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# Historically Black Colleges And Universities: Steep In Tradition, Rich In Education

By Sylvia D. Glover

There are 103 historically Black colleges and universities across the country with an enrollment of 280,000 students. They range from all female/ male private colleges to public universities. These institutions were founded during the Civil War, with the aid of the National Land Grant Colleges Act of 1862. However, the first Black school was, Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth (this was later to be named, Cheyney University) which opened in 1837. This college was originally started to train Black teachers. This institution, like so many other black colleges and universities, was started to educate Blacks, because many were not fortunate enough, or could not attend predominantly white institutions because of their ethnic background. Black colleges and universities have produced individuals who were instrumental in the history of the United States, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Morehouse College; Booker T. Washington, Hampton University; and W.E. B. DuBois, Fisk University.

Students sometimes overlook Black institutions when it is time to apply for colleges. Some see Black colleges as not being prestigious enough to attend. Others think that their degree is

not going to be worth as much as white colleges upon graduation. Gena Chandler, a 24-year-old graduate student at UNC-CH from Jasper, Fla., and a Florida A&M honor graduate said, "People need to let go of the notion that Black students that go to HBCUs can not compete with students at predominantly white institutions." However, others take a contrasting view to the choice of attending a historically Black college rather than a predominately white college or university. There are many factors that influence individuals to embark upon the journey of having an HBCU experience. While some

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have waited all their lives, others are told by their parents that that is where they are going due to family tradition. The main focus is why is it that students chose to attend Black colleges/universities?

First, tradition is a factor in the decision of attending an HBCU. People receive a sense of

pride in their culture when they decide to attend a Black college. Many students are in a sense told all their lives that they are going to attend Howard, Spelman, Morehouse, Tuskegee, for example because a plethora of family members matriculated there. Chandra Jordan, a 19-year-old sophomore at Tuskegee University from Macon, Ga., said, "My mother convinced me to follow in her footsteps to receive my education from her alma matter." She felt like she had no other choice, but to follow her mother's wishes. Other students see it as a chance to continue the family legacy of getting their degree from the college that their parents did.

Secondly, the nurturing environment plays a key role in one's decision. Oftentimes people are heard saying that they feel a sense of belonging when they are around people of their own race. They are more comfortable, and as a result this type of feeling is more conducive to individuals learning better. Many of the students graduated from high schools where there were only a few African-American teachers and students at the school. This results in a miniscule amount of exposure to other African Americans, and in order to gain that a more cultural experience they choose to attend an