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FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS
A BETTER CHANCE

23

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1974

Celebrating Our Alumnae!



Mildred Flores-Thevenin | Class of 2004

My name is Mildred Flores-Thevenin and I attended FMABC from 2000- 2004. I had always wanted to go away to a "boarding school" and was so excited when I was accepted to the program. During my visit, Barbara Sutton picked up mom and I from the bus station. It is so fitting that she's the first person I met, and I remain in regular contact with her & Liz Kolodney today. Their love and care for me is the reason that I try to support FMABC at any opportunity I can.

The biggest thing that surprised me about the program was how challenging the curriculum at FMHS was. In the Bronx, schooling came so easy for me. It was an eyeopener in my freshman year when I struggled with classes like Earth Science. I realized then that I would need to work harder to maintain the high grades I was used to earning. Thankfully, Aleatha Ealy (Class of 2002), one of the upperclassmen, taught me how to study. She recalled her challenges, and took me under her guidance to make sure I had the tools and resources to be successful. I received an enriching education at FM and it prepared me very well for college and life.

My favorite memories at FM include all the sporting events, dances, our Showboat performances, and spending Sundays with our host families. The sense of community of FM was something I hadn't experienced before. My fondest memories include weekly dinners at The Soule's house before dance classes at Guzman's dance studio. Mrs. Soule also walked with me during Senior night for Lacrosse where I served as team manager. Mr. Soule shared words and jokes of wisdom anytime we got together. Liz Ross made sure we experienced all the season activities, like pumpkin picking and always sent us home with full bellies. She is an amazing cook! I'm thankful that I've been able to stay connected with both families throughout the years.

Life at the ABC House was difficult at times but in hindsight, it helped me grow to the person I am today. The family style dinners allowed us to decompress from our day. The weekly chores and study hours helped us learn responsibility and accountability. We also had a lot of fun at the House. Movie nights, mall runs, and chinese food from Number 1 Kitchen. We were also the first to get the internet and we all got our first cell phones. Before that we all shared the house phone and bought calling cards on a regular basis. Good times! LOL

After FM, I attended George Washington University. However, after some financial difficulties I returned home and welcomed my oldest son shortly after. To support my little family, I returned back to work quickly and found myself working at a large NYC landlord. There I



was introduced to the affordable housing industry. It was important for me to complete my college education so in 2010 I enrolled at the College of Westchester for two years and then went to Mercy College to complete my Bachelor's and Master's Degree in 2016. During schooling, I continued to grow in my career and now I work as Director of Affordable Housing Marketing and Compliance at Settlement Housing Fund.

Facebook has allowed me to stay connected with my former classmates, other FMABC alumnae, and reconnect with my favorite teacher Mrs. Laura Lodice. Some of my closest relationships I still have today are from my time at the ABC House. Desiree, who was my classmate since 4th grade and my roommate, is one of my best friends. So is Amanda Cunningham (Chichester), class of 2003. They both attended my wedding this past fall, where Amanda was my Officiant and Matron of Honor. Amanda and I even work together at SHF, where she works as my Deputy Director. I am grateful that I continue to experience milestones with them.

My time at FMABC enriched my life, and I try to pay it forward whenever I get a chance.



2023

MEET OUR SCHOLARS

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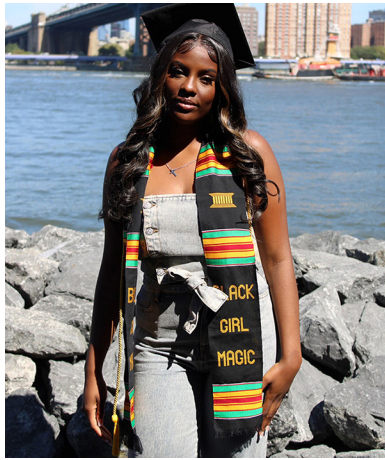
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Serai Williams | Class of 2024

