



## **Nmadili Okwumabua, Clark Atlanta University- c/o 2007, African American Studies**



**Name :** Nmadili Okwumabua

**Your HBCU :** Clark Atlanta University

**Graduation Year :** 2007

**Major :** African American Studies

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

I am from Delta State Nigeria, and Memphis Tennessee! I first learned of HBCU's from my high school friend, who chose to attend Spelman College in Atlanta.



Paschal's Restaurant in Atlanta, GA! | Image Credit: Yelp

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

I chose to attend an HBCU for my graduate degree, because I felt it was the best environment to complete my degree in African / African American Studies. I also knew I would receive total support while doing my research on contemporary African architecture.

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

N/A

### **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?\***

My African History professor, Dr. Black (on fB), amazed me with his knowledge of Africa's past. Dr. Barbara Moss, was also a most amazing resource!



Nmadili Okwumabua, a proud graduate of Clark Atlanta University; Class Of 2007 | Image Credit: Nmadili Okwumabua

### **6. What sports do/did you play at your HBCU? What positions?\***

N/A

**7. Best restaurants on/near campus? Best dishes?**

Paschal's Restaurant in Atlanta, GA! | Image Credit: Yelp Paschals! Collard greens, macaroni and cheese, and some buttery cornbread!

**8. College crush?**

Terry

**9. Ghost stories involving buildings or spots on campus?**

Not sure

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

African / African American Studies.

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

There were so many proud moments! But what felt the best was just knowing I was amongst friends and loved ones... and feeling like the universe spun around 'us'

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

Hmmm, got to think on that one

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

Was not active during my time at Clark, was a bit more active during my undergraduate studies.

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

Well, the saddest part of my experience was the school not having enough teachers on staff. So classes were not offered often enough, resulting in students spending much more time in their programs of study.

**15. How do you deal with racism when you encounter it?**

If the racist person is obviously way too ignorant for my time, I ignore them. I must admit I have not faced anything so trying that I had to 'take the person to school'. I remember the most important experience I had, the one which led me down this particular journey of my life's purpose. It was when during my 3rd year design review, my professors at a certain school of architecture told me there was no such thing as African architecture. In spite of all the relevant and substantial evidence I provided regards the African centered design concept I used for that particular project, I was told Africans had never contributed anything to the discourse of world architecture! And this was irrespective of the majestic monuments of Egypt, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Timbuktu and everything in between! As a young ambitious designer, their insulting ignorance was more than I could bear at a time when I was eager to reflect elements of my rich Nigerian

architectural heritage in my designs. The result: I quit the design program. No teacher was going to succeed in making me in essence, only create design concepts inspired by the race and cultures of my fellow classmates. Architecture is a creative science, and so it made no sense that I would be admitted into a program that required creativity, and then I am told people such as myself had never been, and do not have the creative skills to create architecture. Blatant ignorance at the highest level. My reaction: I became an urban planner whose life's work is dedicated to contributing to the redevelopment of the African continent, using an African architectural language that truly reflects her cultures, aesthetics and place. I refused to be confined to a box that was being created for me, but instead, live in my full glory in an African world created and built in my own image.

**16. When and how did you discover your passion in life?**

I was a child. I loved visiting my friends and seeing how different all their houses were. Then I would draw them. I soon learned this thing I was passionate about was called 'architecture'. Eventually, the passion evolved and became a quest to seek out a black, identity in the arts and architecture of Africa. The passion has continued to lead and define my life's journey.

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

Life is a gift, it should be lived to the fullest! And if you don't get it all in the first go around, be sure to come back around!

**18. If you could speak to those family members that have risen but that live forever through you, what words would you speak?**

To my Grandmom, 'I now understand your words of advice'

**19. How did your HBCU prepare you for a diverse workplace?**

Well, it actually instilled in me the desire to set up my own business, rather than fit into a 'diverse' workplace.

**20. What advice would you give high school students filling out college applications for the first time?**

Make sure you research the best HBCU's that offer your program of study, and apply to them along with other schools. It will probably be a better experience to do the undergraduate studies at an HBCU, and further studies at another school. Much more supportive experience that way. Apply for scholarships as well, that is key!

**21. If you could only speak two sentences to the youth coming after you what would you say?**

1. Discover Africa 2. Let Africa define you

**22. Are you a member of a sorority?**

Did not pledge, as a graduate student, was quite focused on school and work.

**23. How did your HBCU help you to transition into your careers workforce?**

It gave me a true perspective on how international business plays out on the global scene, especially as it relates to Africa.