

**Former Providence ‘Little Sister,’ now a Ph.D., featured speaker at
Big Sisters of Rhode Island gala celebration**

*Growing up in the Chad Brown neighborhood, Kendra King pursued
education as pathway to her dreams*

Dr. Kendra A. King, an associate professor of politics at Oglethorpe University and the director of the Rich Foundation Urban Program, was the featured speaker at Big Sisters of Rhode Island’s 40th year gala fundraising event, the Abracadabra Ball, on Saturday, November 10. Big Sisters honored “40 Women We Admire” as a special part of its celebration. Dr. King was among that group.

Born and raised in Providence, Kendra was matched at age 9 with Big Sister Debbie Iacobbo of Cranston. The two remained Big and Little Sister until Kendra graduated from Classical High School in 1990. Kendra went on to attend Clark Atlanta University. However, she earned her B.A. in government from Colby College in 1994 where she had the privilege of being voted "Class Speaker" by her peers and shared the same platform with former president George W. Bush. In 1994, Kendra was accepted into the Ph.D. program in political science at the Ohio State University. At OSU, she studied American government and African-American politics and minored in political theory. During her stay at Ohio State, she also earned a certificate in Political Psychology.

In 1999, Dr. King was hired by the University of Georgia as a joint assistant professor of political science and the Institute of African-American Studies. In 2003, she accepted a new position at Oglethorpe University, a private liberal arts institution, in Atlanta and by May 2007 had earned tenure. Today she is an associate professor of politics, instructing graduate and undergraduate courses, and is the new director of the Rich Foundation Urban Leadership Program.

Reflecting on her experience as a Little Sister, Dr. King said, “Big Sisters of Rhode Island and my Big Sister Debbie, in particular, opened me up to a new world of exploration, possibilities, and opportunities to reach beyond the limited reality of my temporary circumstances and see a new world. I must, however, give all credit to my mother Jackie as she initiated the entire process and saw in the organization what I as a nine year old simply could not see.”

Initially, Dr. King aspired to be an attorney. Yet, as college opened her to new ideas and experiences, she developed an interest in political science. She also developed her talent as a performance poet and performed with the recorded hip-hop group Hybrid Tongues. During this time Dr. King discovered a facility for translating esoteric concepts into language that the average person could understand. Thus began her development as a gifted teacher.

Dr. King is the author or co-author of two books and nearly 10 articles. Her first textbook, *African-American Politics* (Polity Press), and a chapter entitled "Let's Get It Started" in the book *Service-Learning With Government Partners* (Jossey-Bass Publishing Company), will be published in 2008.

Dr. King is also a strong advocate of leadership training and character development. She has presented her work and conducted both small group seminars and training for The Residential Life Office at Oglethorpe University and for Providence public school teachers. She has participated in a number of national conferences as a panelist, discussant or guest lecturer presenting her extensive research on community building and development or on race, gender and/or politics. She has spoken for a host of organizations throughout the years including Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Community Partners, Inc., Deloitte and Touche, The University of Georgia, Louisiana State University, The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice, and Allen A.M.E. Church, and she has been interviewed by Charisma Magazine on the “Impact of Holy Hip Hop.”

Dr. King enjoys serving and inspiring people and commits her time to a variety of organizations and causes – most notably as the Director of the Rich Foundation Urban Leadership Program, an umbrella organization on the Oglethorpe campus which helps to attract, maintain and develop leaders. In addition she has served as faculty advisor and mentor to several campus-wide organizations and to students. Dr. King has served as a member of the faculty council and the academic program committee in service to her colleagues. She recently completed eight years of service to her undergraduate alma mater Colby College as an Overseer.

In her down time, Dr. King is an avid reader. She also enjoys listening to progressive hip hop, jazz and rhythm and blues. She counts pomegranates, sunflower seeds, journaling and studying the life and legacy of Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. among some of the greatest passions in her life.