



**THE BLACK  
GIRL PROJECT'S  
GUIDE TO  
COLLEGE**

## **A NOTE**

While this ebook, “The Black Girl Project’s Guide To College” is free. The information contained within should not be reprinted or used in any manner without the consent of [The Black Girl Project](#).

All content is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.

Enjoy!

## INTRO

Thank you for downloading and reading this ebook. [The Black Girl Project](#) is a small organization dedicated to providing young women and girls with the tools needed to navigate the many pathways of life. We're not about eradicating anything or changing a massive system. We're about the individual and her narrative—helping whoever sees our film, attends a workshop or reads this ebook to empower themselves to make the best possible choices they can make for themselves.

We began in 2010 with a [documentary](#) of the same name by [Aiesha Turman](#). As an educator in a non-traditional setting, she had the privilege of working with some pretty amazing young folks, both male and female. Having become a mentor of sorts to many of the students, particularly the girls, she became interested in their stories, as many of the issues they were facing had been faced by her and her friends a decade or so earlier. So without any formal training, she decided to make a film and two and a half years later, an hour-long documentary was made.

Wanted to do more, she partnered with the [Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization](#) so that The Black Girl Project could do work as a non-profit. Since then, we've been growing and doing at a steady pace.

In this ebook you'll find the stories of a dozen or so young women who are currently in-school, may have dropped out for some reason, or are recently graduated. These are their own words. We wanted you to hear about college from the horses mouth—not from parents, school counselors or guidebooks. These are their truths and we hope they can help you as you plan for your future.

So share this ebook, email it to friends, send folks the link, but most of all, use it and learn from it.

# AMANDA RIVERA

Former Howard University,  
currently employed full-time  
In New York.

Every person's college experience will be unique in it's own, and I am in no way saying this is how it will be for you but college was a rough transition for me. I went in with the intentions that it would be like high school just different for the fact that I'm living there under no supervision. It was a rude shock to be completely on your own—I felt a bit naked. I had a lot of stress due to the fact that I was out of state, on no scholarships, with a single parent, unemployed and alone.

I was struggling to pay for things as well as adjust to independent living and being a full time student. The classes weren't too bad just different in the methods of teaching and how you really are your own pep talker when it comes to going to class and completing assignments because the teachers could care less if you couldn't hand in paper because you were tired. Your status as a student is based entirely on you and your efforts. On a brighter note the connections I made with people were also different—more mature and enriching. You're coming to a place where everyone has the same mindset and most of the high school pettiness is gone. You actually feel a bit adult, if anything.

I have made some of my closest and dearest friends at college. The social life, of course, is another eye opener you get to see your limits, have fun, experiment, meet lots of interesting people and relieve stress. I have to say though college has taught me my responsibility to myself and my future as a student and an adult. You learn to organize, budget and compromise, which I feel are three important things to know how to do. My advice to new college students is to separate business from pleasure, PRIORITIZE, and do not hesitate to see the school counselor whether you have seen one before and regardless of your mental state; everyone needs a friend and a place to vent healthily about the very real stress of college and adult life. Although my college experience wasn't the best, I learned a lot from it and it's helping me be stronger and when I return to school, I will be better prepared for whatever it has to throw at me.

# RUTH MYERS

Entering senior year at The  
College of Saint Rose in  
Albany, NY.

College life comes with plenty of experiences that will never leave your thoughts as you grow older. It's what you make it, and with all the resources and fun there is available, it isn't that hard to make the best of your college experience. For most students like myself, going away for college may be the first experience they have away from home for an extended period of time. As time goes by you realize maintaining good grades is very important because it sucks to see fellow classmates go just because they were having a little too much fun. I found it easy to remain focused because at the end of the day, even though college is full of excitement, every student around you that's supposed to be doing the right thing was just as focused as I was

The best part about going away for school was being able to meet all different kinds of students. Some students were from your own neighborhood and others were from the other side of the world. Networking and making new friends exposed me to different cultures and beliefs; I found some to be similar to mine and others to be the total opposite.

