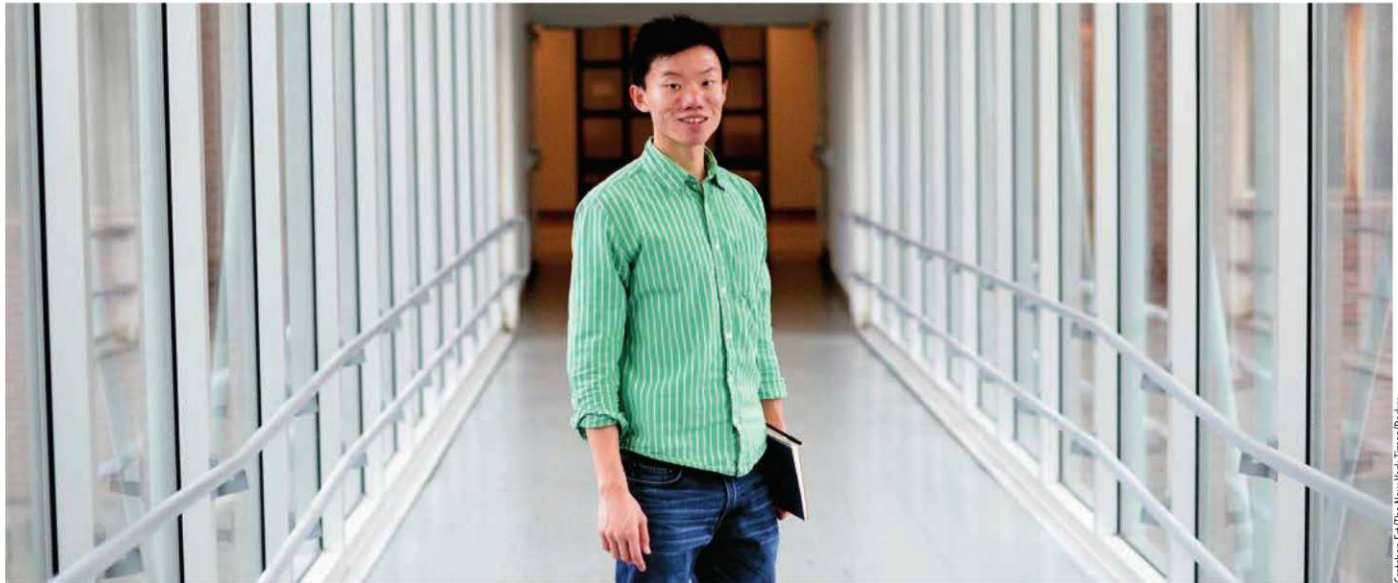


Life's Broad Sea

ALUMNI IN THE SPOTLIGHT | By Bridget Booher



Gretchen Ehr/The New York Times/Redux

Can a Chinese-born, Canadian-schooled, MIT grad student with no children help the Boston public school system fix one of its most vexing problems? **Peng Shi '10** might not have a personal investment in how school assignments are made for Boston's 40,000 students, but he has the mathematical chops to offer creative, feasible options. Instead of the current method, which uses a lottery system for placement within one of three zones, Shi's proposal allows families to choose from one of six

schools based on computer algorithms that factor in geographical proximity and school performance, among other criteria.

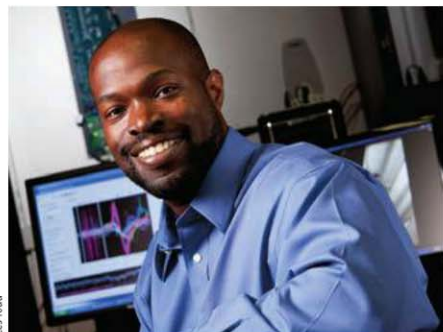
At Duke, Shi was an A.B. Duke Scholar who majored in computer science and math and minored in economics. He was a member of the three-person Duke team that finished fifth in the prestigious William Lowell Putnam Math Competition, which was featured in the January-February 2010 issue of *Duke Magazine*.

Kafui Dzirasa Ph.D. '07, M.D. '09 has been named to "The Griot's 100," an annual list of African Americans making history today. Dzirasa's research focuses on understanding how changes in the brain produce neurological and mental illness.

Dzirasa is an assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke, where he was the first African American to complete a Ph.D. in neurobiology. He is affiliated with the Duke Institute for Brain Sciences and is the

principal investigator in the Laboratory for Psychiatric Neuroengineering.

"Every year, nearly one in four American adults is affected by a neuropsychiatric illness," he told *The Griot*, an NBC News web-



Les Todd

site geared to African-American audiences. "My work aims to alleviate the personal and societal suffering that results from these illnesses."



Mig Doolley

As a young girl in Trinidad and Tobago, **Shireen Lewis Ph.D. '98**

attended the very first school established in her village. With the encouragement of a teacher there, Lewis pursued every educational opportunity available, eventually earning degrees from Rutgers' Douglass College and the University of Virginia School of Law before coming to Duke for her doctoral degree in French.

While working on her dissertation, she and a handful of

women founded SisterMentors as a support group to help each other through the often isolating process of writing a dissertation. In 2001, SisterMentors expanded into a mentoring program for girls in elementary through high school in the Washington area. To date, the program has helped nineteen women of color attend college (including Duke) and helped forty-two women of color earn doctoral degrees. Lewis' story is included in *Visionaries in Our Midst: Ordinary People Who Are Changing Our World*.