



**Ta'mara Hill, Wiley College- c/o 2018, Sociology**



**Name :** Ta'mara Hill

**Your HBCU :** Wiley College

**Graduation Year :** 2018

**Major :** Sociology

**Minor :** Psychology

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

I'm from Hutchinson, Kansas. Before I went to Wiley College, I had no knowledge of HBCUs! We don't have any in Kansas, and I was never taught about them in school or by my family. My high school debate coach is the person who told me about Wiley, and my HBCU knowledge grew once I decided to enroll!



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

When I chose my HBCU it was mainly from a monetary standpoint. I couldn't afford a degree, but Wiley offered me a full-ride. In addition, I was a competitive speech and debate participant, and Wiley has one of the best debate teams in the country. I jumped at the opportunity to be one of Wiley's Great Debaters. After actually attending Wiley for four years, I can look back and say there are hundreds of reasons I'm glad I chose an HBCU over a PWI. A rich, inclusive culture, cultural diversity, Afro-centric education, and being surrounded by Black Excellence are just a few of the reasons why I loved my HBCU experience.

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

My time at Wiley College has shaped me in a way that cannot be duplicated. When I decided to go

to Wiley I was terrified of not fitting in. I am from a predominantly white town and was raised by the white side of my family. As such, I never really had the chance to engage much with People of Color. I was so worried I wouldn't fit in. To be honest, I didn't...at all- but that ended up being okay. I started making friends and finding my place on campus and before I knew it I was immersing myself in my culture for what felt like the first time. By the time I graduated, I still stuck out, but I had a sense of cultural belonging that I hadn't had previously at home. My time at Wiley was filled with cultural, professional, and personal development. I was a member of the Wiley College debate team for three years, and was the Limited Preparation Events Captain during my junior year. During my time as a debater I won multiple national titles and honed my critical thinking and public speaking skills. As a result, I was able to achieve much more in my last year before graduation. My senior year, I left the debate team to pursue other interests. I was a Walton-UNCF Fellow for Education Reform, and worked in New Orleans, for an education non-profit. Following my UNCF internship, I was named an HBCU All-Star for the White House Initiative on HBCUs. Through my initiative I worked on strengthening the mental health of Wiley College students by hosting on-campus seminars and working with Wiley's administration to create an on campus mental health facility. I was also the President of Wiley's Sociology Department Club for two years. I found that my time at Wiley was improved by working to give back to my school, which is why I tried to stay as involved as possible. Each of these experiences I am eternally grateful for- and they are just a few of the opportunities I have had access to because I was a student at Wiley College. Because of how I developed as a professional I was very successful in my future endeavours. In my last semester I was named a US Fulbright Student, which is a prestigious government-funded scholarship, that awards less than 2,000 people every year. I was able to bring recognition to my school, because I am Wiley's first ever Fulbright Student. I was also named the Class of 2018 Valedictorian. I loved being involved in my community on campus and off while I was at Wiley College. I love my Wiley College Family. Though there were struggles, my experience was unique and enriching. If you read this, and have any questions about applications or government funded scholarships, please don't be afraid to reach out to me! As we say at Wiley, "Go forth inspired, glorious deeds to do!"

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

My first time getting to be around black people all day, every day! It was something I truly needed, and I miss it now that I have graduated.

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

Dr. Rolande Dathis, Dr. Sarah Honeycutt, Coach Gemma Buckley, and Dr. Robert Hamilton. Each of these people have played an incredible role in my self confidence, my academic development, and my life post-graduation. They challenged me in the classroom every day, supported me, and wrote EVERY single recommendation letter I requested for graduate school applications. They have made me more thoughtful and more successful. I am forever grateful to them.



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