I knew the first couple of weeks of school were going to be lonely but I didn't allow that to last for long. I was in a new environment so I was eager to explore. I was pretty sure every freshman had the same concern as me but I stayed confident and became socially successful. Living arrangements and adjustments can be challenging because you're forced to get along and wake up to a complete stranger. My roommate and I were both nervous about this new experience, but then again we were just as excited, so we made the best of it and explored the college together on the first night. It was a great way to break the ice with person you were going to be living with for the next year. Because we built such a good relationship we remain good friends today, even though she transferred and pursued her education somewhere else.

# **RUTH MYERS**

Entering senior year at The  
College of Saint Rose in  
Albany, NY.

I immediately learned that college classes are a great deal more difficult than high school classes. Keeping up with reading assignments and course outlines are essential, they cover a great amount of material from papers to exams. My professors expected me to stay on top of all of my reading assignments and to participate in every class discussion. In order to survive my first year of college, I took responsibility for my own actions and did what I had to do when things had to get done. This means that if I missed class it was my duty to get the lecture notes from a fellow classmate and if I had to request extra assignments to make up work or ask for help then that's what I did.

I couldn't avoid not doing work outside the classroom; I found it impossible to do so. Professors have all intentions to keep us students busy no matter what holiday was approaching, I just had to be prepared to get it done and over with. Once I got into the groove of college life, things became much simpler to deal with. My secret to fun and success in college is to remain focused—being focused gave me the motivation I needed to get things done and still having time to enjoy the good life.

# CHENEQUA SNELL

Entering senior year at  
Gettysburg College in  
Gettysburg, PA.

I am currently a rising senior at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. My college experience so far has been filled with many bittersweet encounters, while at the same time exposing me to a larger scale of society. I have a full scholarship and the few loans that I do have assist me with my books (which is about six hundred dollars a semester). While living on campus, I've worked at several eateries for money to shop, to eat-out, to party and/or just to have pocket cash.

Unlike many other students, I did not visit Gettysburg College prior to my attendance. I only applied to the school, because my College Bound advisor at my high school told me it would be a good choice. After being accepted to Gettysburg I chose not to visit (in which I would not advise anyone to do). I did not want to find any little thing about the college that would turn me off from going to that school or going away to school at all. On move-in day I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I felt scared and excited at the same time, because I didn't know what to expect and it would be the first time I would be living on my own. I was always very independent, but when your family is in an entirely different state that independence is challenged.

Gettysburg is a predominantly white school and many of the students are from fairly wealthy backgrounds. So far I've made many good friends of all ethnicities, but there have been a few situations where race played a major part. My freshman roommate was a white female from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The first few days went well, but the latter few weeks were hell. We had arguments concerning if the window should stay up at night, if we should be eating fast food in the room, when our friends should be in the room, etc. In most cases the area coordinator got involved. I tried to talk things out with her but it didn't work and the weekend before Thanksgiving she moved out. My floor mates told me she did not like me, because I voted for Obama and the only reason I voted for him is based on the mere fact that he was black.

# CHENEQUA SNELL

Entering senior year at  
Gettysburg College in  
Gettysburg, PA.

Comments such as this became the norm around the college and race relations became intense as the historical elections and the diversity on the campus grew. Oftentimes there were racial slurs written on the doors of staff or students, I have been called a *nigga* by people in the town and every year the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) has rallies on the battle field. The racial tension among the community was such a surprise to me, because I live in a fairly diverse city where racism is usually done behind closed doors and Gettysburg is a diverse town with many interracial couples.

The racial issues did not disable my school spirit. I have made many friends on several different campuses of surrounding schools. Community service is like a second job for me and I have been surrounded by several organizations that have helped me through the years. At school there is always an event that is free or low-cost going on during the week or on the weekends, for example step shows, concerts, comedy shows, movies, parties, etc. The academic aspect is amazing! The class sizes are very small which allow you to have one on one time with the professors. The professors also make themselves very accessible to the students, which I have learned to appreciate. I can honestly say that I have learned a lot while studying at Gettysburg. Like almost every college campus, there is always alcohol and drugs around you and easily accessible. Some people get addicted, but I have not tried anything. My upbringing and life experience has helped me to get past many peer pressures. I am very strong minded and not easily persuaded so I have no drug stories following behind me.

Despite the issues I have dealt with in college, I would not go back in time and change my choice to attend Gettysburg College. I have learned so much about myself and the people around me. Going away to school will challenge your morals and beliefs, but if you remain steadfast you will be successful.

