

# BERKELEY COMMUNITY FUND

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organization Advancing the Futures of Berkeley Youth

Summer/Fall Newsletter, 2013

## BCF Grants a Record Number of High Hopes Scholarships in 2013



*Bottom row (l to r): Sienguy Hort, Lychou Phey, Elizabeth Cho, Van Tran, Yenenesh Belachew, Paola Franco, Yoseline Escalante-Buendia, Evan Ho, and Semhall Gessesse; Middle: Jeannel Poyaoan, Mohammed Aledlah, Miguel Guiza, Aisha Eisenberg, Willie Scott, Daniel Hernandez and Jalena Keane-Lee. Back row: Tenzin Dechen, Meriem Osman, Anaïs Arias-Aragon, and Negar Esfandiari.*

The Berkeley City Club was alive with excitement and pride on June 10 as twenty college-bound Berkeley High School seniors received this year's High Hopes Scholarship awards in an emotional ceremony attended by family, friends and BCF supporters. Scholars who satisfy program requirements, including maintaining a minimum GPA, will receive a total of \$16,000 over the next four years. Each scholar has also been matched with a mentor to help them navigate the challenges of college life.

Most BCF scholarship recipients are the first generation in their families to attend college. A 2011 study by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA found that only 27% of students from this demographic graduate within four years. That is why it is so critical to provide dual track support – both financial and mentoring. Our results so far have been dramatic: In the five years we have been granting scholarships, 80%

of our recipients have successfully earned a degree at a four-year college or university or are still enrolled and on track to do so.

This year we had seventy-two scholarship applicants. Based on their essays, grades, letters of recommendation, and financial need, thirty-two were invited to interview with a panel of community volunteers and donors. Twenty scholarships totaling \$320,000 were awarded – a record number for BCF. In fact, in the five years BCF has been awarding scholarships, we have been able to increase the number of recipients each year, a trend we hope and expect to sustain in 2014 with the continued generosity of the Berkeley community.

The majority of this year's scholars will attend schools within the University of California and California State University systems. The rest are headed east to attend NYU, Wellesley, Boston University, and George Washington University. Their intended majors include Business, Economics, Music, Biology, Nutritional

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### OUR IMPACT

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, who believe in the importance of higher education to increase economic mobility and social equity, since 2008

- BCF has awarded \$1.4 million in scholarships to 92 motivated and promising lower-income BHS graduates, all of whom have demonstrated great resilience in overcoming early life challenges.
- The majority of BHS scholars are the first generation in their families to attend college.
- More than 80% of BCF High Hopes scholars have either earned Bachelor's degrees or are still enrolled and on-track to do so.



*BCF co-founders Narsai David, Martin Paley, Dorothy Walker, and Venus David enjoying the June 10 High Hopes Scholarship Awards Ceremony.*



*Mentor Sharon Eisenhauer with BCF Scholar Anaïs Arias-Aragon. Anaïs will study music at Boston University. Active in Chorus Club, the John Adams Young Composers Program and with BUMP Records, she plans to become a composer.*

## Who We Are

The Berkeley Community Fund (BCF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit corporation established in 1991 by a group whose love for Berkeley and a community of hope and equity inspired them to set up a fund to reflect their goals. Since 2007, we have focused on providing scholarships and mentoring support to promising Berkeley High School students attending 4-year colleges and universities. We envision a future in which all Berkeley youth succeed in developing to their full potential and in sharing positive, enriched lives with our community and the world.

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# Introducing Joleen Ruffin, Our New Executive Director

*This past May, Joleen Ruffin joined the Berkeley Community Fund as its new Executive Director. She brings a rich background in operations management and student development to the role. Her experience includes work with several nonprofit organizations and private foundations, including the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Stuart Foundation. Most recently, she comes from UC Berkeley's Office of Student Development. Like many of our scholars, she is a first generation college graduate. Here's her story.*

As a young girl growing up in Zimbabwe, my father pushed me to excel in school. Having only completed an elementary education himself, he knew firsthand the difficulties of life with a minimal education. He wanted to spare me that struggle, emphasizing that an education would be one of the keys to my success. My father worked hard with the resources he had to send me to the United States to attend college.

Now, as a college graduate living in the U. S., I understand that regardless of what you study, college brings experiences and opportunities that transform you—opening up the potential to affect your family for generations. With just one college-educated family member, siblings, cousins, and children will have someone in their family they can refer to regarding what it takes to get into and through college. That is what generational change is all about.

Despite the clear benefits of education, there are well-defined gaps regarding access and success, especially for low income and first generation college students. The financial and social investments we make in our High Hopes Scholars make them more likely to succeed and complete college. As we move forward, I'm excited about streamlining BCF's systems and processes, improving the visibility of the organization in our community, exploring partnerships with other organizations committed to college access and success, and increasing the types of support we provide our scholars. I'm thrilled to be a part of helping to change the course of not only our scholars' lives, but those of generations to come.

## Record Number of High Hopes Scholarships

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Science, Marine Biology, Political Science, Mechanical Engineering, Filmmaking, Animal Sciences, Accounting, Dance, International Relations, Sociology, and Fashion Design. They are an exceptionally hard-working group of teens who aspire to become doctors, lawyers, CPAs, marine biologists, veterinarians, high school teachers, composers, choreographers, and business leaders. We truly do have high hopes for this group of "our kids" and look forward to supporting their efforts, and witnessing their accomplishments, over the next four years.

