

Aliyah Parris: U.S. Virgin Islands- St. Croix (NSE Visiting Student 2010-2011)

North Carolina's rolling hills, cascading mountains, and soothing coastlines convinced Aliyah Parris to explore and discover life in North Carolina through the National Student Exchange (NSE) Program. Aliyah visited North Carolina Central University from St. Croix (U.S. Virgin Islands), and while, by her own admission, there were some similarities between her life in St. Croix and NCCU, she enjoyed the new opportunities she was able to experience during her stay.



When asked why she elected to participate in the NSE program she reflected on the desire she had to experience a different life away from the island she has occupied since birth. After attending an information session about NSE at her home school in St. Croix, she jumped at the opportunity to take advantage of this experience. NCCU would offer Aliyah the opportunity to explore a new environment without totally leaving the comforts of home. From the North Carolina countryside, that reminded her of the island, to the campus demographic that was similar to her St. Croix campus, she knew NCCU would be the best transition.

"I had seen movies like Stomp the Yard, and thought that NCCU would be just like that, and in many ways it was. I felt like everything I saw on T.V. was right in front of my face." reflects Aliyah.

Aliyah advised that prospective NSE students go into their new schools or campus with the understanding that there will be an initial culture shock. She continues to suggest that prospective students take advantage of everything, keep an open mind and don't be afraid to explore their surroundings. Within the first few weeks of her occupancy at NCCU, Aliyah had successfully maneuvered the public transportation system and discovered one of her favorite stomping grounds, Southpoint Mall.

Among her various interactions and experiences, Aliyah revealed that she learned a lot about herself during her visit while continuing to advance academically. "From my time at NCCU, I learned how to be independent and take advantage of everything. I received a deeper appreciation of African American history and the vast correlation between the African American experience and that of the Virgin Island Cruzan people. I learned so much from the professors and staff. I also got physically fit here with NCCU's nice gym facilities. I took a lot of exercise classes and was even introduced to Zumba. I'm really going to miss Zumba."

She plans to carry with her back to her home campus some ideas for organizations that she participated in at NCCU, particularly the mentorship programs that she was involved in with local highschoolers.

During her time at NCCU Aliyah joined or was inducted the following organizations:

Every Nation Campus Ministry

100 Black Women Organization

CODES- Connecting Our Diverse Eagle Students

Golden Key Honor Society

Aliyah's First Experiences during her time at NCCU

First State Fair

First Snow Fall

First Greyhound Bus Experience

First time on public transportation

First time going to a homecoming

First time seeing a Fraternity/Sorority

First Football game and halftime show

First time seeing a BET College Tour