



## **LaRia Land, North Carolina A & T State University- c/o 2012, Mass Communications**



**Name :** LaRia Land

**Your HBCU :** North Carolina A & T State University

**Graduation Year :** 2012

**Major :** Mass Communications

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

Chicago. I was introduced to North Carolina A&T the summer before my senior year of high school. I was referred to an organization called Target H.O.P.E. (TH) by a former teacher. Essentially it is a college preparatory program that offered extra academic help with classes you are currently taking in school, as well as assistance with the college and scholarship application processes. They also organize college tours two to three times a year so prospective students can visit the schools they are interested in and connect with administrators and current students. The institutions Target H.O.P.E. visits are primarily HBCUs but also PWIs that embrace their minority students and have an array of support programs for them. Target H.O.P.E. has informal partnerships with the schools it visits and each year an array of students, Target H.O.P.E. alums, enroll each year. Over the years, schools with big enrollment numbers have included Howard, Fisk, The University of Missouri -Columbia, and now North Carolina A&T! My graduation class of 2008 was the biggest class of students that came at one time with enough people to start a chapter on campus. During the visits, the on-campus Target H.O.P.E. chapter members hosted the high school students, guide the campus tours and answered any questions we had about student life and what it is like attending. The summer I toured there were not any TH alumni on campus, so an Aggie Alum who was associated with Target HOPE but not a member, Cory Adams, flew in to show us around. From the moment I stepped on campus I knew Howard had some competition in my heart for where I was going after graduation! For the longest I wanted to go to Howard, for various reasons, but as the visit went on A&T won the battle. The campus atmosphere was completely inviting, not stuffy like some of the other schools. The students walking passed us on their way to class were smiling, saying hello, some stopped to speak. Several were very excited that we were potential students and immediately went into their personal stories about why A&T was a great school. Visually, the campus (click the pdf link or take a tour with the Aggie Escort driver) was a nice mixture between modern and historical, and to this day I'm still in awe at how far this land grant institution has come. It was not your normal tour and I think that is how my mind was changed. We met the Chancellor and Provost at the time and we went inside academic buildings, which is not normally allowed. I met the Journalism and Mass Communication department chairperson at the time and we toured the TV station. Every thing we did, from eating in Williams Cafeteria to walking across the yard, I could picture myself there as a student. I thought I'd fit right in. The icing on the cake: what Aggie Pride meant to this campus and how it pulled everyone in as a family. Cory taught us the proper way to say it before we even got off the

coach and that set the tone for the rest of the day. Every person who spoke in reference to the school talked about Aggie Pride. You can't really describe it, but once you experience it you know that's it! If I have to try, I would say it is always holding yourself at an exceptionally high standard and truly believing you can achieve it no matter the area...Aggie Pride is really a way of life! And it was that home away from home feeling that led me to NCAT and I have never once regretted my decision. (Profile image courtesy: cliniclegal.org)



"I write for the A&T Register, our award-winning campus newspaper."

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

I have always had it in my mind that I wanted to go to a historically black college or university. In Chicago(my hometown), most students from the public school system go to the state schools and take the high school drama and negativity with them. I wanted to avoid that and experience something new, so I only applied to out of state schools. I was used to a small to medium school environment (graduating in 8th grade with only 50 students and graduating in high school with less than 150) and benefited from the one-on-one nurturing those schools provided. I wanted that experience to continue into college. I knew theHBCUs I were considering would give me not only the academic tools I needed, but also focus on concrete ways to successfully navigate corporate America while helping me to embrace and become empowered by my ethnicity.

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

I truly believe becoming an Aggie was exactly what I was supposed to do, its one of the main stops on my path to greatness. I have met incredibly talented and awesome people, who continue to inspire me to great heights by challenging my thoughts and actions. Sometimes I'm walking around campus thinking, man these last 3 years have flown by, but I am not worried about my future because my NCAT education is definitely providing me with the tools I need. My experience has been humbling, full of enough successes to encourage me to keep reaching for new heights and enough failures to encourage focus and diligence. Some may say you can get that from anywhere, but there is nothing like the NCAT experience! This school is big enough for you to be an individual, but small enough where we really are a family. I tell every high school student who asks, A&T as been like a mirror, showing me greatness in myself, and I will always be indebted to it for that. I did not come to college and get caught up in the hype. I came with an agenda, and one of things was to fall in love with a historically black university so that giving back as an alum would not feel like a chore, but something I really wanted to do. I think that is my biggest goal in life, being in a position to give back to the communities who influenced me and help me to get where I am. Mahatma Gandhi said for "you to be the change you want to see in the world" and I live whole hearted by that quote. My now is not for me, but for those who come after.

