



## **April Moncrief, Alabama State University- c/o 1998, Business Marketing**



**Name :** April Moncrief

**Your HBCU :** Alabama State University

**Graduation Year :** 1998

**Major :** Business Marketing

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

I'm from Prattville, Alabama. My brother, who happens to be deceased now, actually introduced me to HBCUs. He attended Alabama State University on a football scholarship when I was around 10 or 11 years old. However it was the 90's hit TV show, "A Different World", that actually sparked the flame that consumed my almost daily thoughts of attending an HBCU.



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

After being exposed to the tv show "A Different World" at around 10 years old, I don't think I ever even considered a PWI. I knew it was not going to give me what I yearned for in a 4 year institution. For me, it was about way more than a great education, of which I knew I would get at an HBCU! I wanted to be around people who, as much as they looked like me, had varying viewpoints and different perspectives but at the end of the day, were fighting for and who wanted the same things out of this country as I did, Equality, Justice, Dignity and Respect. I also wanted to no longer be the minority in the room. I came from a predominantly white high school and I tired of the constant fights to be represented when it came to positions on certain committees and in specific sports and activities that were not known to have black or brown members or captains (except football, basketball and track). And finally, I was over the hidden and closeted racism from the faculty, staff as well as some of the other students.

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

Wow, my experience at an HBCU can be summed up in 5 words, "The Time of My Life"! I will never forget not one person or event during my time at ASU. The professors, the staff members, the buildings, the major tests, the presentations, the probate shows, the parties, the football games and the list goes on. All of these people and events will forever hold a special place in my heart for MYASU. I won't pretend that every day at ASU (Alabama State University) was a beautiful cake walk, it wasn't! I had some pretty tough professors who "demanded" nothing short of excellence of me and some days it was hard to meet those expectations. I lived off campus (in my hometown with my parents) and I worked part time so I commuted to ASU every day. There were some long nights camped out in the computer lab waiting to use a computer and then having to drive all the way back to my hometown around midnight, get up the next morning, head to work

and then back to campus for classes. However if I will say, if I had it to do all over again, I wouldn't change a thing! Those long nights in the computer lab and having to drive 25-30 minutes home every night, as opposed to walking back to my dorm room across campus, are what made me who I am today. It was the tough class schedule and the responsibility that I knew I had to get my butt home, get some rest, get to work (either that evening or the next morning) and then back on campus (to class) that drove me to succeed! I had great professors who knew my course load and knew I had a job and the fact that I commuted every day that would check in on me to make sure I was okay. However be clear, they never made it easy for me because they knew they were preparing us to be "Excellent" and that the cold world outside of ASU didn't value people who looked like us, so they always told us we had to be 10x better than anybody else, and we were/are! So no, they were never gonna give me any breaks but they most definitely wanted to make sure I was mentally, physically and yes, even spiritually (yes, one of my professors happened to be an ordained Pastor) handling everything that was on my plate. It was all of those small gestures that made "My HBCU Experience" one of the best experiences of my life! My professors at ASU had such a profound effect on me that after graduation I founded "The HBCU (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) Forum". The HBCU Forum is a non profit organization founded on the principle of "Pulling One Another Up As We Climb". We host a mentoring event every year in Prattville, Alabama where we bring back Alumni as well as recruiters from HBCUs all across the country and they work to dispel any myths and untruths about HBCUs as well as share their stories of how attending an HBCU changed their lives. (Copy/Paste the Link to Join "The HBCU Forum")

<https://www.facebook.com/The-HBCU-Forum-Changing-Perceptions-One-High-School-Grad-At-A-Time-131513287048437/>. So to end, my HBCU experience not only prepared me to be competitive in the world but it also charged me to "Pay It Forward" with the creation of "The HBCU Forum". I want other students perceptions, and most importantly "their lives", to be changed by attending an HBCU, just like mine was. I'm also an author. My first book, "How My Divorce Saved My Marriage", was published in August of 2015. I've done countless interviews sharing me and my husband's story and I go around the country speaking on the topic of Love, Marriage, Divorce and Everything in Between. I credit every success to "MYASU".

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

Being around so many smart, proud, savvy and intellectual black people at one time absolutely "blew my mind"! I couldn't believe what I was witnessing as we sat in class having these very in depth discussions about racism as it related to classism and discussions about the education gap in this country and how it related to the wealth gap and all of this was going on in a Math class, Wow! However one very important thing that stood out the most to me as one of my first experiences at an HBCU was how everybody, although we looked alike, didn't "think alike". That was absolutely "Everything" to me. I admired the fact that we could be alike culturally and in our appearance but because of our varied upbringings, we were not a Monolithic people. These people were from very diverse backgrounds that gave them very different life experiences, therefore, their outlook and/or perspective was so very different from mine and it didn't at all make me uncomfortable. It honestly made me want to know more about them because I wanted to understand how their life experiences made them think in such a different way. Talking with these

different people intrigued me and I now wanted to maybe, possibly open my mind up to thinking and maybe seeing things in much different way from the way I had been taught. "Exposure causes Growth"!

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

Dean Percy Vaughn. He was the dean of the College of Business (COBA) and he did not play with any of us, even the professors. I think everybody was afraid of him, including the professors! Dean Vaughn was so tough on us! We couldn't wear skimpy or scantily clad clothing in his business department (building). No earrings (for the boys) and definitely no "yeah, huh or umm" types of conversations in his classroom nor his building. If you dressed, at any time, in a manner that was not fitting to that of a business major he would ask you to leave his building and come back when you were more presentable. Also, if you spoke to him using certain colloquialisms or saying things like, "umm and yeah", especially during presentations that was an automatic "F". Most students despised Dean Vaughn. Well, that is until we matured in the COBA (College of Business) department and he began to reveal to us his "Why". He expressed to us that he was hard on us because the world was not going to take it easy on us. For one, because we were black and for two, we attended a black school. We finally got it! So instead of despising this amazing man who changed a lot of our lives, we began to see him as a second father. He was tough but he ultimately only wanted the best for us! I miss him still everyday!