# MELISSA GRAVESANDE

Associates Degree in  
Biology. Kingsborough  
Community College, New  
York.

Growing up as a young African American girl in the “City of Big Dreams” I’ve always had dreams of becoming a well known doctor, particularly an obstetrician/gynecologist. Even then I knew the steps needed to accomplish such a big goal and how I was going to get there—attending college.

My final year of high school I was so exciting, especially as the months neared to the deadline for college applications. The only colleges I'd had in mind were away from home. At the time I didn't care where just as long as I was able to experience the life on campus, in dorms away from home. As I attended more and more college trips it boosted my desires to go away and live the college life with many students my age. I quickly learned that an away college, well those that I thought greatly of were not an option for me because of my performance in high school which stood at a 75% or “C”. I'd have to be at the top of the notch if I wanted to be accepted to colleges such as Binghamton or the University of Albany.

So I figured the fall semester was up and coming and although I couldn't attend an on campus college, college was still an option, “community college” of course. The plan was to attend a community college in the area, improve my grades, receive a year's worth of transferable credits then transfer out. The college I chose was Kingsborough Community College, as they say “the college that works for you”. I decided to major in Biology since my area of desire was that of medicine or pre-med.

Life at my community college was actually a great experience for me. It was a period in my life where I was able to make the transition from a high school student to a responsible college student. Although I was unable to go away for college, I still had the opportunity to experience what it is like being in college. I adjusted well both with my professors and peers and learned very quickly about time management and the responsibilities needed to be a successful student.

# MELISSA GRAVESANDE

Associates Degree in  
Biology. Kingsborough  
Community College, New  
York.

There were no longer teachers reminding you to meet deadlines, it now became professors assigning material on a syllabus with a given date and it was your duty to deliver that material on time. You were recognized by how you applied yourself in a class of at least 30 students, and if you wanted to be acknowledged you had to prove yourself by being the best and receiving all A's.

During my spare time I held a part time job which was a huge factor for me not only feeling independence and earning extra cash to pay for text books but also the challenging feelings of conquering my studies while providing myself with a living to take care of myself as I would have done if I were living on a campus. The key I would say for succeeding in college, are all in how well you are able to multi-task and have efficient time management skills which aided in helping balance my studies, finals, lab practicals, research studies, work and my social life all at once.

My experience at my college played a great role in myself growing up and becoming independent. It showed me that it's not where you go but where you end up in the end. Although I did improve my grades, and was able to eventually transfer out and attend Hofstra University, I decided that the best decision for me was to stay and graduate from Kingsborough Community College which I eventually did with an Associates Degree in Biology and having a 3.5 GPA.

College is not quite over for me yet, I still have more to go. Since I enjoyed and was so happy in the end to attend a community college, I figured that home is where I will finish my studies and receive a Bachelors Degree in Nursing in yet another CUNY College.

# **SAMANTHA LAWRENCE**

Recent graduate, John Jay  
College of Criminal Justice,  
New York.

I graduated with my Bachelors from John Jay College of Criminal Justice with a major in Forensic Psychology and a minor in Law. If I had to sum up my college experience into one word I would say mediocre. I mean don't get me wrong, I'd say I graduated with pretty ok grades but I know I could have done better. I have had good semesters and bad semesters but I feel like they always turn out the same —start off strong lots of good grades and loving school, then towards the end of the semester I would get annoyed and not want to do any work at all. One thing I will say that I really loved about the way I did my whole college thing was I stuck to what my core classes were; took them all, passed them, and moved on because by the ending of junior year I had basically taken all the classes I needed for my major and I was just taking classes for the heck of it, which is how I ended up being a law minor.

Just some words of wisdom from a recent graduate: take school seriously because every semester counts. For example, my first semester in college I was just so happy about being in college and having this new-found freedom that I never had before, I let that get in the way of my schoolwork and totally flunked my first semester. That might not seem bad but I ended up trying to raise my GPA every semester following and trying to raise your GPA from rock bottom to something feasible is so hard and very stressful. The next word of advice is: have a plan of action, set goals for yourself; it could be short term and long term goals. Plus you should know what you want to do with your life before you graduate, so that way while you're in school you can take internships that could help with giving you the right experience. This brings me to my next point, do a couple of internships while in school because it can give you a firsthand look at the career you are thinking about getting into or it might broaden your job options because you might take an internship just for fun and end up loving it.

