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[Be The Change]

Senior Convocation: Assembly for action

JMU students intern for speaker's world-changing nonprofit

By GABRIELLE PICCININNI ('11)

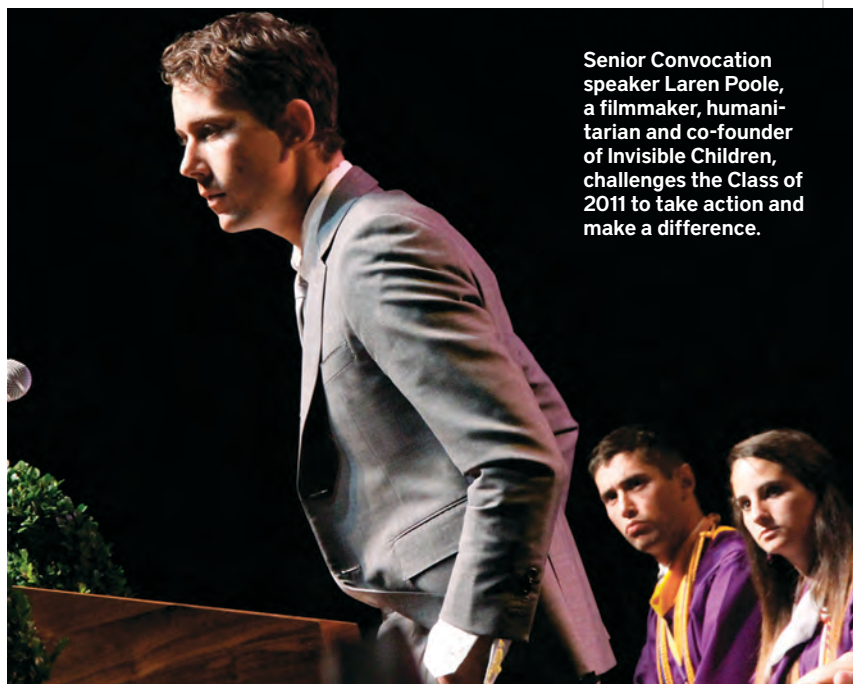
JMU's Class of 2011 — 2,910 strong — got one more JMU-style “Be the Change” message during Senior Convocation on May 5. Laren Poole, filmmaker, humanitarian and co-founder of Invisible Children, challenged JMU graduates to live a life of action. “Our generation can see injustice like never before,” he told seniors. “We are connected to people all over the world who are the same age, who listen to the same music, like the same things and share the same Internet. This connection demands action. Those who think they can change the world are the ones who do,” he added.

Poole and two friends founded Invisible Children after traveling to Uganda in 2003 to film a documentary on the plight of children from the war-torn country. For more than two decades, the Lord's Resistance Army killed tens of thousands of people in northern Uganda, abducted thousands of children to serve as soldiers and slaves, and displaced more than 1 million Ugandans.

Determined to expose the crisis, Poole and his friends created the documentary film *Invisible Children: Rough Cut* to focus on the plight of the children and child soldiers. Today, the nonprofit organization uses the power of media to transform apathy into activism. Through the organization's “Roadie” internship program, volunteers tour the world visiting churches, schools, colleges and universities to share the documentary and to inspire others to help end war.

Poole urged JMU's soon-to-be graduates to take positive action for the world. “Don't sit on that brilliant education. There is always more to learn. I beg you to take action,” he said.

Long before Poole set foot on campus, two JMU students accepted the Invisible Children organization's call to action. Annie Long ('12), a School of Media Arts and Design and Spanish double major, is



Senior Convocation speaker Laren Poole, a filmmaker, humanitarian and co-founder of Invisible Children, challenges the Class of 2011 to take action and make a difference.

‘Those who think they can change the world are the ones who do.’

— LAREN POOLE,
co-founder of Invisible Children



Invisible Children “Roadies” taking some time out for fun include, (top row, l-r) Dan Krozner, Shane McNeeley, Elise Benusa ('13), and Annie Long ('12). Front row (l-r) are Aol “Irene” and Akello “Monica,” and Ashley Platé, a teacher and Florida native who housed the team and treated the group to a Disney World trip.

a three-time IC Roadie veteran. She also served as an Invisible Children team leader in fall 2010. Elise Benusa ('13), a global justice major with a minor in African studies and humanitarian affairs, also toured in 2010 and was assigned to Long's team.

