



## **Suhailah Stevenson, Florida Memorial University- c/o 2002, Criminal Justice**



**Name :** Suhailah Stevenson

**Your HBCU :** Florida Memorial University

**Graduation Year :** 2002

**Major :** Criminal Justice

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

I'm from Chicago and I first heard about HBCUs my freshman year of high school. I was in a teen organization and the advisors graduated from UAPB.



G&G Caribbean Restaurant during the Forever Fridays- Ciera "FamulyAffairGirl" Birthday edition  
| Photo Credit: G&G Caribbean Restaurant facebook

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

Being from Chicago and going to an all black high school I knew I wanted to do something different. So in my Sophomore year I started telling my advisor that I wanted to go to an HBCU. Even though MOST of my teachers had gone to HBCUs, the info on HBCUs was not as prevalent as the info on PWI. I would say 99% of my high school graduating class went to a PWI. HBCUs intrigued me, it quenched my thirst for AA History. They were smaller and I knew I didn't want to be just a number, that I wanted to be heard. All through high school, my mother kept saying that if I wanted to go to an HBCU she knew who to call, my grandmother's brother. She got in touch with her sister and found out he had left one school to go to another. I went to a college fair, spoke with the previous school & asked where he was. I then went to their booth, confirmed he was there and said ok I'll give it a try. I was hell-bent on going to an HBCU!

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

Florida Memorial University is the only HBCU in South Florida however it is still not as well known as the other 3 Florida HBCUs. My experience was one of friendship, loyalty, advocacy and humanity. The friends I have today are the same ones I met in the Fall of 1997. We've grown together over the last almost 16 years and I know that had everything to do with each of us deciding to matriculate at FMU.

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

I had so many firsts in college but only a few I will share. I cut my first class in college. I'm quite the nerd & do-gooder so I had to be coaxed into skipping class that day. First road trip was to Orlando. I got my first F, that was just a bad semester altogether.

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

I had so many professors that left lasting impressions on me, many of whom I still speak with today. It's so funny, I graduated 11 years ago but when I step foot in a classroom of my former Professor, it's like I'm still a student. The 3 most influential were my Genetics teacher, my Criminal & Constitutional Law teacher and my advisor. They each taught me so much, not just in academics but in life also. How to be a better thinker, a better advocate and how to believe in myself no matter what.



**6. What sports and/or extra curricular activities did you do in High School? And why?**

I was a straight nerd in high school. I was a member of SGA, Jr. Engineering Technical Society, Peer Intervention Program and Top Teens of America. I did it because that's what I was taught, give back.

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

Well, there were plenty of good restaurants in the area but there was nothing and I mean NOTHING compared to a home-cooked meal!!!! It didn't matter who's mother, father, grandparent, sibling, aunt or uncle that prepared it, that meal was sure to be the BEST thing since bottled water. And of course we're in South Florida so the Caribbean houses were absolutely heaven!!!!

**8. College crush?**

I will not divulge that information. Needless to say, we are still friends to this day.

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

Lol, they said part of the Student Services building was built on a Native American burial ground but that was just a rumor.

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

Well when I started I was a Biology major with aspirations of Medical School. My Junior year I suffered a huge loss and suddenly Med school was not what I wanted to do. I then became a Criminal Justice major. I had always had aspirations of going to Law School and I figured that would help me. Needless to say I excelled in that major quite nicely.

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

Graduation!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

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

Lol, oh gosh there were so many spots to 'cuddle'. The best one was in the lobby of the dorm, at a friends' house or outside on the benches.

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

Go Lions Go!!!! Orange....Orange....White.....White....Blue.....Blue

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

I was involved with SGA since my freshman year. My school is an UNCF Institute so I was also involved with the Pre-Alumni Council since freshman year as well.

**15. Where is the "yard" located?**

The whole campus was the yard. I don't think anybody ever referred to FloMo as the 'campus'.

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

Well Florida Memorial College at the time moved from it's original campus in St. Augustine, Florida in 1969 to Miami. The Administration building is still utilized on campus today and is where President Puryear worked upon moving to Miami.

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

Leaving my friends!!!!!!!!!!

**18. What situation in your life made you feel like you had arrived into woman/manhood?**

When I came home from college the relationship between my mother and I changed. It went from mother/daughter to friend. That's when I knew I entered womanhood. Even though she's no longer here, she's still my mother but she's also my friend. I cherish that friendship more than any other.

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

Through lots of prayer and walking away. I have a tendency to speak before I think. My friends say I have no filter. So the best thing for me is to pray for that person and walk away.

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

I love so many things but I'd have to say my passion is volunteer work. My mother volunteered her time I know from the time I was born, even before then. It didn't matter the amount of time, what mattered was the quality of time. My other passion is family. I love the time I spend with my family. It makes me strive to be the best person I can be not only for me but for them too.

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

We are each here for a mission and we will not leave this lifetime until said mission is complete.

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

I didn't have any nervousness about going to college. My fear was not making new friends. I was fine with leaving Chicago because I knew in a few months I would see my mother & sister.

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

I have a 22 year old sister who I'm raising and I try to give her all the information I was given because our mother isn't here to do so. I tell her to be cognizant of the decisions you make. Not be afraid of the unknown although I know you will be. Don't let that fear dictate your actions. Show appreciation for EVERY experience you have whether it's positive or negative but especially if it's negative. Embrace life, change what you want to change and always remember I do not expect for you to rise to low expectations.

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

You are here for a reason, discover it and then live it. You did not get here alone, so show your appreciation.

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

I pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority....there is no other!!! Lol, just kidding. I knew way before going to college I was going to pledge Delta. I absolutely LOVED Deltas. It's funny because my Godmother is an AKA and she TOLD me I was pledging AKA period. I just couldn't find the connection. Deltas were always present and ready to work. Not to say others weren't. Deltas just made their presence known from the moment their foot hit the ground. I loved that about them, I still do.