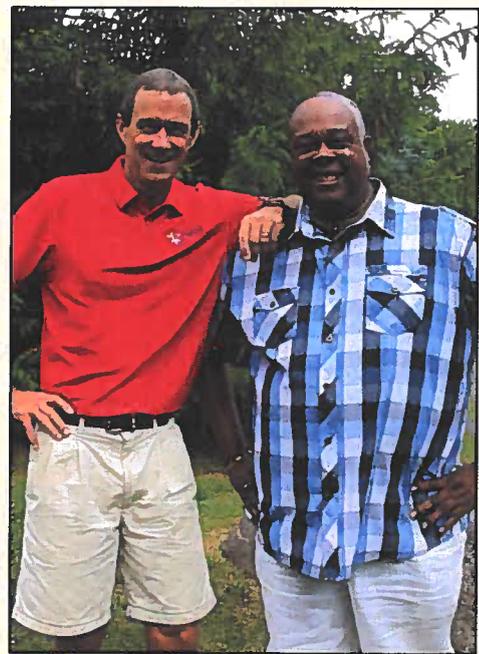
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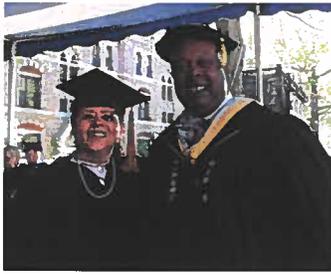
Here are a series of photos from my travels to Chapel Hill, Charlotte, Chicago, Sewanee, Due West, Durham, Cary, and Murfreesboro.

On the left from the top: With Carmen Pennington, with Onis Cheathams, Gil and Nancy Ciocchi, and with my Sewanee mentor, Mr. Benjamin.

On the right, I'm standing in my yard with my longtime friend, and college basketball teammate, Mark Peeler. He and his wife, Maggie, stopped in to see me on their way to NYC to celebrate Maggie's birthday.



ALL MY RELATIONS



Honorary Doctorates

Above: With Anna Deavere Smith (top), actor, playwright, and professor. Best known for her roles in *The West Wing*, *The Practice*, and *Nurse Jackie*.

With poet, Rita Dove, a Pulitzer Prize recipient, and former United States Poet Laureate to the Library of Congress.

A Civil Rights Pioneer.

In September, I attended a lecture at the Yale Law School featuring James Lawson. I went, primarily, because I learned that a highly respected individual from Tennessee would be speaking. I soon learned that he is much more than that—he is an important part of American history.

James Lawson was born in Pennsylvania, but grew up in Ohio and attended college at Baldwin Wallace College in Berea, Ohio. In college, he joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), two organizations that believed in nonviolent resistance to racism. He spent time in prison as a conscientious objector to violence by refusing to sign up for the draft. Once he was released from prison, he spent time in India studying the principles of nonviolent resistance that Ghandi developed. He met Martin Luther King Jr. in Ohio after returning



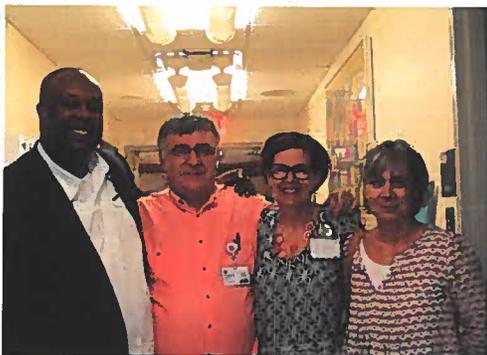
from India, and since Dr. King also believed in nonviolence, he encouraged him to move “down south” because “we don’t have anyone like you there.” Mr. Lawson moved to Nashville, and enrolled as a student at the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University. He returned to his work with CORE and started to conduct training workshops for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He trained many future leaders of the Civil Rights Movement on the tactics of nonviolent resistance, such as John Lewis and former Washington, DC mayor, Marion Barry (recently deceased).

Among many activities of the Civil Rights Movement, Mr. Lawson is best known for launching the Nashville sit-ins, which challenged segregation in downtown stores. Vanderbilt expelled him because of his activism, but more than 40 years later, apologized to him for its treatment of him. He now is a faculty member at Vanderbilt.

WITH TOUT A' FAIT SOCIAL CLUB AND FRIENDS



ALL MY RELATIONS



Above: This past summer, mom and I were invited to a lovely dinner hosted by some of my longtime Sewanee and Murfreesboro friends. Dan and Lee Ann Backlund are on the left, and Bill and Jenny Reid are on the right. As you might guess, Lee Ann and Jenny are sisters.

Right: My brother, Terry, and mom wearing their Sunday best. Here they are posing for a photo at church on Easter Sunday.



Left from top: My brother and mom last Christmas; nephew O'Brien towering over his basketball coach and teammates; family at cousin Derrick's baptism (he's in the center of the photo), flanked by his wife and father on the left and his sister, my mom and his mother on the right; and some of my former Duke colleagues, Gil, Jayne, and Lexi.