



# 2011 Southern Education Leadership Initiative

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Southern Education Foundation, Inc.

## About SEF

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The Southern Education Foundation (SEF) is a public charity comprised of diverse women and men who work together to improve the quality of life for all of the South's people through better and more accessible education. SEF advances creative solutions to ensure fairness and excellence in education for low income students from preschool through higher education. SEF traces its roots back to 1867, when philanthropist George Peabody established a dedicated fund to advance education in the South.

## **2011 Southern Education Leadership Initiative:**

The Southern Education Leadership Initiative (SELI) is a unique leadership development effort that works to advance equity and excellence in education in the poorest region of the country, from pre-kindergarten through higher education. Since its inception in 2004, the Initiative has provided over 135 undergraduate and graduate students summer internships in nearly 70 nonprofits and foundations working to eradicate education inequities throughout the South. The program was founded to acknowledge with not just words but with deeds, the 50th anniversary of the United States Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which marked the end of legal segregation of America's schools.

### **SELI Interns receive:**

- An opportunity to work for eight weeks in an important venue: a policy institution, community-based organization, philanthropic institution, or public agency involved in efforts to improve educational quality, access and equity;
- Exposure to research in the field, practical experience, and opportunities to meet and work with outstanding and inspiring leaders involved in education policy and practice;
- A modest stipend and travel expenses for summer trainings;
- Professional development and leadership trainings that orient them to issues in education and the nonprofit sector;
- An opportunity to network, reflect and exchange ideas with fellow interns.

# Orientation 2011

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At the 2011 Orientation, interns engaged and dialogued with outstanding nonprofit sector and education leaders. They examined issues of public education finance, explored strategies for community organizing and making change in high-poverty communities in the South, and discussed challenges and opportunities for reforming public education.

Participants engaged and dialogued with outstanding sector and education leaders including Dr. Sybil Hampton, President Emeritus of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, Joyce Parker, Director of Citizens for a Better Greenville, Damon Hewitt, Director of Education Practice at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Molly Hunter, Director of Education Justice at the Education Law Center and Dennis Parker, Director of the Racial Justice Program of the ACLU. The panel presentations, site tours, documentaries and briefing materials broadened the horizons of participants and oriented them to the issues they would be working on at their placement sites.



Interns engaged with panelists, SEF staff , and each other in discussing strategies for improving education equity.





Top right: Interns learn about the structures and role of nonprofits and foundations involved in education reform.  
Bottom right: Interns learn about the role of the courts and policy makers in education reform.



Interns enjoyed a dinner with Hank and Billye Aaron during the orientation. Mrs. Billye Aaron was a keynote speaker at the welcome dinner and shared inspiring words of encouragement with the interns.



Interns visited the KIPP Strive Academy in Atlanta. The principal and a student made presentations on their school culture and achievements followed by a panel discussion on school choice and the role of charter schools.



Ben Guest, Director of the Mississippi Teacher Corps, spoke along with two MTC Alumni about their experiences teaching in the Mississippi Delta. Their on-the-ground perspective on rural education and conditions in high-poverty schools in the South deepened the discussions and learning of the cohort.



Bottom left to right: Jerry Gonzalez of the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials; Dennis Parker of the ACLU Racial Justice Project.

# Placement Experiences

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After the completion of the orientation, interns traveled to their placement sites where they worked for eight weeks on a variety of issues. Since 2004, SEF has placed interns in 13 states and nearly 70 organizations in urban and rural communities throughout the South. In 2011, SEF received over 40 formal requests for an SEF intern from organizations located throughout the region.

In 2011, interns were placed at the following organizations: Tennessee Voices for Children (Nashville, TN); Foundation for the Mid South (Jackson, MS); Advancement Project (Washington, DC); Voices for Georgia's Children (Atlanta, GA); Families & Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (New Orleans, LA); Mississippi Teacher Corps (University, MS); Intercultural Development Research Association (San Antonio, TX); Georgia Family Connection Partnership (Atlanta, GA); Assisi Foundation (Memphis, TN); and Georgia Partnership for Excellence in Education (Atlanta, GA). Interns confronted issues ranging from teacher effectiveness, early childhood education to school discipline and ending the school to prison pipeline.



Jovonte Santos, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts, interned with the Foundation for the Mid South in Jackson, MS and researched teacher professional development in the Belt-Line states.





