



HIGHLIGHTS:

The first two recipients of scholarships named in honor of the family of Pauletta and Denzel Washington will be announced Wednesday, April 14. The awardees will receive financial support and the opportunity to conduct research under the direction of Cedars-Sinai scientists.

PAULETTA AND DENZEL WASHINGTON TO AWARD NEUROSCIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS NAMED IN THEIR HONOR

LOS ANGELES (April 6, 2004) – Keith L. Black, MD, director of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center’s Division of Neurosurgery, and the family of Pauletta and Denzel Washington will announce the recipients of two new scholarships Wednesday, April 14. The ceremony for invited guests will begin at 3:30 p.m.

The Pauletta and Denzel Washington Family Gifted Scholars Program in Neuroscience awards will allow the recipients – one undergraduate and one graduate or medical student – to participate in summer research fellowships. Each will work under the direction of a renowned scientific investigator on a project related to the blood-brain barrier, immunology, gene therapy, gene discovery or advanced surgical technology.

The undergraduate award provides \$2,000 in support per month during the fellowship. The graduate student will receive \$2,500 per month. At the end of the summer, each student will be expected to submit an abstract or scientific paper to a national neuroscience, cancer or neurosurgery organization. If the paper is accepted for presentation at a professional meeting, the scholarship program will provide additional support to enable the student to attend and participate.

“One of the things we believe in very strongly is the mentoring process. We see a need to introduce more talented, bright students into the field of neuroscience because there are extraordinary opportunities to increase the understanding of the human brain and to advance treatments of disorders that affect the brain,” says Dr. Black, who holds the Ruth and Lawrence Harvey Chair in Neuroscience and directs Cedars-Sinai’s Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute and the Comprehensive Brain Tumor Program.

Dr. Black came to Cedars-Sinai in 1997 after conducting research and teaching for 10 years at the University of California, Los Angeles. As he began to assemble a highly respected team of scientists and clinicians to devise new approaches to treating brain tumors and other abnormalities, a group of prominent members of the business world and entertainment industry formed an organization called The Brain Trust to raise funds to support the research effort.

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Pauletta Washington, an early member and executive of The Brain Trust, has been a generous and untiring supporter. She and Denzel, the two-time Academy Award-winning actor, have hosted events in their home to raise funds and awareness of the Dr. Black's work.

"The Washington family, and Pauletta in particular, has been an extremely strong advocate for gaining support for our research to find cures for disorders that affect the human brain. They also have a passion and a commitment to ensure that future generations of young talent enter the fields of science in general and neuroscience in particular. Furthermore, Pauletta and Denzel are recognized role models for young people, demonstrating that they can achieve great things. For all these reasons, naming this award in their honor was an easy decision for us," says Dr. Black.

Dr. Black often credits his parents, both educators, for instilling a sense of curiosity and encouraging a spirit of discovery in their children. Similarly, Pauletta Washington's parents were a school principal and a teacher who impressed upon their children the importance of education and striving for excellence. An accomplished actress and musician who is active in a variety of charities and causes, the North Carolina native trained at an early age at the prestigious Juilliard School in New York City. Although the pressure to do well was intense, she says her youth and naiveté were probably an advantage.

"I'm from a small town and all I knew was that I was going somewhere and playing," she says. "It was about the teacher. I had an incredible teacher."

Denzel considered a career in medicine when he first attended Fordham University but he took a role in a theater production while serving as a summer camp counselor, fell in love with acting, and was quickly recognized for his talent and brought to the attention of one of the nation's top talent agencies. Returning to Fordham with his new area of interest, he was tutored by one of the school's leading professors. After graduation, he was accepted into San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater for an intensive year of study.

"Now what are the chances of that? You're not even thinking about that career, yet you're put into a position with the top agent?" asks Pauletta, who teases her husband that his quick rise to success is analogous to a woman in her first pregnancy who quickly delivers the baby after a couple of labor pains. "He's had to pay some dues, he's had a couple of reality checks, but for the most part, he has been blessed."

Still, the Washingtons know that success depends more on hard work and lofty goals than good fortune and pleasant coincidences.

"My mother used to say, 'A diamond is made from pressure,'" recalls Pauletta, who was the first African-American to capture first runner-up in the Miss North Carolina beauty pageant. "I must say that at the end of their lives, both of their lives, they considered me their diamond. So I guess pressure can be good sometimes." That message is now being handed down to the next generation in the Washington household.

"I've always told the children that knowledge is the only weapon you have, and it is especially important for an African-American. People can do anything to you, but they can't take your knowledge," says Pauletta, adding that beyond the philosophy of a structured education, there is also a practical application. "They know that there is no way out. As long as we have breath in our bodies, my husband and me, they are going to go through school. After college, they can decide what they want to do. But there has never been a question: Am I going to go? And I think that Denzel and I have been very fortunate in that our children have not rebelled

against that. Their lifestyle has helped, because we've traveled so much. They've all traveled since very young, all over the world, and mixed with different cultures. It confirms what we have said in the house."

Pauletta and Denzel and all four of the children are expected to be on hand when the first scholarships are awarded on April 14.

"This is an incredible honor for us. You can only imagine how ecstatic we were when we learned that our family would be recognized in this way," says Pauletta. "We have been true supporters of Dr. Black and his research team for a long time because we have had first-hand knowledge about their work. This is a wonderful opportunity for students and one of the most incredible honors that could be bestowed upon us as a family."

Although award applicants are not required to have committed to a major in science, a strong interest and background in the neurosciences is clearly considered a plus. Applications are reviewed by highly respected neuroscientists from Cedars-Sinai and other institutions across the country.

"We anticipate the number of awards to increase through the years, and hope to see many bright, young scientists apply," Dr. Black says. "I appreciate the prominent neuroscientists who have agreed to participate in the selection process. Their involvement demonstrates the quality of the program and will continue to attract highly qualified applicants who are willing to rise to a challenge for an opportunity to excel."

Cedars-Sinai is one of the largest nonprofit academic medical centers in the Western United States. For the fifth straight two-year period, it has been named Southern California's gold standard in health care in an independent survey. Cedars-Sinai is internationally renowned for its diagnostic and treatment capabilities and its broad spectrum of programs and services, as well as breakthroughs in biomedical research and superlative medical education. The Medical Center ranks among the top 10 non-university hospitals in the nation for its research activities.

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