I am from Brooklyn, New York. This year I'm a senior at Fayetteville Manlius High School. During my last year of high school, my favorite class so far has been AP Lang and Composition. In this class, I love the setup and how open everybody is to sharing their ideas and building off of each other. The last book I read was *The New Jim Crow* and this book was insightful. I feel like I learned a lot from people who have dedicated their whole life to these studies. My favorite movie still and has always been *Home Alone 2*. This is something that I doubt will ever change because it's a childhood classic and I watch it every single year before Christmas. What I like best about the ABC program is the opportunity to interact and build strong bonds with the people in the house. I will miss it when I graduate. This is an experience like no other. Throughout my ABC program experience, I have built a strong connection with my host family whom I have gotten extremely close to. One of my favorite things to do with them is trying new things around town. While the ABC program is a program mainly focused on academics, one of my favorite things to do outside of school is sleep and hang out with Arianna. My

future aspirations are to major in something within the science field or study the criminal justice system.



Arianna Duncan | Class of 2025

I am currently a Junior at Fayetteville-Manlius High School. I came into the FM ABC Program at the beginning of my Sophomore year. My favorite class this year is Global Environment because it gives me an opportunity to look at the many ways different races interact with the environment. What I like best about the ABC Program are the many different opportunities that you get introduced and exposed to. You're also able to form a close connection with the others in the house and learn about the different cultures and backgrounds. Something I never did before coming to the ABC Program was watch a musical and carve pumpkins. With my host family, I like to go to new places and try new things. Outside of school, I like to relax, hangout with my friends, or catch up on shows. This past summer I went to Jamaica for vacation and to visit family. When I graduate high school, I want to pursue a career in the medical field, possibly becoming an anesthesiologist or a pharmacist. A fun fact about me that I like to ice skate.




Mayra Z. Rivera-Lewin | Class of 1997

Since graduating from F-M in 1997 I attended LeMoyne College in Syracuse, NY. Graduated in 2001 with a bachelors in Spanish and Elementary education pre-K-6th grade. I was the first Latina commencement speaker. I returned to the Bronx and got hired by NYCDOE 4 days after graduation. I completed my

masters degree from Mercy College in education and I hold permanent NYS certification. After 15 years in the classroom I took a position working for the chancellor's office as a Universal Literacy Reading Coach. After 6 years of supporting teachers in two schools. I realized that I missed being with students and have returned to the classroom and college to obtain my special education certificate. This is now my 23rd year as an educator in district 9, the district that I went to school in as a kid up until I left for Manlius.



resilience, determination to succeed, and adaptability gave me the ability to do well. At Wellesley, I gained my voice. I was mentored by professors and other black women at Wellesley, and I became a leader on campus, becoming a VP of Ethos (the black student org), bringing speakers such as Valerie Jarrett (part of Obama's cabinet) and Linda Johnson Rice (CEO of Ebony magazine) to campus. Directly after Wellesley, I went to the University of Pennsylvania for a Masters degree in Education.

FM-ABC allowed me to walk away with a sister, lifelong friend, and godmother to my children- Jessica Reid. We speak to each other often and offer each other advice and wisdom on this journey called life. Another piece that I have taken with me is the appreciation of the outdoors and fall activities. Each year I take my kids apple and pumpkin picking multiple times. FM supported my baking habit. While there I always relieved stress and homesickness by baking. I would make breads, pies, cakes and cookies! To this day, I love to bake but I haven't had as much time to do it.

When asked "how was boarding school?" I always say that my experience was worthwhile. It was extremely hard while in it but in the end, I am grateful to have had it. Thank you!


Victoria Allison-Griffith | Class of 2006

I am proud to be an FMABC alum it set the foundation for me to Dream Bigger!

Life has been busy as I raise three kids in New York City. I am a mom to Isabella (11), Alexander (6) and Zhuri (1.5). I am currently the Department Chair of Math and Math Specialist at The Nightingale Bamford School which was actually the school we used to go to for our A Better Chance interviews in the early 2000s (such a full circle).