Two of Long's and Benusa's 2010 teammates — Aol “Irene” and Akello “Monica” — are natives of Northern Uganda. Both currently work for Invisible Children through its Legacy Scholarship Program.

Benusa first heard Long talk about the Invisible Children organization during a general education government class they shared. “Everyone [at JMU] is so involved and into so many causes, and we are all one force trying to change the world,” she says. “It was JMU's go-getter attitude that attracted me to come here.”

Both Long and Benusa remain actively involved with the JMU Invisible Children Chapter, and they welcomed an IC Roadie team that visited campus in March.

“Invisible Children staff told me that my individual actions can make a direct impact, and I believed them,” says Long. During her assignment as a team leader, Long coordinated her team's two-and-a-half

month journey and 92 event presentations. The team also promoted Invisible Children's fundraising program, Schools for Schools, in which American schools compete to raise money for partner schools in Uganda. JMU won the book drive portion of the competition, which gave Benusa, co-president of the JMU Invisible Children Chapter, the opportunity to travel to Uganda on an IC-sponsored trip.

Choosing to take time off from school to participate in the Roadie internship program was a big decision, but a decision Long and Benusa agree has benefited their Madison Experience. "Going on the road really allowed me to appreciate my college education and fueled my passion to learn and grow more," says Benusa.

Long agrees, "I now realize how privileged I am. I don't think I would appreciate school the way I do now had I not worked for Invisible Children." ❧

* Learn more at www.invisiblechildren.com/



Class of 2011 by the numbers

2,910	bachelor's degrees
461	master's degrees
10	doctoral degrees
6	college ceremonies
64	nurses pinned
22	ROTC cadets commissioned
3,381	new JMU alumni



[Phi Kappa Phi]

Germany in summer, graduate school in fall

Andrew Pham wins Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship

After spending the summer in Germany through a JMU Study Abroad program, Andrew T. Pham ('11) will have a good start on his master's career. The piano performance/music composition major won a \$5,000 Phi Kappa Phi Graduate Fellowship.

Andrew T. Pham ('11), a piano performance/music composition major, won a 2011 Phi Kappa Phi Graduate Fellowship and \$5,000 award. Each year, the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi awards 57 fellowships to top scholars across the United States.

During his studies at JMU, Pham racked up many academic laurels. He twice won first prize in JMU's Write On! Academic Writing Contest. The JMU School of Music faculty also awarded him the prestigious Presser Scholarship, an award given to the outstanding junior in the School of Music. Pham is currently completing a Master's of Music

degree at Indiana University. "My JMU piano professor studied at Indiana University, and he helped me throughout my graduate application and audition process," says Pham, who spent the summer in Freiberg, Germany, in JMU's summer music program. Pham studied piano from May 15 to July 4 accompanying opera performances, studying German Lieder (art songs for voice and piano) by composer Hugo Wolf, and studying the German language. "I really enjoyed learning French and Vietnamese, so I had a blast trying to decipher German," says Pham. ❧

* Read more about Pham at www.jmu.edu/bethechange/stories/andrewPham.shtml.

[No. 1]

U.S. News ranks JMU tops

U.S. News & World Report's 2010 edition of its "Best Colleges" guidebook ranks JMU as the No. 1 public regional university in the South. JMU has held the spot for 17 consecutive years. Among the factors that figured into Madison's favorable ranking are JMU's 92 per-

cent average freshman retention rate, 81 percent average graduation rate, 16/1 student/faculty ratio and 86 percent of faculty who are full time. JMU's freshman retention and graduation rates are both among the highest for schools in the complete *U.S. News* rankings report.

U.S. News has ranked JMU No. 1 for 17 years.

A total of 572 universities are included in the Best Regional Universities category of the magazine's rankings. Institutions in the category provide a full range of undergraduate majors and master's programs and few, if any, doctoral programs. JMU offers doctoral programs in assessment and measurement, clinical audiology, communication sciences and disorders, music, psychology and strategic leadership. ❧