



R. Wayne Woodson, Morehouse College- c/o 1987, Music



Name : R. Wayne Woodson

Your HBCU : Morehouse College

Graduation Year : 1987

Major : Music

Minor : English

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

I am from Detroit. My parents took me on a tour of Morehouse College when I was about 10 years old. My high school choir director, Nina R. Scott, formally introduced us to HBCUs. She was an advocate for our studying at these schools. In 10th grade, I went on the NAACP Black College Tour.



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

I originally was going to Kentucky State University, but after hearing the Morehouse College Glee Club in Detroit during my senior year, I was determined to go there. The only PWI I considered was the University of Michigan, but it was just too big. I went to a small high school at which I was known, and I wanted to have a similar experience in College.

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

Where do I begin? As a member of the Morehouse College Glee Club, I was able to see the world. We went to Russia, Poland, and Bermuda. We also tour nationally every year. I was also able to perform in the '96 Olympics. I never thought I would leave the country and each experience provided me a with a unique world view.

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

I remember my first Glee Club rehearsal. They sang "All Breathing Life." I was so scared that I almost quit that day. I came from a high school with one of the top choirs in Michigan, but these men intimidated me. I did not think I could be that good. I ultimately became the baritone in the quartet and the student director. I also had an opportunity to serve in one of the most amazing student government programs I have ever experienced. It was like the federal government. The leadership training I gained at Morehouse has empowered me throughout my career.

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

Dr. David Edward Morrow impacted me academically, professionally and personally. In my sophomore year, I quit the music degree program and switched to English. He simply said, "I will be here when you return to this department." He ALWAYS pushed me to be greater than my limited understanding could comprehend. I was also with him when I received the word that my father had died. It was my senior year and the Glee Club was on tour. He paid for me to get back to Detroit, as I had to leave the tour. After my father died, I had a total breakdown. I had stopped going to class and refused to leave my apartment. He sent 3 students to my house to get me. I came to his office and he told me, " Do you think your dad is proud of your quitting school." I started crying. He just looked at me and said, "Now that we have that out of the way, what are we going to do to fix this mess?" I had never really experienced any male role model other than my dad. Dr. Morrow has been my God-Father ever since. He made me see a counselor and I graduated that May. I owe him for most of my successes. He has ALWAYS supported me. Because of him and my father, I have dedicated my life to mentoring African-American young men.



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

My proudest moment at Morehouse College was completing two undergraduate recitals: voice and choral conducting. For my conducting recital, I had to put together my own choir and prepare the group. It was stressful, but prepared me for a future in music.

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

Interestingly, I ran from the career that would become my passion...education. I told my mother I would never become an educator. She worked in the Detroit Public Schools for 37 years, and I was NOT going to do that. Finally, I took a college choir director position at Paine College. I now serve as the Dean and Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and I love what I do each day. My mom frequently reminds me that I am in education.

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

I live my life by the Ghandi quote, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Since starting my work in higher education, I have developed two personal quotes: 1. "Mediocrity is not the standard." 2. "Excellence is a process and not a destination. I often state these to my students."