# **SAMANTHA LAWRENCE**

Recent graduate, John Jay  
College of Criminal Justice,  
New York.

The next point I would like to make is, make yourself known to the professors, This might seem stupid but if you do it, it could be the difference between a B and an A. Don't sit in the back of the class and not participate, try sitting closer to the front and being an active participant because the professor might remember you during grading and think “well your tests weren't that strong but maybe that's because you're a bad test taker” and if you participate and know what you're talking about in class, the teacher might take it into consideration.

My last point, which is really a big one is, don't be a procrastinator. This will never help and probably more times than not end up with you not even doing the assignment and yes I speak from experience. I was the king of procrastination until I realized that I could be getting better grades if I just handed in my work on time. When your teacher gives you an assignment to do, if you can, do it the same day or as soon as possible because the longer you wait the more and more you're not going to want to do it anymore.

These are some words of advice, which I wish I listened to when I started school because maybe instead of being mediocre it could of been spectacular. It was a love/hate kind of thing with me and college but I will say I'm happy it's over, for now because I will be going to grad school. I would encourage everyone else to take their education as far as they can or money allows, I guess. Just one little thing I forgot, if you can. take summer and winter classes because it would definitely lighten your load for spring and fall, and you could possibly graduate early, which would be a grand accomplishment.

# MELISSA HENRY

Nursing, University of  
North Carolina.

College life. Where do I begin? For me the adjustment to college life was pretty amazing. I went away for school my first two semesters. I attended Clinton Community College in Plattsburgh, NY. I had my own room (for once in my life), I was able to schedule my classes when I wanted (tons of sleep!), and of course the parties! I didn't party much though because I'm usually a homebody. I got to meet a lot of cool people whom I still keep in contact with today. I taught myself time management which is really important for deadlines.

My biggest challenge in college was finding out what I wanted to do. I had to change my major about a million times because there was so much I wanted to do that it got to a point where I didn't know what I wanted to do. Here are the majors in the order of transition: Theatre Arts, Journalism, Speech Pathology, Early Childhood Education, Human Services, Business, and now I'm finally a Nursing major. At first, I was upset with myself because I felt like I was taking all these classes and constantly switching my major that I was on a path to nowhere. I felt like something was seriously wrong with me. Then I realized that, this is what college is all about. It's about finding yourself and your true passion. My true passion is to work with babies and pregnant women which is why I want to specifically go into the Labor and Delivery field.

My big advice to every freshman college student is that if you don't know what you want to do or you're not sure about what you want to do, get all of your Liberal Arts classes out of the way first. That way, those classes will be guaranteed to transfer to your Bachelor's degree.

I had to learn the hard way because I went into college with a lot of interests in different majors knowing that I couldn't do them all but still attempted to tap into every single one. Another thing that is important while you're a college student is to engage in student clubs, volunteer opportunities, or internships that are related to your major so that you can build your resume and have a good chance of getting hired out of college. In some cases, your senior year of college! I plan on volunteering in a maternity center so that employers can see I have a passion for my field. Overall, stick with your passion because once you graduate, you'll have a career that will be rewarding.



University of Hartford,  
Hartford, CT.

College is goal that every girl should aspire to achieve. Having a high school diploma is by every means a celebratory achievement, but a college degree is what employers are looking for. College is not only an opportunity for people to further their education but it is also an institution in which people are exposed to people and subjects that they were never introduced to before. As a young woman of African descent in college, I can personally say that it has changed my life. I have not only grown as a student but also as a person.

In college it is important for girls to realize that they are not alone. There are always people who are willing to help you, but first you must realize how to help yourself. As a student enrolled in college you must be conscious of your goals, and understand that your goal is yours alone; no one but yourself is affected by your decisions. There will be challenges, but it is important to keep striving for your very best. In my first semester of college I faced many difficulties, but I was too arrogant to seek help. I continued to not seek help until the semester was nearly over; I thankfully passed all of my classes but not with the marks that I wanted. The next semester I buckled down and concentrated on my studies. And most importantly I asked for help, this was the key to my success.

