



## **Tonya Giddens, Norfolk State University- c/o 1992, Business**



**Name :** Tonya Giddens

**Your HBCU :** Norfolk State University

**Graduation Year :** 1992

**Major :** Business

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

My uncles and aunt are HBCU graduates. My uncles attended Morehouse College and Hampton University and my aunt attended Alabama A&M University so I come from a long line of HBCU graduates.



Norfolk State University Alum, Creator/Executive Producer of the Ms. Full Figured HBCU Pageant, and Ms. Exquisite Full Figured USA 2012 Tonya Giddens! | Image Credit: Facebook

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

Growing up with relatives who attended an HBCU it seemed like a natural progression for me. The experiences that they talked about fascinated me but what really sealed my final decision to attend an HBCU was the feeling of unity and togetherness that I don't think I would have experienced attending a pwi.

### **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?\***

Attending Norfolk State opened up a world of new experiences for me. It was my first time being away from home and I must admit I was a bit sheltered. Ironically the first person I met on campus was also named Tonya so I guess that was an icebreaker (LOL). My first experience attending Homecoming was overwhelming to me as my high school never had one (HS of Music & Art). It was great!

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

I must say that there were a couple who left (and still do to this day) an impression on me. First and foremost Dr. Wanda Brockington (Mass Communications Dept.). As a plus size woman she always carried herself with such class and always had style. Dr. Stanley Tickton was another professor who was so passionate about his work. They may not have realized it but yes I was

paying attention even when they thought I wasn't. [What did they do that continues to mean so much to you to this day?] They both have such a love for what they do after all these years and I admire that. We should all be fortunate to do something that we love to do. As the saying goes, "Love what you do and you'll never work a day in your life."



Tonya is dedicated to supporting HBCUs and so created the Ms. Full Figured HBCU Pageant™. She hopes that the Ms. Full Figured HBCU Pageant™ will serve as a springboard to nurture and empower young plus size women at Historically Black Colleges and Univers

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

[What are the key attributes to being a successful model such as yourself? Do you have a preference between fashion shows and modeling shoots? If yes, why?] The key to being a successful plus model is 3 words: DO YOUR RESEARCH. There are so many models out there who have walked in a couple of shows and feel like they can be considered "models". Learn everything you can about the plus industry; know the players in the game. Get the training needed to get ahead in the business. I prefer fashion shows because I love the adrenaline when I (used to) hit the runway. It's an unbelievable rush. As Beauty Director of Full Figured Fashion Week®, what is a typical day like for you? How did you make it all come together?] My Job as Beauty Director in Full Figured Fashion Week® is to pull together a hair and makeup team for the models for the fashion showcases for the week. I collaborate with the Executive Producer and Lead Makeup Artist and Hairstylist to select looks for the models. Quite simply, my job is to make sure the models look beautiful when they hit the runway. [What did it feel like to become "Ms. Exquisite Full Figured USA" in 2012? How did you prepare for that pageant and that moment of being crowned?] Being Ms. Exquisite Full Figured USA was a great experience for me. I said that when I turned 40 I would do something I never did before so when this pageant came along I decided to go for it. As far as preparing for the pageant I had to pull together looks for each category and come out doing my best, and that's what I did. I never won anything before and to win in my category was a truly humbling experience. How did the Ms. Full Figured HBCU Pageant™ come to be? Why did you found the pageant? I actually caught the pageant bug a long time ago, before I won Ms. Exquisite FFUSA. I wanted to produce a pageant that displayed the beauty of young plus size girls who attended HBCUs and show the world that these young women are smart and beautiful as their straight size counterparts. My main goal is to make sure these students receive scholarship money, every little bit helps for them to further their education and become productive people of society. How can HBCU students and alumni participate in the upcoming pageant this March of 2014? We will begin the casting process for the pageant in October, all the details and the criteria for competing in the pageant are on the website (<http://msffhbcu.com/main/sign-up/>). For more information email [info@msffhbcu.com](mailto:info@msffhbcu.com). Want to be a model? Learn how to get the most of your Norfolk State University HBCU Experience? Contact Tonya Giddens on Facebook.