Haley Bove is a rising senior at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, LA. She interned with Voices for Georgia's Children in Atlanta, Georgia and organized a Children's Day at the Capitol.





<sup>14</sup> Marcella Zapata is a graduate student at the University of Texas at San Antonio. She interned with the Intercultural Development Research Association and researched higher education access trends in Texas.

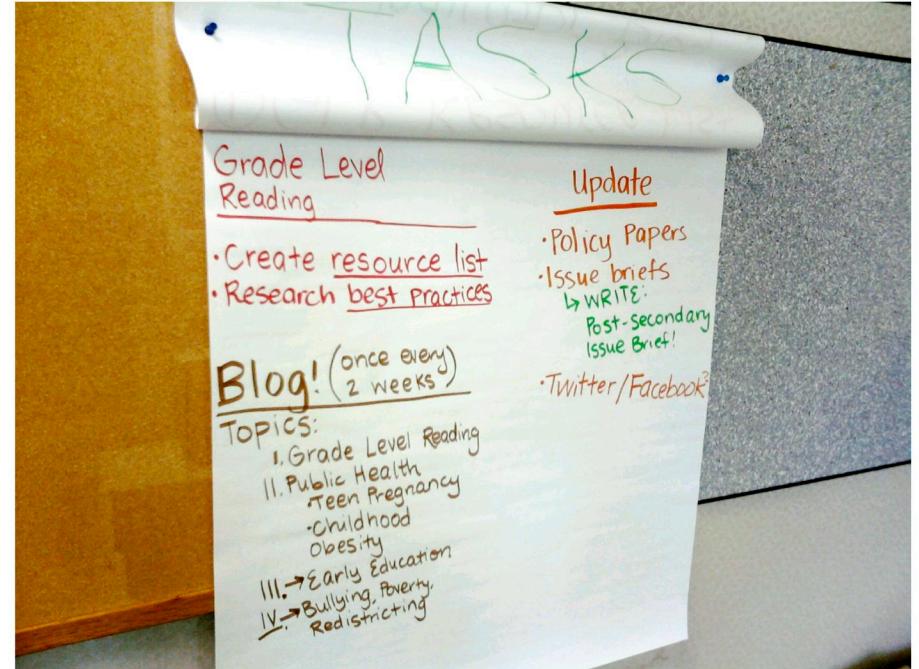


Malik Sanders is a rising senior at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. He interned with the Mississippi Teacher Corps and mentored at-risk youth in the Mississippi Delta.



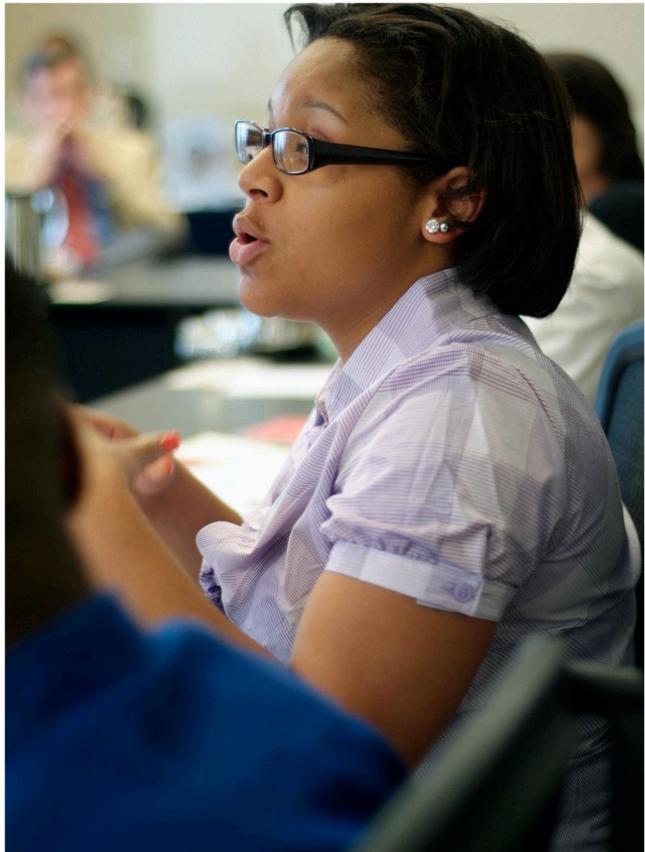
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Elisa Olivarez is a rising senior at the University of Georgia. She interned with Georgia Family Connection Partnership and researched public school redistricting, school bullying and teen pregnancy in Georgia.