**Mentoring Works!** Want to help a scholar successfully complete college? The Berkeley Community Fund is accepting applications from community members who would like to mentor next year's recipients of High Hopes Scholarships. Mentors provide guidance to the scholars throughout their time in college. For more information, call us at (510) 542-2126 or email [info@berkfund.org](mailto:info@berkfund.org).

**Your support is  
needed now more  
than ever...**

As the cost of higher education continues to skyrocket, our mission—to help talented and resilient lower income Berkeley students afford and successfully complete college—is more critical today than ever before.

Help us continue to help Berkeley youth achieve their educational aspirations by donating at one of the following levels for the next four years:

Bachelor	\$1000/yr
Masters	\$2000/yr
Doctorate	\$4000/yr

**Your contribution makes a difference!**



# Skip Battle Leaves Lasting Mark on Berkeley Community Fund



**S**kip Battle (previously Ask Jeeves' Executive Chairman and CEO) joined the board of the Berkeley Community Fund in 2004. He leaves our board this year, but also leaves an indelible mark on the lives of many promising past, present, and future Berkeley High School graduates headed to college. His contribution is immeasurable, for it has been not only financial, but also visionary, strategic and devoted.

We wish Skip the best, and asked

him to share some of his thoughts on higher education.

**On the imperative role of education...** When I grew up, at least half the men in my town got their hands dirty at their jobs. Those jobs have been replaced by machines, and the opportunities for someone who has limited education have shrunk dramatically...In addition to living a more thoughtful life, a college degree is now the entry to a huge proportion of the jobs that allow people to live at least a middle class life. As a general rule, education makes us better citizens...it correlates with more fulfilling employment, and more stable families.

**On your commitment to the BCF...** It seems that anyone interested in social justice would find helping needy high school graduates get through college to be a very worthy activity. I think we have proven that this model of giving people a 4 year commitment is a very effective use of our donor contributions. Our record so far, which is 6 years now, shows that the students we select graduate at rates well above the average for California college students from a similar cohort. And we know that people who graduate from a 4 year college have lower unemployment rates, make more money, pay higher taxes, have longer lives, and less incidence of cancer, alcoholism etc. etc.

*It seems that anyone interested in social justice would find helping needy high school students get through college to be a very worthy activity.*

**On your hopes for the BCF...** I would love to see the time come when we could say to every needy high school graduate who has the resiliency to cope with a good 4 year college that he or she has a place with us, and we give support as long as they work hard and make good progress in the college they attend.

## Scholar Spotlight

### BERHAN BAYEH

#### High Hopes Scholar, 2008

Berhan moved to Berkeley 10 years ago from Ethiopia, knowing almost no English, and attended Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School and Berkeley High School. Today he is a graduate of UC Riverside's Class of 2013 and holds a B.Sc in Physics with a minor in Economics.

Berhan always loved Physics, but the recent recession sparked his curiosity about Economics. He says college helped him refine his thoughts about life, our country, the world, money, faith and "a lot of other things." He was active in the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, led the UC Riverside delegation to the UC-wide African Black Coalition, took an "incredible" seminar about Marxism in the Economics Department and forged friendships and connections he hopes will last a lifetime.

During summer breaks, Berhan worked in Berkeley at ConnectEd, a nonprofit that is pioneering an interactive way of teaching youth. He is currently studying for the GRE and plans to apply to graduate school to study Economics. He would like to become a university professor.

Berhan says his BCF mentor, Gary Hoachlander, was "and still is one of the most reliable people" in his life. One of Berhan's biggest life lessons in college — "Learn from others' mistakes, especially if you see the consequences of their actions."

### BISRAT TEKIE

#### High Hopes Scholar, 2009

Bisrat is a proud alumna of Sarah Lawrence College, Class of 2013, with a B. A. in International and Public Relations and Immigration Affairs. She hopes to play an active role in the development of U. S. immigration laws and policies.

An immigrant herself, having come to Berkeley in 2007 via Eritrea, South Africa and Germany, Bisrat speaks fluent English, Italian, Arabic and, what she modestly terms, "passable" Spanish!

During college Bisrat worked as a classroom assistant for America Reads and as an office assistant at Sarah Lawrence. She also interned at the Westchester Italian Cultural Center and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand's New York City office.

She writes, "I am honored to be part of the BCF and I look forward to serving and helping expand the program, mentoring students by sharing my story and assuring them that anything is possible as long as you allow yourself to dive; you will find yourself in the deep and come out with so much to give."



*Berhan Bayeh, UC Irvine Class of 2013, celebrates graduation with his family*

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## SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR GRAND CELEBRATION OF THE YEAR!!

**Thursday, October 10, 2013**

Join us at the  
**Benjamin Ide Wheeler Award Dinner**  
**Honoring Wavy Gravy,**  
an outstanding Berkeley Citizen  
known worldwide for his  
extraordinary contributions to  
basic human needs!

Mix and mingle with fellow Berkeleyans at  
H's Lordships Restaurant  
Cocktail Reception: 5:30-6:30 PM  
Program & Dinner: 6:30-9:00 PM

**Proceeds support BCF and our High Hopes program.**

Tickets available at  
<http://2013bcfannualawardsdinner.eventbrite.com>  
or call us at (510) 542-2126.

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BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT OUR WORK WITH IN-KIND  
AND FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGHOUT THE  
YEAR.

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Bisrat Tekie, BCF High  
Hopes Scholar Class of 2009;  
Sarah Lawrence College, 2013