College is not only about academics, a large part of growing up is socializing. College is a wonderful opportunity to actually learn about people from different religious and social backgrounds. In college you realize that learning goes beyond the classroom. Besides learning about other cultures, many colleges consist of various teams and clubs. Extra curricular activities are as important as they were in high school. Whether a team is athletically based or academically acclaimed it is important because they help students express themselves. It is okay to experiment girls, the more things you try the more experienced you become. Don't be afraid to move outside of your comfort zone. College should be a safe environment, but have a sense of adventure every once in a while.

Keep your heads up girls and remember that you have gotten so far already. Many of you will realize that by attending college, you have embarked on a marvelous journey. College will not only give you the tools you need to become a hard working person but also allow you to help other girls like yourselves have a dream. Please remember to remain smart and wonderful. You can do anything that you set your mind and heart to.

**NASHA**

**MAY**

Sophomore, Georgetown  
University, Washington, DC.

So you're at that point in your life where it seems like all your hard work finally paid off. You're enjoying prom, graduation, graduation parties and best of all, you are about to reap the greatest benefits: college and FREEDOM. At this time last year there was nothing I looked forward to more than the freedom of being on my own. I heard advice from everyone on how to succeed in college, notice how I said heard, not received. At the time I thought I was receiving it, but it wasn't till I actually got to college that I realized that I hadn't really received any of it. Under the microscope of highly achieving siblings, and highly expecting parents I did as I was expected to do, but in college where I was no longer directly under that microscope, I did things my own way, knowing there was no one I had to answer to. I'm more than positive that I am not the only person who experienced these feelings during the first year of college.

All that being said, I'm going to do as others before me did and try to give you a little bit of advice anyway, hoping that maybe you will be wiser than me and not just hear it, but receive it. My advice can be broken down into three parts: stay true to who you are spiritually, academically and socially.

When you think of college, the first thing that pops up in your mind is more than likely not related to spirituality. I assumed that since I had been going to church my whole life, college would be my break from that. By the time midterm season comes around (and it comes around quicker than you think) you will realize that you cannot do this whole college thing without whoever it is you may worship during your time of praise, in my case its God. College doesn't mean growing away from that so you can have your little four years of sin, it can actually be an opportunity to build your religion, not influenced by any expectation.

Secondly academics, when I say stay true to yourself academically, that only applies to those who are already working hard. If you do not fall into that category, get there quick. This was the main mistake I made: not sticking to the hard working habits that got me to college in the first place. Don't get sidetracked by friends who want to party more than they want to study.

**NASHA**

**MAY**

Sophomore, Georgetown  
University, Washington, DC.

Chances are they're either doing great without having to study as much as you do, or their doing poorly and will suffer the consequences. It wasn't long before I was back into my strong study habits from high school that I realized the same tactics from high school aren't a huge help in college. Simply reading over the notes is no longer enough. For me it required attending EVERY class, taking notes, TRYING to pay attention and when study time came around, translating those notes into something I could truly understand then writing them over and drilling myself.

Lastly is socially. Don't think just because I put this last that it is not important, its just not as important as your relationship with your form of God, or your academics. If you're not anti-social, you will have a social life, whether it's on accident or on purpose. Join clubs, run for positions in your favorite clubs, party and be merry. Just make sure that you carry yourself well. Don't believe everything that the guys tell you. As the new freshman, you are fresh meat for them and they WILL attack (and attempt to devour). Some will be genuine, but MOST won't, so use your discretion wisely. If you are going to an HBCU then chances are your social experience will be simply be a step up from your high school experience because the friends you make in college are the friends that you do everything with: take classes, eat lunch/dinner with, study, gossip, party and even fellowship. I realized this was the case for me after about one month of school. If you're not going to an HBCU, then expect to be a minority on campus. Try not to be shocked by it, just embrace it. I told myself before I got to Georgetown that I was going to use this as an opportunity to diversify my friend group, but after orientation (the culture shock), I was warmly welcomed by the black community and became so comfortable that I failed to do so. I advise that you do embrace the Black community, while stepping out of your comfort zone to make other friends as well.