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

N/A

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

I would also have to say Dr. Teresa Styles is probably the most influential professor I have had thus far. She had a very successful career in broadcast journalism before she became a professor and is VERY passionate about this industry and everything she is able to give to her students. I think she is an underestimated professor in the department because her teaching methods are not really conventional, but you walk away with ALOT of much needed advice about how to navigate and be successful in the industry after graduation, and that is more valuable than having a perfect transcript. I trust her opinion and value her criticism, and she is really funny to me when she starts telling stories about her time in the business. She has seen some of everything. Also, there were a few administrators who influenced me as well. Specifically, Mr. Porter, the director of the New Student Orientation program, his staff, and the staff within the Department of Student Development under Mrs. Iverson-Payne. They were examples of what effective leadership should look like and gave great advice on how to go about obtaining and maintaining different roles. One of the biggest things I learned was to not let anything intimidate you or keep you from doing your job to the best of your ability. Great leaders, from their example, are always professional when the time calls, but relatable where those under them will want to work with them. My teamwork skills have definitely been sharpened from that experience and I was fortunate to have had that correction in my earlier collegiate years because most students won't get that type of mentoring until later.



"I am extremely proud that I was able to travel to Europe last May with the Honors Program."

## **6. Best restaurants on/near campus? Best dishes?**

When you come from Chicago, food is not on your list of things you compare. Nothing tops what you can get at home. Even the fast food places just taste...different. With that said, I am a BIG ice cream/dessert/icee type girl (thanks to you LaRia we did some research on the best dessert spots in the Chi, take a look!) and I do not think I would have survived down here this long without finding some place to indulge my cravings. Alex's Cheesecakes (Check out some of the reviews on Alex's) is my favorite! Cheesecake (<---Some of the Best Cheesecake spots in the Chi!) is my second favorite dessert and she makes some of the best I have ever had. It's a bakery so there is something for everyone, and I am currently on a quest to taste every flavor she has. Her chocolate raz is my latest favorite. I also really enjoy The Juice Shop. Their drinks are made naturally with real fruits so it's a refreshing change! I think it's a chain place down here but we don't have it at home. It puts me in the mind of Jamba Juice back home.

## **7. College crush?**

There have been several guys I've "admired" from a distance. Lol. Total "eye candy"! But I would never approach a guy, so they probably won't ever know I liked what I saw.

## **8. Ghost stories involving buildings or spots on campus?**

Not that I know of.

### **9. What is your major? and Why did you choose it?**

I am a Journalism and Mass Communication major with a concentration in Electronic Media. I've known I wanted to be a journalist since I was a junior in high school. My interest developed from introductory classes I took at Columbia College Chicago through a program called Columbia Links. I have always enjoyed writing and at that time was desperately looking for a career that would allow me to do the two things I loved, help people help themselves and write. That's what journalism is to me; providing the public with information that they can use to make educated decisions to make their lives better. Whether it's reporting on politics or reviewing the latest movie to hit theaters, people look to the media to translate things they would otherwise never know. The media is very powerful, historically it has always shaped the political agenda of this country, and that is a conversation I want to be apart of, speaking for and to the people about things that are important for them.

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

I am extremely proud that I was able to travel to Europe last May with the Honors Program. Our Honors Program travels abroad twice a year with students, and that experience, as a whole, was simply amazing. We went to Paris, Rome, Florence, and a couple other small cities in between. I ate some of the best food I had ever tasted, especially the ice cream, and I was able to shop and explore some of the biggest cities in the world. I even got my portrait drawn by an Italian artist, which I was really excited about! That trip was not like anything I had seen on TV; it was ten times better, and to be surrounded by so much culture and history was surreal. It was when I saw the Eiffel Tower up close for the first time that I decided the rest of my life HAD to be spent with several trips abroad sprinkled in over the years. I made a personal goal to visit each continent at least once. The world is officially my playground and I intend to never stop playing.