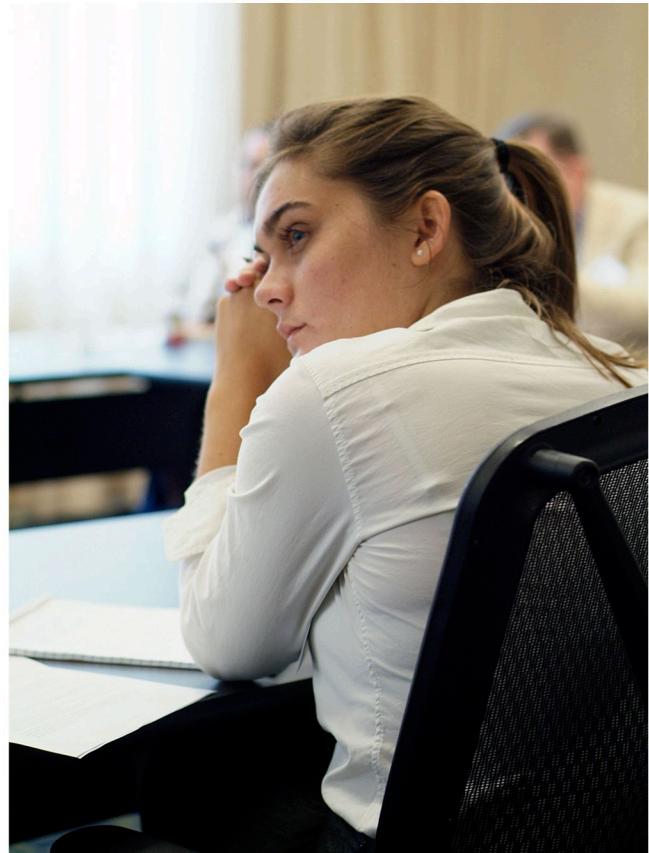




Kayla Brooks graduated in the spring from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. She interned with Tennessee Voices for Children and assisted low income parents and children access social services in the state.







Amy Holiday is a rising senior at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA. She interned with the Advancement Project in Washington, DC and worked to end the school to prison pipeline.



# Closing Meeting 2011

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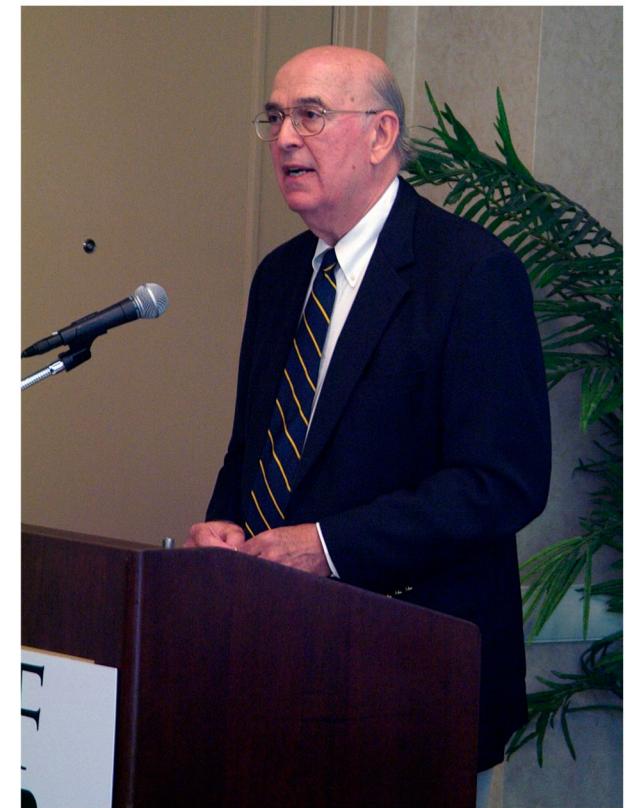
At the end of the summer, interns convened for a Closing Meeting in Atlanta where they presented to their fellow interns, SEF staff, and other attendees their projects and responsibilities over the summer, the strategies used in their work, and lessons learned from this experience. Interns worked in small groups and facilitated discussions to reflect on how their work was connected, how it related to Brown v. Board, and discussed strategies that would impact their own communities.



