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DSU Mourns the Loss of Honors Student Akiah S. Powell

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The DSU community is mourning the loss of Akiah S. Powell, a senior political science major who passed away unexpectedly on Feb. 4 due to natural causes.

The death of Ms. Powell was made all the more poignant by her projected graduation this upcoming May and her plans to enter law school immediately afterward.

Formerly of the Bronx, N.Y., her family had moved to Bushkill, Pa., about five years ago, according to her mother, Marilyn Powell. By all accounts, Akiah was a dedicated student who was known to be service oriented, a faithful friend and destined for success. She was on the Dean?s List throughout her entire academic journey at DSU.

A political science major with a minor in pre-law, Ms. Powell had already taken the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) and applied to a number of law schools. ?When it came to legal studies, I believe that Akiah found her niche and a path to a successful career,? said Dr. Sam Hoff, the director of the DSU Law Studies Program. ?She had demonstrated the requisite skills to become an attorney and she was on the precipice of being accepted to law school.?

Dr. Hoff noted that Akiah possessed strong opinions about certain cases he taught in her Constitutional Law and Civil Liberties class.

?She had a sort of righteous indignation about injustices that cannot be taught,? Dr. Hoff said. ?It is a trait that made me confident that she would have been a stellar attorney and would have contributed significantly to the legal profession.?

Akiah had been a McNair Research Scholar since the spring of 2011 and within that program had demonstrated a passion for education and her love for fellow students, according to Tonia P. Conley, director of the DSU McNair Program. Ms. Conley said upon becoming a McNair Scholar, Akiah quickly bonded with her peers in the program and demonstrated her leadership and innate strengths among them.

?We could always depend on the warmth of her personality and the beauty of her smile,? Ms. Conley said. ?Akiah epitomized our program?s slogan: ?Pursuing Excellence Without Excuse.? She was certainly more than a student? she was a scholar!?

She said as a McNair scholar, Akiah had conducted research with Dr. Hoff (also a professor of political science) on a project entitled ?The Continuing Impact of Religion on Public Policy,? and was to have presented that paper at a research event in Nashville, Tenn., in March 2012.

http://www.desu.edu/sites/default/files/Akiah%20Powell%20(from%20SH)%20

Akiah S. Powell would have graduated in May and expected to enrolled in law school in the fall.

Dr. Akwasi Osei, chair of the Department of History, Political Science and Philosophy, as well as another advisor of Ms. Powell, said that she was a grounded and focused student who always had a smile and was eager to help.

?She had a quiet strength,? Dr. Osei said. ?She was strong in a quiet way and she made her presence felt quietly.?

During Akiah?s undergraduate journey, she distinguished herself as an inductee of both the Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society/Upsilon Chapter, as well as the Pi Gamma Mu International Social Science Honor Society/Delaware Alpha Chapter. She was a co-recipient of her academic department?s 2011 George Washington Leadership Award, a Thurgood Marshall scholar, and was a member of the DSU Honors Program. She had been selected to be an alternative legislative fellow at the Delaware General Assembly.

Ms. Powell also worked in the Division of Academic Enrichment as a supplemental instruction leader and Writing Lab specialist/tutor during the 2011-2012 school year. According to Kenneth Hunt, a supplemental instruction coordinator, Akiah showed exceptional knowledge in the field of English; and as an English SI Leader and writing lab specialist, she demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication to each student.

?In addition to the students gaining a strong sense of confidence, the overall class average increased as a result of her method of teaching,? Mr. Hunt said. ?She gracefully served both positions within the division with honor and distinction.?

Jean H. Gilroy, academic support coordinator, added that ?Akiah was a role model to all the students with whom she worked. Many lives have been touched, and many students will succeed and graduate from DSU due to her efforts.?

Among her student peers she was good friend and someone who could always be counted on to be helpful.

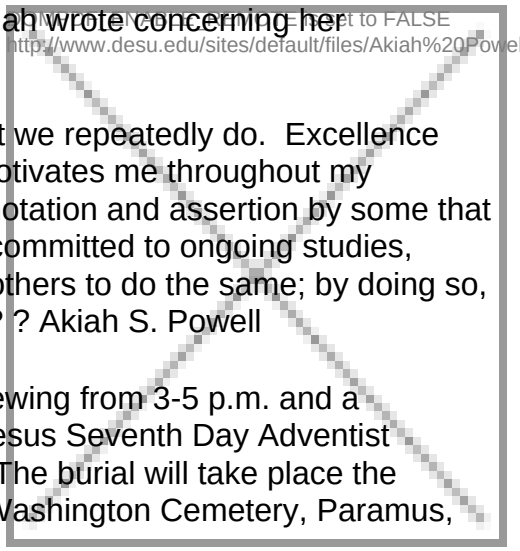
Samantha Holsey, also a senior political science major, has been a close friend of Akiah ever since their freshman year when they shared an honors suite in Wynder Towers. Ms. Holsey described her good friend as ?very genuine and independent? and as being one who was interested in others? success as well as her own.

Akiah S. Powell (2nd from the right) enjoys a fellowship moment with some friends.

?Instead of trampling over you to get to first-place, she would bring you with her,? Ms. Holsey said.

Akiah Shekira Powell was born to Hillary (Piper) and Marilyn Powell on March 12, 1990, in Bronx, N.Y. Akiah loved the Lord and was a member of the Smyrna Seventh-Day Adventist Church located in the Bronx. She attended the R. T. Hudson Elementary School and graduated from Northeastern Academy in New York City. She began her academic career at DSU in August 2008.

The following is an excerpt of a personal statement that Akiah wrote concerning her motivations and goals for her life:



?One of my favorite quotes by Aristotle says, ?We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.? This quote inspires and motivates me throughout my educational journey and helps to remove the negative connotation and assertion by some that people are the product of their environment. Rather, I am committed to ongoing studies, research, improving myself, and sharing and encouraging others to do the same; by doing so, I hope to impact not only my community but that of others.? ? Akiah S. Powell

Funeral services will be held on Sunday, Feb. 12, with a viewing from 3-5 p.m. and a homegoing service immediately afterward at 5 p.m. at Ephesus Seventh Day Adventist Church, 101 W. 123rd St., in the Harlem in New York City. The burial will take place the following day, Monday, Feb. 13) at 10 a.m. at the George Washington Cemetery, Paramus, N.J.

Akiah S. Powell

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