

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

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Hi, everyone, and welcome back to a new season of College Bound. I'm Tajae, one of your hosts of the College Bound podcast. Just a quick intro of myself, my ND intro. My name is Tajae Thompson. I'm a senior studying marketing and sociology from West Palm Beach, Florida, and I'm currently a resident assistant in Johnson Family Hall.

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So we're really excited to be back here for another season of College Bound, and at the beginning of the season, we really want to explore identity at Notre Dame, and then more specifically, we want to explore what it means to be a student at Notre Dame with intersectional identities.

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So some of our episodes are going to discuss what it means to be Hispanic at Notre Dame, being a part of the LGBTQ+ community at Notre Dame, and then also just the ND experience as a whole, with how we, as Notre Dame students interact with the greater South Bend community and what to expect after graduation, and some other great topics throughout the semester. So to kick off this very first episode of our new season, our first episode is going to be about being black at Notre Dame.

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And here to talk about this with me is one of my lovely fellow interns, Savannah Carr. So Savannah, if you could come in and give us your ND intro? Really appreciate it.

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Yes. Hello, everyone. My name is Savannah Carr. I am majoring in computer science and on campus, I live in Flaherty Hall, but Miami, Florida is my hometown.

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Oh my gosh, it's great to have another South Florida gal here with me. We're pretty close, West Palm and Miami, what's that like 30 minutes apart?

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So, oh yeah, it's so fun. Definitely missing the sun right now in the middle of winter. But, you know, keeps it fun and fresh.

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I think it was around 19 degrees when I went out to go get brunch this morning. So really missing that weather at home.

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Definitely, definitely.

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So of Savannah, if you're ready to get started, I'm just ready to kick it off and ask some questions. So the first question I have for you today, is when you were doing your entire college process and then when you decided that you were coming, you're going to come to Notre Dame, like when you're still a senior in high school, what did you expect when you were going to come to Notre Dame, as Notre Dame exists as a PWI or a predominantly white institution?

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Well, Tajae, I did expect to be the only person of color or the only black student or the only black woman in my classes. So obviously, being from Miami, Florida, like there's a lot of diversity down there, but specifically my high school was definitely predominately Hispanic, and so I have experienced being the minority before, and so I've kind of already navigated what it means to be minority and just going through high school just kind of with friends, but also kind of doing my own thing, and so I kind of knew like what I would be getting into.

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And this time, maybe instead of Hispanics now maybe just more, Caucasians, I expected that, but it was fine and honestly coming here like, there is some diversity, but there is also always room to grow. And then I also expected to not really connect with non-people of color with like specifically like the black experience, like hair products, and oh, like, got to wash day and like, "Oh, what's my curl pattern?" and all of this from all of those different types of things. But I think that it makes my experience here unique, and yeah, that's what I kind of expected. What about you?

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Yeah, same here. Because once again, we have that kind of similar background to being from practically the same area in Florida, and my high school is really diverse. So I knew, essentially, what I was coming into at Notre Dame because I knew the racial and ethnic composition was going to be a bit different here. So in high school, there was a lot of students are coming from similar backgrounds as myself, more low income, first generation American students, so I knew coming to Notre Dame, I wasn't necessarily going to get that same experience, so I definitely kind of had worries where I was like, "How am I going to connect with other students? Even other students of color?", because we're all coming from such different backgrounds all over the country, all over the world? So I was worried and I and partially I didn't know what I was going to expect.

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I expected something different, but I didn't really know how different it was going to be, so there was really this unknown going into my freshman year that online really can't tell you that you can't really look at a website and say, How is this experience going to match up to your high school experience because everyone has like such like different life experiences and backgrounds that got them here.

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So now we're going to move on to our next question, I really loved hearing what you had to say for the first one, but now so what has your academic and social experience been like being a black student at Notre Dame so you can talk about academics first and then go into social? Or if you want to talk about social first, it's really up to you.

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Yeah, definitely. So academically, I am the only like black woman in my computer science classes specifically. And so freshman year going through all those engineering classes would be maybe one of three black women in my classes. And so that can be hard sometimes because sometimes you just want to look up someone and just kind of have that understanding. But again, it just makes my experience unique. And then it also pushes me to work harder and say, OK, like, I'm going to do me and I'm just going to just try my best and do whatever I can to pass my classes and to do well.

