



## **Natasha Wedderburn, Coppin State University- c/o 2013, Biology**



**Name :** Natasha Wedderburn

**Your HBCU :** Coppin State University

**Graduation Year :** 2013

**Major :** Biology

**Minor :** Chemistry

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

I am a Baltimore native cultivated and grown right in Baltimore County. Honestly, I was the first in my family to attend and graduate college. The idea of what it was like to attend a HCBU was introduced by watching a "A Different World" and I wanted that experience of blackness and being in a space of being unapologetically Black. I later had a friend Paul that was a few years older than me who applied and got accepted into Bowie State and stories of his experiences only made me what to attend an HBCU even more.



Clubs and Orgs Day at CSU. the Newly formed New Directions Pep Squad Speaking to former CSU president Reginald S. Avery

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

Barack Obama stated "Later, I would realize that the position of most black students in predominantly white colleges was already too tenuous, our identities too scrambled, to admit to ourselves that our black pride remained incomplete. And to admit our doubt and confusion to whites, to open up our psyches to general examination by those who had caused so much of the damage in the first place, seemed ludicrous, itself an expression of self-hatred - for there seemed no reason to expect that whites would look at our private struggles as a mirror into their own souls, rather than yet more evidence of black pathology." If I attended a PWI I would not have grown into the woman I am today. Being at an HBCU and around my brothers and sisters that spoke the same struggle but had different perspectives and allowed you to be raw and bare all created a safe space and a space where iron could sharpen iron. Coppin was the place that taught you how to love you as a Black person in world that is taught to not love you. Coppin nourished every drop of my potential creating a person that was well prepared to face the world once we left the nest and comfort of our HBCU. Coppin felt like a home away from home and I knew I had to be there.

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

The Department of Natural Sciences speaks for itself. In order to earn your degree you had to pass a exit exam, write a thesis, and present your thesis.

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

The Department of Natural Sciences speaks for itself. In order to earn your degree at that time, you had to pass an exit exam, write a thesis, and present your thesis. Compared to other PWI these are typically graduate level requirements for graduate level students. Coppin applied pressure and pressure makes diamonds. After leaving and entering the real world, where I interviewed, I got the Job over Top PWI's. Why? Because Coppin understands that you must be the best of the best and professors grant you opportunities to add on your resume and enrich you with skills that will surely set you a bar higher above the rest. Thus, truly living up to their model of nourishing potential and transforming lives.

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

The Department of Natural Sciences is a family and literally all of the professors take you under their wing and grow you. The Department Chair at the time Gilbert Ogonji was a wealth of wisdom and always dropped jewels that got you through the day. Dr. Roth, Dr. Hegde, Dr. Murdock, Dr. Nesbitt, Dr. Roth, Dr. South-Hall, Dr. Sobhi, and Dr. Uddin all came to the classroom with a heart for teaching and a wealth of experiences that they shared to enrich us past what was in the textbooks. Dr. Jiru is the professor that has had the most impact and has served as a mentor since 2009. Dr. Jiru is amazing. Heck everyone in the science department is amazing and truly feels like family while you are there and long after you are gone. He was my first professor and when I had to take A&P and turned quickly into a mentor and someone, I admired because of his work ethic and quiet but strong leadership. He is never the loudest in the room, but his presence can fill a space and he cares about the people he works with and that is the type of leader I knew I wanted to be. Through the power of mentorship, we created The Coppin Mile Project. This started as my Capstone Project for the Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Leadership program at UMBC. The program director thought it was so well thought out that he encouraged me to go back to Dr. Jiru and share the idea. I emailed Dr. Jiru and we connected like always. This project tied both of our interests together very and well and this was the birth of the Coppin Mile Project.

<https://coppinmileproject.wixsite.com/website>



Graduation Day in 2013: Members of the STEM Club taking a group pic one last time

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

Ayyyyyyyyyyyyyye Coppin

#### **7. Are you a member of a sorority?**

Yes. I am a Finer Woman of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

#### **8. Entrepreneur? Tell us about your business.**

The Coppin Mile Project is an entity of Coppin State University's Department of Natural Sciences and has the mission of being a Historically Black Institution in a dynamic urban setting that serves

a multi-generational student population and provides education opportunities while promoting lifelong learning. The university fosters leadership, social responsibility, civic and community engagement, cultural diversity and inclusion, and economic development. These shared values allow for synergy in the efforts to have community impact and adding value to our stakeholders. The mission A West Baltimore change agent in the areas of Urban Agriculture, sustainability and food waste while creating impact in the areas of food insecurity and injustice by creating equity through a positive lens through education, community outreach, community science/ research and strategic partnerships. The Goal Connectivity for Baltimore's Urban Ag Space while addressing Food insecurity and social/ environmental justice for Baltimore City Residents of all ages.

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