### **11. Where are the spots to go to if you wanted to cuddle with your boy or girlfriend?**

I haven't had a boyfriend in Greensboro while I have been here for school so I do not know from experience. I do see people everywhere though, walking to class, chilling in the cafe, and everywhere in between. I can always tell if they are a young couple, freshman or sophomores, because they "cuddle" so openly, like make out anywhere for the world to see. I think one of the city parks would be a better place to spend time with a significant other, especially the one downtown. It has a beautiful fountain that lights up at night.

### **12. What are the chants heard most often at the sporting events?**

Various renditions of AGGIE PRIDE are always present, and there are a few that the cheerleaders lead that we all know. I personally LOVE that the Orientation Student Leaders of summer 2008 made up a chant personally for the class of 2012: " Aggie Aggie AGGIE PRIDE, Is Nation Nation NATIONWIDE, 20 20 20...1..2, Reppin' Reppin' A&T IS WHAT WE DO!!!!" and everyone loves to say "AGGIE BORN, AGGIE BRED, when I'm gone, I'ma be AGGIE DEAD!!!"

### **13. How are you positively active on campus? (e.g. clubs, SGA, etc.)**

On campus, I am the Historian for our Target H.O.P.E. chapter and I write for the A&T Register, our award-winning campus newspaper. I also volunteer in the community with the YWCA-Greensboro and I am the secretary for the Education Committee of the Greensboro chapter of the NAACP.

### **14. Where is the “yard” located?**

That’s kind of a hard question for me. Traditionally, the yard on HBCU campuses are in the center of campus and is the social hub as well. Our campus is so spread out now because of construction, we don’t fit that tradition. “Officially” our yard would be the area behind our Memorial Student Union where the fountain is located. I call that area the Quad also because four of the main academic buildings are there. Throughout students’ time at A&T, they will have classes in one of those buildings so they will spend a lot of time traveling between that area and congregating with friends between classes. I would consider our Holland Bowl, a big area in front of our cafeteria “yard-like” as well because that too is a place where people gather to hang with friends, between classes and during down time.

### **15. What and where are the historical places on campus?**

The most notable to the A&T family and the surrounding community is probably the A&T Four statue. It was created to commemorate the sit-in that took place on Feb. 1, 1960 by four freshman students at Woolworth’s, a white-only lunch counter in down town Greensboro. My personal favorite historical location on campus is our reflection pool. It is surrounded by brick monuments made up of the actual bricks with bullet holes taken from Scott Hall, a dormitory no longer on campus. In 1969, A&T students were protesting with local high school students over a variety of injustices and over the next few days the “disturbance” grew significantly. Eventually, the mayor called in the National Guards to patrol the city and on May 21 gunfire was exchanged between A&T students and the police, and a sophomore student, Willie Grimes, was shot and killed. This monument reminds me of a moment in A&T history and Black history that is not really known and I’m empowered when I show visitors on campus this special place and explain what happened and why it is significant. It also inspires me because the full story it is an another example of the strength of Black people, how we are courageous and stand up for our beliefs (even though in recent years we have not lived up to that legacy); and even though it resulted in the loss of a life, I do not think his life was taken in vain. I remember when President Obama was elected, it seemed like the entire student body came from where ever they were watching the results first to the reflection pool and then the statue and we celebrated in unison. The level of Aggie Pride at that time was over-whelming and it was an experience I will never forget.

### **16. What to date has been your saddest moment at your HBCU?**

Since I arrived in the Fall of 2008 as a freshman, a student has passed away each year; two related to playing sports and one was shot in off campus apartments. I did not know these gentlemen personally, but I was friends with people who did. Those times were hard because it seemed like the campus was in mourning, especially when Dennis Hale was killed. It always hurts

my heart when young people are taken before their time regardless if I knew them personally or not.

**17. How many “firsts” have you had at college ? What are they? (e.g. first road trip, first job interview, first love, first “F or A”, etc.)**

I can not think of any.

**18. How did you overcome your nervousness about going to college?**

I was not nervous! I loved NCAT before I came here (I visited twice before enrolling) and I was ready for the next phase of my life. I was fortunate to have great mentors who encouraged me to begin with the end in mind. So I came on campus immediately looking to build relationships with my professors and looking for clubs and organizations to join, both socially and professionally. Chicago is too far way for me to go home often, just winter and summer break, so I had to make Greensboro work since I would be here more than there. I do miss my families and friends a lot, but how I perform now will determine the job I get later, and how much of a better life I can provide for them. I say families because I am close not only to my immediate family, but my god-family as well.

**19.**

I do not have Greek aspirations.