The interns gave thoughtful presentations on their work over the summer and led powerful discussions on ways to put theory into action.



SEF President Kent McGuire and Vice President Steve Suitts spoke to the interns about their summer experiences and encouraged them to use the lessons learned to impact their communities and be the change they want to see.

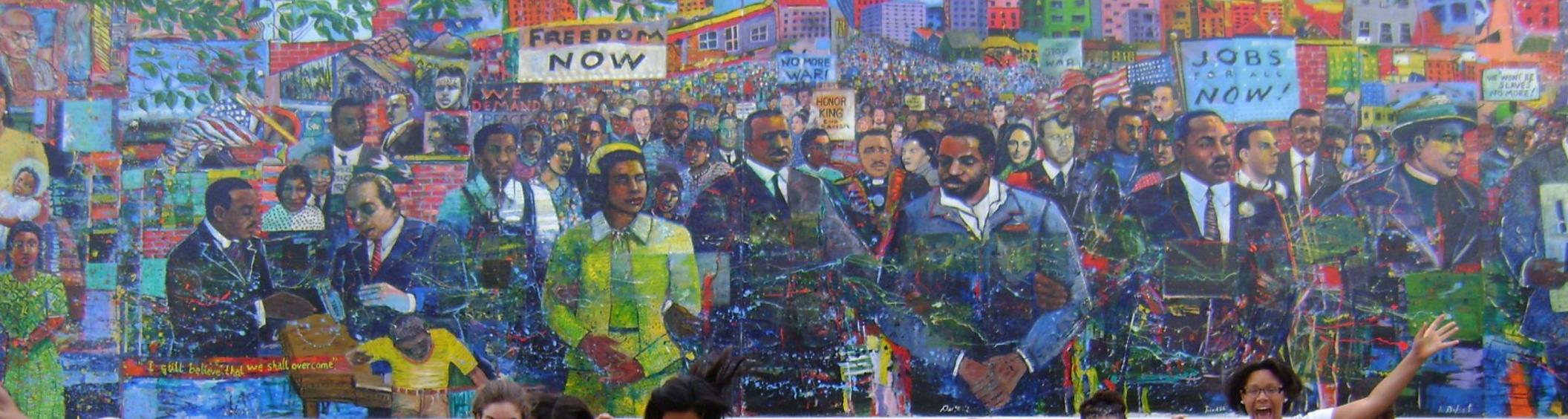




The interns were able to enjoy a tour of Historic Auburn Avenue and the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, a competitive bowling match as well as a trip to the Atlanta establishment, The Varsity.







## **THANK YOU FROM THE 2011 SELI CLASS!**

"You are truly investing in making a positive impact in education." - Angela Hurtado

"This summer made a lot of things possible, and gave me a chance to really figure out my passion. Without you that would not have become a reality." - Mariah Deans

"I know I will take the lessons I have learned with me. I feel fortunate." - Eleanor Canter

"I value my summer experience so much - thank you for making it possible." - Elisa Olivarez

"This has truly been a life changing experience. You have helped grow a cohort of SEF interns and passionate leaders of the future." - Amy Holiday

"Your benevolence speaks to your concern and care for future leaders. Because of you I have acquired the tools I need to make change in the community." - Kayla Brooks

"I appreciate the work you do to connect students like me to experiences I could have never attained." - Jovonte Santos

"Your support has exposed us to the many challenges that lay ahead of us and has afforded us the opportunity to focus on what we'd like to conquer." - Marcella Zapata

"I feel revitalized about my future and know that I will take the lessons I learned this summer with me always." - Haley Bove

"I hope we make you proud." - Malik Sanders

## **You are developing the next generation of leaders!**

The Initiative has created a wonderful pipeline of highly accomplished young people, inspired to work directly in education institutions, philanthropy and the nonprofit sector in reforming education. Through this Initiative, a new generation of change agents has been empowered to tackle the continued inequities of the South's educational system. The torch of leadership and responsibility for making change is being passed from one generation to the next.

## **The 2011 Southern Education Leadership Initiative was made possible by generous support from the following:**

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Billye and Hank Aaron Philanthropic Fund

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Walmart Foundation

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## For more information:

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If you are interested in learning more about the Southern Education Foundation, please contact us:

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