Don't forget that it is possible to stay true to yourself while remaining open to change. If you leave college the exact same way that you entered, four years from now you need to speak to someone about getting a refund. As long as the change is results in better in yourself spiritually, academically and socially then it's all good.

# ELISE BOYKIN

Sophomore, Drew  
University, NJ.

They say that freshman year of college is a “learning experience” and being that I just survived it, I can attest to the fact that it truly is. College is nothing like high school. In high school, you’re accustomed to being in classes with people that you’ve come to know over a while. College, you are thrown into the melting pot and unless you are outgoing and willing to make friends, you’ll be by yourself. Adjusting wasn’t hard for me. I didn’t cry when my parents drove off and I didn’t call them every day which somewhat angered them, me being an only child. Granted I just went to school in a state away, I only went home once a month which was enough.

I know one of the most important things to me when I decided to go away for college was that my roommate and I would have the best relationship. Unfortunately, I was not graced with this opportunity. My roommate and I were far from compatible although when first signing up for housing, they had us fill out a survey to try and decipher who could be roommates. We did not have similar interests or habits. We were like day and night, total and complete opposites. The only thing we did have in common was our favorite color.

I saw my freshman year in college as a way to broaden my horizons. I strayed away from signing up for all the clubs that I thought were “black.”. I diversified myself and mixed with all races and orientations. College is about being independent as well. When I realized my bank account balance was decreasing and didn’t want to rely on my parents, I went and looked for a job on campus.

My freshman learning experience was what I learned in the classroom and beyond. For one, the school that I go to is majority white and therefore the African-American ratio is rather small. I plan on majoring in Political Science and took a few courses that analyzed various law cases.

**ELISE  
BOYKIN**

Sophomore, Drew  
University, NJ.

Of course, when cases were brought up that included African-American clients in them, everyone waits to see what the African-American students will say in the discussion, which isn't the greatest feeling. Granted, college was not what I expected. I had a lot more freedom there than I did at home. A lot of people in my freshman class got crazy without their parents' control and some did not return the next semester. The town where my school is at is nothing like Brooklyn. It is small, quiet, and a nice escape from the bright lights.

One thing I can say is that college should be seen as a fresh start. You must be willing to make sacrifices in order to make the best out of opportunities. Be open minded and willing to try new things. Be independent and don't follow the crowd. Last but most important of all, remember the parties will always be there, but the chance to make up a bad grade won't.

# PAIGE PADGETT

Junior, Lehman College,  
Bronx, NY.

As the college journey begins it is impossible to ignore the change in the intensity of adversity. When achieving aspirations, or doing right in general, there are uncomfortable circumstances that occur to limit success and contentment. It is up to you to remain steadfast and accept that the college journey is a path chosen by you for self betterment, and that whatever should transpire along the way is only to strengthen and not discourage you.

The college experience exists during a transitional time in life. It's when your teenage years come to an end, bills start to surface, and new people, places, and things are encountered. It is a time in life when the mentality of a person is truly tested by the arrival of mature decision making, influencing experiences and shaping perspectives. The goal, outside of graduating and successfully entering the job market, is to learn from what is experienced during your college career, and to begin adulthood with the accoutrements required for life in a competitive world.

My college experience began in high school where I participated in college credit courses that were provided by the College Now program. This decision, as should any in reference to college, was an individual choice with no input from parents or friends. The key to being happy, or sane for that matter, during college is to act on behalf of you. The college experience is filled with people who each have an opinion on what's right and, or, wrong. Attempting to follow any and everyone's advice only leads to unwanted cycles of confusion and dismay. Nevertheless my college experience got off to an early and steady start. Although my courses were in addition to my high school work, it was impossible not to treat my college work load with the same respect and importance that was given to my regular school work. It was not only crucial to achieve passing grades in both sets of classes, but the main objective was to do better than expected. Thus upon graduation I was able to finish high school with two semesters worth of transferable college credits. The best part of this experience was the ability to work at my own pace with my own good in mind, two major components of growing up.

# PAIGE PADGETT

Junior, Lehman College,  
Bronx, NY.

