
December 2008

2008

12-2008

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Recommended Citation

Liberty University, "Liberty student to represent Bahamas at inauguration" (2008). *December 2008*. 13.
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Liberty student to represent Bahamas at inauguration

January 16, 2009 | By Sarah Funderburke

On Tuesday history will be made when President-elect Barack Obama is sworn in as the first-ever black president of the United States. While millions of people are watching this event on TV, one Liberty University international student will be front and center at the inauguration, representing his native country of the Bahamas.

Sophomore Steven Cartwright was born in Nassau, Bahamas, to missionary parents. He traveled frequently between the U.S. and the Bahamas while growing up, and in high school was invited to participate in a leadership program called Global Young Leaders.

“It opens you up to a lot of different people and backgrounds,” Cartwright said of Global Young Leaders.

As an alumnus of this program he received a coveted invitation to the 2009 Inauguration, before the election results had even been decided.

Although he did not personally support Obama during the election, he is excited to witness this moment in history.

“Morality aside, his issues, and what he is going to bring to the table, like increasing taxes on international countries and shutting down off-shore bank accounts of American investors, is going to hurt my country badly,” Cartwright said. “It is a big deal, though to see him inaugurated.”

Despite being elected vice-chair of Global Young Leaders in high school, Cartwright said he is interested in working in youth ministry after college — not politics.

“I was a dolphin trainer through high school and that’s all I wanted to do, but then there were some atheists at my job who started challenging me on what I believe and why I believe it, and I realized I didn’t know anything, so I felt this passion to go study the Bible,” Cartwright said.

He began attending Word of Life Bible Institute in New York and after two years transferred to Liberty and declared a major in Biblical Studies.

Other than the inauguration itself, Cartwright will be attending several Global Young Leaders seminars with important world leaders such as former Secretary of State Colin Powell and former Vice President Al Gore. The seminars will be on hot-button issues, including the economy and the role of faith in politics.

“My biggest question that I want to ask Al Gore is ‘What’s global warming and where is this coming from?’,” Cartwright said.

He will also be attending the Black Tie Gala and the Presidential Breakfast while in Washington, D.C. Up to 5 million people are expected to descend upon Washington to see the inauguration ceremonies.