



## **AlaTorya Cranford, Paine College- c/o 2009, Biology & Pre-Medicine**



**Name :** AlaTorya Cranford

**Your HBCU :** Paine College

**Graduation Year :** 2009

**Major :** Biology & Pre-Medicine

### **1. Where are you from? Who introduced you to HBCUs?\***

I am from Hartsville, South Carolina where a private liberal arts institution sits; but I was introduced to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) by my early childhood educators, athletic coaches and youth organizations like, Delta G.E.M.S., in the city.



Founder & President of TranspireOne, Inc.

### **2. Why did you choose an HBCU over a pwi?\***

As I got older from middle to high school, the exposure to the HBCU experience became greater. I began attending high school days, my step-dad was an HBCU grad and every educator I had up through high school had some HBCU affiliation whether family, an educator or graduate. I applied to a handful of PWIs and so many HBCUs. I personally feel like the HBCU chose me! My attraction to an HBCU was the love of the culture and swimming in such a large pool of excellence with individuals who look like me and I could also learn from them, was one of the greatest feelings. It was as if we understood each other whether smiling, sad, laughing or completely struggling together.

### **3. What is the story of your "experience" at Your HBCU given its heralded status as a stellar and prestigious institution?\***

I don't believe I could have been as prepared to deal with life physically, mentally, educationally, emotionally, financially and spiritually if it wasn't for my time spent at Paine College. Paine College gave me my first glimpse at self-actualization as a student and later an employee. The experiences within and outside of the classroom have provided me with the tools and necessary skills of critical thinking, not what to think but how to think. Paine College accepted me where I was but pushed me beyond the purple and white gates and into the world. Through the interactivity whether planned or unplanned, my HBCU taught me how to always be ready, adapt and address the curve balls of school, life and work - things a text book couldn't give you. I thank Paine College for giving me a hand up, placing me at tables and meeting people I've never imagined, to love the history from the arts to the ancestors and instilling in me life skills that I can use at any level of employment and even the confidence to begin something from scratch. I thank Paine College for every administrator, staff, professor, coach, teammate, resident director, custodian, grounds and cafeteria employee because I've learned something from each of them.

#### **4. "First time" experiences at your HBCU?\***

These are all "first time" but lasting experiences!!!! Running for and becoming a campus queen, twice, was a FIRST! I wasn't really interested in the ultimate girly things. Partying in the same area you dine while the windows were sweating, was a FIRST! lol Spades on the stoops, music blasting and football/kickball on the Quad was like the ultimate family reunion. The memorable water fights between the athletic teams right after class, was a FIRST. I experienced my FIRST of many losses while in college; those moments took a lot out of me but I didn't realize the damage until later in life.

#### **5. Who are the professors that have impacted your life in and out of the classroom? How did they do that?\***

Dr. Bryan O. Mitchell was one of the first I met participating in HCOP during the summer prior to enrolling for the fall semester at Paine College. He has always been transparent and innovative with his teachings of the textbook and always dropped life jewels. Dr. Yousufzai was always willing and had an open door policy if assistance was needed. He always made it seem as if every challenge can easily be conquered. They both made a first generational student feel as if she was in the right place regardless of what it may have felt like.



Higher Education & HBCU Influencer

#### **6. What sports do/did you play at your HBCU? What positions?**

Volleyball - Middle Blocker, Outside Hitter, Setter & Libero Softball - Short Stop, Third, & Pitcher (once ) lol

#### **7. What is your process when you are going through a hardship that you have never faced before?**

There is no timeline for hardships; you have know idea of when they will occur or how long they will last. I experienced many hardships while being a student at Paine College. I had a lot of loss in a couple years of college of some loved ones and good friends. They seem to have all came back to back. Many will look at me in amazement like how are you still smiling, going to class, playing in your games - that college needs to give you your degree. It was that much death I faced. I got through it with the help of my teammates and coaches. My professors had no clue, because I still went to class but I didn't perform as well; I was there but not connected. Everyday I had to choose to face whatever the day threw at me, with grace and smile because all that had already taken place I knew whatever else was to come I could handle. You have to choose how you face each obstacle, hardship, and uncertainty of every day; that is the most important step in dealing with it. CHOOSE TO ENDURE with grace and understanding it will only end if you go THROUGH IT!

#### **8. When and how did you discover your passion in life?**

My career choice shifted my junior year in college, my passion was ignited my final year in college. I realized my passion was catered to the youth and empowering, uplifting, guiding and

providing a sense of hope. I had much peace and joy in that arena and whether paid or not there was no other place I wanted to be and serve. I am now working in my 9th year of being a higher education professional and starting TranspireOne, Inc., a non-profit, both catered to my passion for young people and their future.

**9. Sports accomplishments in high school? at your HBCU? (records, medals, articles, et cetera)**

Several awards (Don't remember many) High School: (Hartsville High School) Volleyball: All-Star, All-State, All-Conference player, MVP, Best Blocker etc Basketball: All-Conference, MVP, Best Defensive, etc College: (Paine College) Volleyball: Unsung Award Softball: Walk on - ranked #1 in all of Division II for Batting Average in 2007.