After graduation I attended Lehman College. Choosing the *right* college institution is vital to the entire college experience because it is the atmosphere in which you'll either sink or swim. A college of choice should be comfortable, convenient, and affordable. In terms of affording college, there are various financial aid opportunities, but the last thing any college student needs to worry about is debt. Even though I made the decision to remain in my home city and attend a local college, I advise anyone and everyone to go away to school. Take up the challenge and live in a new environment with new ideas and the people that comes with them. There's a whole new world outside of our comfort zones.

As I continue my college journey it becomes extremely evident that college is what you make it. If you desire to make the most of it, always manage your work load accordingly, join clubs, do volunteer work around campus, and involve yourself in every aspect of college life. The college work load is misperceived as difficult, but anything is difficult when you don't attempt to make it achievable. College doesn't come with any guides or road maps. Everyone is different. One method's convenience may be a hindrance for someone else. Trust your intuition, and if that's difficult take the college experience to learn more about yourself in addition to new knowledge.

**KIA**  
**CHARLES**

Junior, Adelphi University,  
Long Island, NY.

I'm currently a Psychology major with a minor in Biology going into my third year; so far it has been an experience I would not change for the world. My journey started when I applied to 19 schools and got into 18. I was overwhelmed but I narrowed it down to two universities based on location and major. Adelphi University which I'm currently attending and Morgan State where I spent my freshman year. I chose Morgan State over Adelphi when I made my final decision because I envisioned myself there rather than Adelphi. However, my experience at Morgan was not dazzling but it taught me life lessons I would never forget. In a sense, it definitely made me less sensitive to inconsequential things and opened my eyes to the significant picture, making me sturdy and ready to face reality.

Despite the rough time faced it wasn't all bad I had wonderful experiences, especially socially and I met a lot of phenomenal people who all have something magnificent to share. I can honestly say that I had a remarkable time socially from parties to shows to debate panels to forms to just hanging out with friends, I enjoyed and loved my HBCU. I ultimately transferred from Morgan because academically I was not stable, I kept changing my major; the year I was down there I had two majors and was well on my way to a third one the upcoming fall with a declining GPA and after a while I just missed the security of home even though I wasn't that far.

At Morgan I did a lot of soul searching and had many different characters young and old to help me personally to be where I am at today, mental and maturity wise. Transferring to Adelphi was cool, I'm stable academically but I miss the social aspect and the reality check of Morgan. I guess I can't get the best of both worlds. Coming from an HBCU down south the atmosphere is completely different compared to a predominantly white school up north. In classes I'm content and doing much better than before with a stable GPA. I've realized no matter where I attend, I'm going to encounter bad professors and good professors, I've just wisened up on who and what to attempt each semester.

**KIA**  
**CHARLES**

Junior, Adelphi University,  
Long Island, NY.

I've lived on both campuses and I must say there was never a dull moment at Morgan where as Adelphi I'm not so occupied in social activities and I tend to complete my work in a fashionable manner. In the housing aspect I have had my share of roommates. From a pathological liar my first semester in which we did not get along, to a sister from another mother my second semester (literally we had the same birthdate, we were both from New York, our families had the same mix and heritage and we're still great friends to this day), to a drunk my second year who, when sober, we became good friends.

In the area of friends at Adelphi it's a bit different from Morgan, people at Morgan have real issues and have a great sense of reality where as Adelphi they tend to live in a fantasy world; not all but some. College is a true test to choosing your friends wisely and it isn't easy anywhere. At Adelphi, which I didn't expect, I've gotten to do study abroad so far in Egypt and Italy and I'm hoping there's more to come broadening my horizons to different cultures. Another great thing about college is the work experience gained while in school; my freshman year I worked in the Dean's Office of Liberal Arts at Morgan State where I learned so much, to my sophomore year at Adelphi working at an elementary school with the second grade getting a hands on approach to the working field. As I stated before I would not change my college experience so far one bit but I've learned that your experience are what you make it with the people you surround yourself with and the choices you make—good and bad..

# COURTNEY JAMES

Recent graduate, City  
College of the City University  
Of New York, Harlem.

I entered The City College of New York August, 2007 with no declared major or particular career goals. I knew I loved to write but I wasn't too sure if that should be kept as a hobby or made into a future career. My brother who was in his senior year at that time made it his duty the night before my first day to tell me to "go with the flow." I was packing my bag; getting pens, highlighters, and notebooks stacked and he walked in with a chuckle under his breath.

