



## **Jameka Lewis, Langston University- c/o 2005, International**



**Name :** Jameka Lewis

**Your HBCU :** Langston University

**Graduation Year :** 2005

**Major :** International

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

I'm from a small town in Oklahoma called Guthrie. I was introduced to HBCUs organically because Langston University is near my hometown. Nearly every Black person in our community had a tie or connection to Langston.



My freshman year at Dear Langston

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

I choose an HBCU for several reasons. First, I was awarded a full academic scholarship. I didn't want my parents to have to worry about affording college and PWIs offered me less in scholarship money. Second, Langston was close to home and many of my community members and family had ties to the university. I knew that they'd be there to look out for me as I pursued my studies.

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

My experience at Dear Langston was priceless. I felt that I could finally be who I was and could grow into a young woman. I experienced so much culture and I met people who challenged my thinking. Many of my professors were like family; they had a personal investment in my education and my success and they constantly pushed me to do more, think more and experience more.

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

One of my major "first time" experiences at my HBCU was when I studied abroad in 2002. I went to the Dominican Republic for 8 weeks to study Spanish and Caribbean culture and I worked at a bank for an internship. It was my first time traveling outside of the country and I learned lessons that will last me a lifetime. I recommend that if anyone wants to experience life outside of the U.S., take advantage of the study abroad opportunities at your school.

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

There are so many professors who've had an influence on my life! Dr. Sonya Williams introduced me to Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. by telling me about her Zeta experience. She also encouraged

me during and after my pregnancy. Dr. Darnell Williams coordinated our study abroad trip and always looked out for me. He made sure that I stayed on top of my studies and told me to never stop pursuing my dreams. Dr. JoAnn Clark was the Dean of the Honors Program at the time I was enrolled. She taught us the ins and outs of how to present ourselves and how to navigate the world of academia. Lastly, Ms. Bettye Black was the curator of our Black Heritage Center. It was there that I learned so much about Black history and she introduced me to librarianship. I consider her my mentor in the profession and a part of my family.



I had her during my senior year, but I still graduated with honors and went on to obtain a Master's degree while raising her and working full time.

## **6. What to date has been your proudest moment @ Your HBCU?**

The proudest moment I had at my HBCU was graduating with honors and seeing my one-year old daughter in the crowd. I knew then that everything I did: every decision I made, every accomplishment, every trial and tribulation would be to give her the best start at life possible.

## **7. What's your take on life (in the philosophical sense)?**

My take on life is simple: you can do it! I believe that we can do whatever we put our minds to. Yes, we'll face discrimination and doors will be closed in our faces. But we come from a people who persevered beyond the ignorance of others and carved their own paths. That's the kind of grit and fortitude that runs through our veins. Will life be hard at times? Definitely. But you have to keep pushing. You have to believe in yourself and your abilities. There are people rooting for you and who believe in you, but you have to believe in yourself first.