This is my fifth year at Nightingale, but my thirteenth year teaching. I have taught at charter, public and independent schools. I love being a leader in the educational world because I know how much of an impact education had on me. After graduating from FM in 2006, I went to Wellesley College. Cheryl encouraged me to apply and I am so glad she did! Wellesley was a transformational experience for me.

Being an ABC scholar had many bumps. I remember being homesick often, unsure how to navigate house politics, and hating that Greyhound bus which would drive us back and forth to an often cold and snowy Syracuse. To this day, I'll never ride another Greyhound. As adolescents and young girls trying to understand who we were in the world, the ABC was a different place. However, once I got to college, I realized that my


Shynise Stiff | Class of 2010

My favorite memories were times with my housemates. We had so much fun and helped each other through the journey. I also valued the time with my mentor, Alice Newman, and my host families - Threattes, the Donatos, and the Helmers. My F-M family is still a

part of my life; I've kept in touch with my host families and got fantastic life advice from Mrs. Lodice, Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Ruppert, Adam Lenter, Barbara, and Liz. This village helps me continue to push forward.



Life at FM High School was great. I was exposed to many opportunities that continue to affect my life today; the Rhetoric of Race course at FM was the foundation for my current work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Leading the Black History Month activities at FM really pushed me out of my shell; now I lead presentations in front of hundreds of people without any fear.

After FM, I went to Cornell University for undergrad. I also have a Master's in Education from Southern Methodist University and am getting my Executive MBA from New York University Stern School of Business. My time at FM gave me a strong foundation to thrive in these competitive schools and expand my network to know that I belong in these spaces.


Natasha King (Forde) | Class of 1991

I wasn't surprised about anything really. I loved it! What was different was going from an environment that was culturally diverse to one where I was among the minority. That being said, the community was warm and embracing.



Memories made were many! From road trips with my host family the Hughes's, performing in Show Boat with my housemates, being on the lacrosse team, a member of the charity sorority DKB and fun weekends with schoolmates who I am still friends with today.

School life was great, along with some of the above I was on the student council, the volleyball team and took part in whatever was happening. It was a competitive academic environment and I

was inspired to be diligent about my studies. It was for me a rich, well rounded experience.

I look back on life at the ABC house with much fondness. Of course it wasn't all roses having a bunch of teenage girls in one house (oh the hormones lol). But our resident director Amy was a gem and I made a lifelong friend and gained a sister in Natasha Haynes-Smith (now Ali) who was not only one of my bridesmaids but is also my children's Godmother.

I went to the University of Maryland College Park which I fell in love with (I mean that literally and figuratively since I fell off the sidewalk while looking around, awestruck by the beauty of the campus) during a college tour with my host family.

After college I worked at WJLA in Washington for a year and then moved to Barbados after the blizzard of '96. (sunshine and warmth were calling my name!)

Since graduating almost 30 years ago! (Geesh that's a long time!) I have done A LOT! Got married, had two kids, worked in marketing, was a reporter, took some time off to be a stay-at-home mom. Made features and documentaries for NGO's and Corporations, worked on the communications for ICC Cricket World Cup 2007 and then spent 5 years as the Press Secretary to the Prime Minister of Barbados. Following that stint I became a PR consultant for private clients. I've also made created and made content for the travel page of one of Barbados' online media houses. I created a series called Fifty Fit for the same media house which followed me on my health and fitness journey when I turned 50.

I currently have a show on social media called Spilling Positiva-Tea with one of my best friends that highlights how people have turned adversity into something positive.

Just this October I made a major change and returned to the states with my husband Adrian, we relocated to Miami Florida. We have two children who are finishing up their university studies, Khaelan

is a senior at McGill University in Montreal Canada and our son Maurice is in his junior year at Florida International University. So we are starting a new chapter.

