



Leslie Taylor, Johnson C. Smith University- c/o 2009, Communications with a focus in Public Relations



Name : Leslie Taylor

Your HBCU : Johnson C. Smith University

Graduation Year : 2009

Major : Communications with a focus in Public Relations

Minor : Public Relations

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

Native of New Haven, Connecticut and currently holding down the Queen City...Charlotte, NC. My 'big cousin' was attending JCSU and introduced me to the wonderful world of HBCU's and I actually fell in love with the BLACKNESS when I visited one year during the CIAA tournament.



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

I was enrolled in a predominantly white school for two years and felt secluded and limited. All we had available to us was the Black Student Union and mini-black-meet-ups on campus but nothing that empowered us to do more than party and bullshit. I was a student-athlete and you can always count on the jock subculture to be mostly minorities but again we were so outnumbered in the classroom and general population it just wasn't enough celebration of self. Even dating was a headache having to be affiliated with men who preferred interracial encounters. One weekend on Johnson C. Smith's campus and a Chicken Wednesday later I transferred schools to begin my journey as an HBCU student.

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

My experience at Johnson C. Smith University was pretty remarkable to say the least. I met people from all over despite it's small population. The cultures of DC, New York, Cali and the deep south were beautifully intertwined throughout the campus. I learned so much about my blackness there's no other classroom not even the "School of Hardknocks" that can teach you the essence of our roots. The band...that woke me every morning at the crack of dawn...became a fascinating reminder of my ancestors. The staff, the students and administration were all reflections of self. I played volleyball and ran track during my time at Smith and that experience alone was super rewarding-to play and travel with a sisterhood was all I could ask for coming from a PWI. As I reached my graduation date, and wore out my welcome at the library to complete my exit paper, I realized I arrived as a girl and was leaving a woman.

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

Plenty....one stand-out experience I recollect was my first time attending a coronation. It was so regal and elegant. Nothing I'd ever expect out of my college experience especially having come from a white school.

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

One of my favorites was English Comp Professor Jemayne King. He was so real and played NO GAMES! He realized my writing capability was way beyond the course but because I lost some transfer credits it was mandatory that I retake. He allowed me to be free to express myself outside of the course assignments and even enlighten some of the younger students while I was there. We still keep in touch on social media now and he's still one of the most inspiring figures in my life. Especially after he made it to be a TEDx speaker and become the first professor to curate a course that is considered the first in educational history of higher education to identify with sneaker culture.....ENG 296 Sole Food: Digestible Sneaker Culture.



6. Entrepreneur? Tell us about your business.

My HBCU empowered me to use my talents and gifts to not only "graduate and get a job" but to reach a capacity that is ever-expanding. Straight out of college I began blogging and have since then launched my PR firm Leslie Monet Public Relations. I represent athletes, actors, entertainers, authors and more. I credit my growth and confidence to my HBCU experience as it defined self-love for me and through that opened my mind to a limitless lifestyle.