"This is college, Bonnie," he told me. "You'll learn as time goes by that all the supplies you needed when you were in High School will dwindle down in size."

"Are you sure?" I asked clutching the notebooks I had rushed out to buy that evening.

"Yeah, I am. Don't obsess. Oh! And whatever you do, please don't let your advisors push you into selecting a major before you're ready."

My interpretation: "Create a comfort zone with a pinch of risk attached to its tale so that I can still stay on my P's and Q's." I think about my brother's predicament all the time. Being the first college-bound student in our tiny immediate family, he had no one to give him such advice. Being a computer science major his freshman year took a toll on him, forcing him to switch to Fine Arts and Graphics which eventually set him back an extra year. But I knew I didn't want to be in that predicament. And I knew I did not intend on ever paying for my undergraduate schooling because of a slight slip-up like switching my major. I had acquired a few scholarships by this time and I wanted to use them wisely.

# COURTNEY JAMES

Recent graduate, City  
College of the City University  
Of New York, Harlem.

My first day of classes was not too typical. First of all, I got lost before every class because the North Academic Center, blue-printed by a man who designed prisons, had four totally different sides to it. I got the hang of the building eventually and decided that my first test of duty would be to study the campus. After I eventually got the hang of the campus and college life, there was really no turning back. I did become more careful about double-booking my already hectic schedule, I tried my best to get involved in campus life, I stayed close to professors and I opened my mind up to other people's perspectives.

At first I thought it was impossible to have a positive social life while also managing a heavy academic life but I learned later on that it was healthy to reach out of your shell and experience things at this time. College is the time to try new things and to solidify your views on life. Doing this gave me leeway in choosing the path I'd take in my college career. Yes I was still quiet, but I slowly realized that you didn't have to be loud to get what was out there. By the time I hit my sophomore year, I had written a few articles for CCNY's African American newspaper, *The Paper* and by my junior year, I had also written for CCNY's monthly magazine, *The Campus*. I also had a great relationship with my advisors and professors and there were many new incoming freshmen I got to mentor and tutor.

I reminisce back to that night all the time when it was just me and my brother. To think that just a few sentences of realistic advice could do a world of good and just by observing his obsessive little sister, he was able to help me as I hope I am able to help you.

# JAMILA BROWN

Junior, Manhattanville  
College, New York.

Hello beautiful black girls my name is Jamila J. Brown. I started out at the University of Bridgeport then in my second semester of my sophomore year I transferred to Manhattanville College. I am going into my third year of college, and if there is one thing I have learnt is that the work never ends. You not only have to be concerned about maintaining your GPA but also the position you are in.

My college experience has been a blessing thus far. Throughout the two and half years I have been in school I have learned a great deal of things that I would like to share. You can consider me a guide to your future and success. There are four key points that will help you prepare for college; time management, understanding you are there for one thing and one thing only, take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way be active and participate.

College isn't as hard as it may seem on television "if" you manage your time right. You know your schedule better than anyone so you pick when you can take on different tasks. With this skill you will always be prepared, whether it's with studying or simply meeting a deadline. Don't let the word college fool you, there will be some immature, judgmental, and argumentative people that will cross your path, but they aren't worth the trouble. Remain focused and remember what you are there for. Although this isn't always easy to do you will grow thicker skin, and believe it or not a stronger understanding of those who are beneficial and those who are on a slippery slope in their lives and are just looking to drag you down with them. Some of the most exciting things on campus are the clubs and programs. Become active on campus and participate. In high school the cool kids are the ones with the name brands but in college the cool kids are the one's who make a difference on campus.

## OUTTRO

We hope you were able to learn something from what these young women took the time to so generously volunteer about themselves and their experiences. Not everyone can, wants to, or will attend college, but for those who do, it's important to have first-hand experiences to help guide you through. And for those of you already in school, hopefully what you've read will assist you as you continue to strive for your degree.

Navigating college life can be pretty difficult and this guide is just one of the many roadmaps you can use to help see your way through to the end.

We welcome any and all feedback, so send an email to [hello@blackgirlproject.org](mailto:hello@blackgirlproject.org) and let us know what you think. And again, share this with your friends, family members and anyone you feel who may need it.

Enjoy your journey,

The Black Girl Project