



Urban League College Track

NEWS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

URBAN LEAGUE COLLEGE TRACK ALUMNUS, TROY SIMON, SELECTED TO SPEAK AT WHITE HOUSE FORUM ON NEW ACTIONS TO EXPAND COLLEGE OPPORTUNITIES

Troy Simon, a graduate of Urban League College Track and Posse Scholar, did not learn how to read until he was 14. He is now studying American Literature at Bard College. On January 16th, he will speak at President Obama's Forum focused on expanding college opportunities.

Washington, DC, January 16, 2014 – College Track CEO, David Silver, and Urban League College Track Alumnus, Troy Simon, will join President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House to engage in a discussion focused on new actions that will increase college opportunities for students. Troy Simon will be a speaker at the event and will introduce First Lady Michelle Obama.

"I'm excited to have the opportunity to speak at the White House about my experiences and education. Though I struggled in school at first, the Urban League College Track and Posse programs, as well as my teachers, many of them Teach For America corps members, have been the support system I needed to succeed," said Troy.

Troy graduated from the New Orleans Science and Math Academy in 2012. His path to graduation was not easy; Troy did not learn how to read until he was 14 years old. After Hurricane Katrina hit, Troy's family relocated to Houston where Troy enrolled at Now College Prep, a KIPP school comprised of primarily Teach For America teachers. Troy's fifth grade teacher, a TFA corps member, helped him learn how to read.

When Troy returned to New Orleans, he enrolled in Urban League College Track, a college completion program that empowers students from underserved communities to graduate from college. His experience at Urban League College Track helped Troy focus on writing. During his time in the program, he met with Walter Isaacson, President and CEO of the Aspen Institute, who read his work, "Through a Boy's Eyes," and awarded him two full scholarships to attend the Aspen Summer Words Young Writers' Conference and Ideas Festival. While there, Troy studied with award-winning novelist and University of North Carolina Professor Randall Keenan, and was published in two works developed by Urban League College Track students: *Whispering Conscience* and *Young in America: New Orleans*.

In 2012, Troy was awarded a four-year, full-ride Leadership scholarship from the Posse Foundation. He is now a sophomore at Bard College, pursuing a major in American Literature.

Troy's success can be attributed to many people and programs – College Track, The Urban League of Greater New Orleans, Teach For America, the Posse Foundation, and his dedicated teachers. In Troy's words: "Between Posse, Urban League College Track, and my old teachers, I have an unbreakable support system."

The Urban League of Greater New Orleans President and CEO, Erika McConduit stated, "We are exceedingly proud of Troy and all he continues to accomplish. Troy epitomizes the potential of every African American youth in New Orleans who when supported with the proper education and safety nets can create a bright future. The Urban League of Greater New Orleans is committed to ensuring all New Orleans students have an equal opportunity to succeed."

In 2008, The Urban League of Greater New Orleans and College Track partnered to form Urban League College Track. The program serves over 200 high school and college students from New Orleans. The program has seen two classes graduate from high school – the classes of 2012 and 2013 – and nearly 100% of those students have been accepted to and have enrolled in four-year colleges.

College Track is committed to serving more students like Troy. By 2016, the program expects to more than double its impact, increasing enrollment from 1,600 to 3,000 students. In 10 years, College Track will serve over 10,000 students across the country and increase its number of college graduates tenfold. Additionally, the organization



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has ambitious growth plans to open at least one new site per year for the foreseeable future. Currently, College Track operates six sites in East Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Colorado.

Over the last 16 years, College Track has demonstrated a tremendous record of success: more than 90 percent of seniors are admitted to four-year colleges, with 55 percent graduating in six or more years. Eighty-five percent of students are first generation college students.

David Silver, College Track's CEO and Teach For America Alumnus, is thrilled about Troy's opportunity to tell his story at the White House and equally excited about the opportunity to bring College Track to more students, stating, "I'm honored to be here with Troy at the White House. The focus the President and First Lady are putting on education and support programs encourages us at College Track. We're providing a strong academic and social bolster for students from eighth grade all the way through college graduation, and we're thrilled that the Obamas have thrown their support behind programs like ours."

If you are interested in learning more about Urban League College Track, contact Cathy Washington at cwashington@urbanleagueneworleans.org and Camille Merritt at cmerritt@collegetrack.org.

About Urban League College Track

Urban League College Track is a New Orleans based college completion program that empowers students from underserved communities to graduate from college. We work closely with our students with after-school programming and college coaching from the summer before ninth grade through college graduation. Urban League College Track is part of the national College Track organization, which currently serve over 1,600 high school and college students in East Palo Alto, Oakland, San Francisco, New Orleans, Colorado, and Los Angeles. Over the last 16 years, more than 90 percent of College Track seniors have been admitted to four-year colleges, with 54 percent graduating in six or more years. Eighty-five percent of students are first generation college students. For more information on College Track, please visit www.collegetrack.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The Urban League of Greater New Orleans is one of 95 affiliates of the National Urban League. The mission of the Urban League is to encourage and empower communities in the pursuit of economic self-reliance, parity and civil rights. The Urban League's three Centers of Excellence are focused in the areas of education and youth development, community and economic development, and public policy and advocacy. The Urban League is a non-profit, non-partisan, non-sectarian, community based organization and a participating agency of the United Way. For more information on The Urban League of Greater New Orleans, please visit www.urbanleagueneworleans.org and follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).