

Ferreira looks, finds roots at Bennett College

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lovingly adopted Sabra and her twin sister, Shireen. Sabra was taught to respect herself, black culture and all races of people. Having white parents didn't hinder Sabra from learning about black people. Going to libraries and attending cultural enrichment programs encouraged Sabra to find out more things about herself.

On June 6, 1992, Sabra Ferreira found the missing piece to her life, her natural mother. They met over the phone. The bond is not complete but the relationship is worth the try, says Ferreira.

"I felt so overjoyed my heart pounded as she spoke I could not believe it was her." Ferreira, a junior social work major, is now looking forward to meeting her mother at her graduation in 1994.

While growing up in a white community, Ferreira experienced casual racism. She recalls several incidents that made her feel like a lost puppy in the woods defending a land that she has never been to.

Being an hyperactive child, many teachers labeled her as dysfunctional. However, Ferreira's adoptive mother knew that wasn't so. There were many times where students would tease and make fun of her hair, calling it short and nappy. Ferreira recalls harsh incidents that caused her to think about herself and the future.

"A little white boy who lived down the street asked my sister and I to pull down our pants... and we did, the boy laughed and called us niggers."

Ferreira realized that she was not like the kids on the block. "I was just someone living in a white community, washing my hair every day like my blond haired friends. "Black history discussions in school were not easy; students would ask me things about my black leaders that I did not know," Ferreira explains with a funny grin. "Here I am sitting in a class learning about black things that people expected me to know about."

Ferreira does not regret her experiences but learns from them. "It was important for me to be around black people — teachers, men and women."

Before coming to a black school, Ferreira saw people for who they were and thought she would find Utopia. Instead she experienced acceptance and denial.



by Deanne McLeod

FERREIRA: "As I grew and became more knowledgeable, I became a butterfly with the same color, but with wings that now direct me in the right direction."

"I didn't understand why black women did not wash their hair every day, and most kids hated the way I talked — without slang words." She was confused. Black teachers and elders helped ease the transition. Ferreira changed her thinking and became more open minded.

The most important thing is to survive no matter what your background is, says Ferreira, "I'm still learning about myself and my heritage."

It may take time, but Ferreira is still beating the odds. She is looking forward to working with the government and making some changes that will help minority women. She hopes that the past will mold positive energies for the future.

"I feel like uplifting myself and my people in order to make better sense out of the destruction that all races have created for one another," she says.

Ferreira is a tutor for the Black Child Development Institute in Greensboro. While tutoring black children, Ferreira is reminded of her school days in Minnesota. If you were black "everyone

expects you to be good in sports, There weren't many times when they paid attention to your academics." Ferreira recalls one track meet that broke the myth. "The opposing team took one look at me and said, 'we lost this race!!' Something came over me; I don't know what it was, but I came in last place."

Ferreira sees the potential in the students she tutors and stresses knowledge over ignorance.

The people in Sabra Ferreira's life care deeply for her. Co-worker Tina Holt, the campus post office mistress, says, "Sabra is unique she wants to learn all she can about black people ie: traditions, foods, and churches. Sabra is blessed to have parents who encourage her quest for making herself whole."

Yumaranai Kurewa, a social work major from Zimbabwe, says Sabra is very different from most people. "Sabra accepts me for me; her open-minded personality has help her cope with reality."

Sabra's background sometimes shocks people. If we all took the time out to involve ourselves in our culture the negative problems would not exist.

LaVern Belle, Sabra's roommate, says, "Living in Washington, D.C., has given me plenty of opportunities to find my roots but I have never met a person so excited as Sabra. She feels as if she missed something while growing up, but no matter what her background is, it has been a benefit. Sabra can now deal with the things she claims she missed."

"A few years ago I hated the idea of white people adopting black children," says Genesta Perry, a student from Ronceverte W.Va "My views have changed; if there aren't any black couples available, then it's OK."

Sabra loves her parents and thanks them for the opportunity to branch out. Hopefully, Sabra will one day have the same bond with her birth mother.

Sabra compares herself to a caterpillar: "I started out new and unknowing about being a part of the African-American community. As I grew and became more knowledgeable, I became a butterfly with the same color, but with wings that now direct me in the right direction."

Friendships will last

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Some people found Bennett College to be a struggle for independence. "When you first get here the administration immediately puts restriction on the students. I couldn't believe it. I don't know how I made it through them treating me like a child," said senior mass communications major who asked to remain anonymous.

Many senior students at Bennett say that the most memorable Bennett experience was the lasting friendships that have been built. People at Bennett College have come together from all walks of life from all over the world. "It is amazing the people that you meet and the things that you learn from them. The friends that I have made at Bennett are the most beautiful people in the world to me," commented senior English major Kim Harper. "The fact that at this particular time in our lives we have all come together to show the world that 'there ain't no stoppin' us now!'"

ALUMNAE WEEKEND Schedule of Activities - May 6-9, 1993

Thursday, May 6

1:00 Board Room
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Executive Committee Meeting Headquarters
Alumnae Board Room Headquarters Board Room
Registration Headquarters

Friday, May 7

8:00 am - 9:00 am
8:30 am - 9:00 am
10:00 am - 12:30 pm

Breakfast for 55th and 60th Year Classes President's Home
Registration Headquarters
Seminar: "Everything You Want to Headquarters
Know About Bennett College and Didn't Know How to Ask"

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm
1:30 pm - 3:30 pm
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm
7:00 pm

Lunch (on your own)
Annual Meeting Bennett College Alumnae Assoc. Headquarters
Dinner for 50th Year Class President's Home
Choir Concert Campus Chapel
Class Reunions Place of Your Choice
Hospitality Suite Open Headquarters

Saturday, May 8

8:00 am - 9:00 am
10:30 am - 11:30 am
12:30 pm

White Breakfast (White dresses or suits) Campus Dining Room
Class Reunion Picture Taking Sheraton Downtown
"All Bennett Luncheon" Sheraton Downtown
1933, 1938, 1943, 1968

Honoring Classes of:
Classes in Reunion:
7:00 pm
8:15 pm

Baccalaureate Ceremonies Campus Chapel
Class of '53 Dinner & Testimonial Headquarters
Dance Headquarters

10:00 pm - 12:00 midnight

Sunday, May 9

11:00 am

COMMENCEMENT CHAPEL