Life has been full and exciting in the first half and there is so much more to come (I used to think 50 was old boy but I now wholeheartedly reject that assertion!) FM and the ABC house contributed in great measure to the richness of my journey and I am grateful for all those who had the vision to start it and for those who have continued to continue its legacy.


Dorisol Inoa | Class of 2009
What surprised you about the program?

The abundance of extracurricular programming opportunities.

What were any memories that you would share?

When I was featured on the local newspaper after I was awarded the QuestBridge college scholarship.

What was life like at FM High School?

It was one of the most active and busiest times of my life. I had a packed schedule with classes, after school clubs, rehearsals, and of course, homework.

What was life like in the ABC house?

It was like a reality TV show. It was also a supportive environment for studying and learning.

What college did you go to?

I went to Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.

What have you been doing since you graduated from College?

I've had several careers. I worked for Deloitte Consulting for 5 years. I worked in several NYC public schools as a College and Career Coach for 2 years. Most recently I was a project manager at a national education non-profit, EL Education. Right now, I am focusing on expanding my online clothing store Growth Mindset Style.



I am excited to share that my essay "I Stay Dreaming and Believing" is being published in the Dominican Writers Association next book, Una Visa Por Tus Sueños: Finessing the Dominican Dream. In the essay I share my story about attending the FM-ABC program and how that decision changed my life. The book is available for preorder at dominicanwriters.com

**Natasha Ali | Class of 1990****What was life like in the ABC house?**

Life was fun - 9 teen girls, 2 bathrooms - what could go wrong?!

What college did you go to?

University of Maryland (BA), University of Wisconsin-Madison (MA)

What have you been doing since you graduated from College?

I worked in TV news as a producer for more than 20 years at the network and local levels.

I think what has stuck with me is a sense of service. I do believe that to whom much is given, much is expected. I have volunteered with ABC over the years and mentored young people throughout my career. I hope I can pass that sense of community on to my kids.

**Perdexter Hogue Jones | Class of 1979**

My nicknames are Dee, Dex and Dexter.

What most surprised me about the program was how much the community gave of their resources, including but not limited to their time, money, support, creativity and compassion to a group of young minority ladies each year.

The yearly fundraisers were fun. The public came out to support the program in a big way. I enjoyed spending time with my host families. It was nice to have a home away from home. There was a local restaurant that had good pizza!

The FM High School staff and students were receptive to the FM-ABC scholars. I had a serious crush on Fred Sheridan, our guidance counselor. He was so kind and patient. Mr. Sheridan helped me to select a set of courses which kept me on track to graduate in three years. We participated in the high school's yearly talent shows and helped out at the Athletic Association events.

I'm from a big family, so the FM-ABC house was an extension of my family. My FM-ABC sisters were some amazing young ladies. My first year roommate, Konnie Whitfield Rice and I are still good friends.

I graduated from Oberlin College with a double degree in Anthropology and Sociology. After graduating from Cleveland Marshall College of Law, I was employed at the Cleveland Board of Education for several years. After leaving the Board of Education, I served as a Cuyahoga County magistrate for 20+ years.

I am married to Jay Jones, Sr., an alumni of the Clinton ABC program. These days I am a legal consultant who enjoys spending time with my 89 year old mother and family, sitting near a lake shore and sipping a nice glass of wine.

My FM-ABC experience was a positive one. It strengthened my confidence and intellectual skills as well as allowing me the privilege of seeing that we are all more alike than we are different. Please thank the current FM-ABC board of trustees for their diligence and hard work. Thank you.

**Tammy Rosado Gruenberg | Class of 1984****What surprised you about the program?**

The comradery between the girls

What were any memories that you would share?

Winning the Mock Trial nationals in 1984

What was life like at FM High School?

Academically challenging but doable

What was life like in the ABC house? Regimented**What college did you go to?**

Mount Holyoke College, Postbac at Columbia, Medical School at Cornell and Master In Public Health Columbia

What have you been doing since you graduated from College?

Medical Director of Women's Health Pavilion at Morris Heights Health Center

**Ingrid (Beth) Thompson | Class of 1998**

Looking back, I'm surprised by how long it took me to adjust, socially. It wasn't until junior year when I really felt I found my footing and voice.

My overarching memory (now that I have 25 years' worth of perspective) is that, even the struggles were beautiful. I mean, I would never want to go through high school again. (Who would, really?!) But I would never un-do one moment of time. The years I spent in the FM-ABC program made me the woman that I am today. I was exposed to places, people, and concepts that I will always carry with me. More sentimentally, I remember waking up early on Saturday mornings to get my chores over with and beat everybody else to the TV so I could watch X-Men. I remember having to sign out wherever we went. Which was mostly Sno-Top for heath bar flurries (I'm still obsessed with heath bars to this day). Or Harvey's to buy way too much candy — and then getting cavities because I had never eaten much candy before. I remember the town's great debate over letting Burger King open, and then spending Saturday evenings there, complaining about how wack their new fries were once they eventually did open. There were oh-so-many weekend pizza and Ling Ling's orders. And a curious "Caribbean" restaurant with an interesting take on island cuisine.

Sundays with host families were the best. Barbara Drake. The Helmers. The Blacks. The Milmoes. The Mannions. The Soules. Ms. Keane. The Taylors. The Maxwells. The Hams. The Giancolas. They all made us feel like we were part of their families.

Mrs. Cranston was my beacon of shining light.

2023

CELEBRATING OUR ALUMAE

Then, there was the ever-rallying troop of board members and guidance counselors who encouraged and pushed. I literally cannot name them all, but Jean, Barbara, Ms. Ring, and Ms. Kolodney personally saw to it that I achieved my goals. And, a heartfelt shout out in memory of Mr. Tucker. His presence, empathy, and encouragement had a tremendous impact on me.

As for my girls...There were plenty afternoons chatting about our dreams on the swings of the playground behind the house. Mornings scarfing down waffles then racing like Usain Bolt to catch the school bus. Walks up the hill when we lost the school bus race. Countless hours being silly. Or in the phone booth. Days on end learning the choreography to every video on BET and MTV. Endless music for all the Greyhound rides. Breakfasts with Santa. Rated G movies. The steadiness of George and Judee. The RAs that doubled as big sisters. And love.

We weren't perfect. But we loved each other. And supported each other. That's a distinct memory I feel to my core.

Life at FMHS was like visiting a foreign land. Picture this: It's 1994, hip hop was becoming really popular, and Mary J. Blige had us wearing baggy pants and big hoop earrings. As a child of Jamaican parents, I was also really into reggae. And, in the midst of it all, this first-generation American girl living in the Bronx transplanted to a far, far away town called Manlius where grunge was the style and alt rock was the lick. I was an alien. A painfully shy, socially awkward alien. Everything was new and different. But I was always interested in behavioralism (without having a term for it at the time, of course), so interacting with people from completely different walks of life was fascinating.

There was never a dull moment in the FM-ABC house. All at once I gained a multitude of sisters and an extra-extended family in the staff, board members, and host families (even the ones who weren't technically mine). However out of place I felt at school, being in the house more than made up for it. The bonds I formed will never be broken, no matter how much time passes or how long I go without speaking to my lifelong ABC fam.

I went to William Smith College (Geneva, NY) and majored in psychology (and minored in theatre) so, when I got a job straight out of college with Dr. Ronald Fieve, "the lithium miracle doctor," I was beyond thrilled. I worked for him for several years, conducting psychopharmacological clinical trials, and loved every moment of it. But there was always a tugging at my heart to nurture my creative side. So, I got my foot in the door as an Administrative Assistant at an ad agency where I eventually became a Copywriter. Almost 18 years later, I am still in advertising, as an Associate Creative Director. During that span of time, I met my forever boyfriend (Earl), fell in love with him, bought a house together, got married, and had a son (Earl Jr., now 5 years old).



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