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So that's mainly on the academic side and socially, since there are not a lot of black students in general, in my engineering specific classes, I definitely have to go out of the way sometimes to meet other black students like going to club events or going to school events, which we'll talk about like a next question. But just kind of meeting other black students through other social clubs, there's also, again, so many different types of students at Notre Dame, other people of color like Native Americans and Hispanics, and so also like getting to know them and talking to them, through my classes and everything has also like shaped my experience in a way. So, yeah, overall, the experience is like sometimes you feel alone, but I know that, even like my roommates in my some of my professors, they have my back and I know that I got this I was made to I was admitted to this school for a reason, and so, yeah, like, I'm going to do the best that I can, and that's all you can do.

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No, that is so great to hear. And it's great to see that even like in different colleges, we're still like being able to, like, carve our spaces out and realize exactly why we belong here at the University. And I think this situation is kind of similar with me. I'm in the College of Business, where there are some times where I walk into a class and I will be the only woman of color there or the even the only student of color there. And that's not to say that black students aren't majoring in computer science, we're not majoring in engineering or business, it's just saying that there are fewer black students here at Notre Dame and we're just spread over the many, many majors that the university offers. So unfortunately, that means sometimes you might be the only person in one of these like engineering specific classes or a marketing specific class. But that doesn't mean that black students aren't majoring in those majors.

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But yeah, academically, it's just kind of fighting imposter syndrome sometimes and trying to like make sure that we, as you were saying, we got into this university for a reason we deserve our spot here, we're smart, wonderful women and students, so it's just like getting into the groove of things.

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You get comfortable and it's just a learning experience like throughout. And then similarly, socially, it's just kind of taking out that time to carve out and making sure I want to interact with all sorts of people, whether no matter of race, ethnicity, where people are coming from and just like kind of meeting as many people as I can. And as you were saying, we're going to kind of talk more about kind of these cultural clubs on campus where how black students are able to gather and we kind of bring our diverse experiences from back home and the different majors that we're in here at the University.

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All right. So let's get into some of the resources here. What are some of the resources that you like have found in your experience that you think have helped black students navigate Notre Dame's campus?

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Yeah. And so I'm going to kind of bring up two things. And so one is the MSPs and that stands for the Multicultural Student Programs and Services. And so they have a lot of faculty members, a lot of them are black and people of color that really aid in any way possible. So for me in particular, I talked to one of the faculty members and then he was able to get me a tutor for my physics class because engineering that that stuff is hard sometimes. So sometimes and definitely don't be afraid to ask for help when you need it. I definitely do.

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And so again, that like program really like helps me get a tutor. And then they also have programming events pretty much like every weekend they'll put on a movie talking about race or just like, have some sort of event where people can come together and like talk about things going on on campus. And so I really think that they have great services and great program. So definitely about I would recommend anyone really reaching out to them and getting any help that they can.

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And then also the social clubs where you can meet other students that look like you. And so I'm in the Shades of Ebony Club, which is again a social club specifically for black women. They also have a lot of events over the semester, just meeting other black women and getting experiences and going ice skating or getting a meal, and there's just so many different fun things to. And then Wabruda is the male version of that, so for the black men, they kind of do the same thing, and then also want to mention the BSA, which is the Black Student Association. There's also lots of events and programming with them and then the BBAND, which stands for the Black Business Association at Notre Dame. So pretty much whatever you're going to be doing, there's a club out there for you and there's people that will have your back.

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Yeah, BBAND is actually the Black Business Association at Notre Dame. And I just wanted to clarify that real quick BSA is the Black Student Association. It's a lot of it is a lot of acronyms. As I realized, the one thing that they really didn't prepare me for college was how many acronyms they were going to be, and keeping those acronyms straight is insanely difficult. But yeah, and then all of these, like great clubs at Savannah had brought up, they're really for anyone, like anyone can join. Like, you don't just have to be black just to join. It's for everyone just meeting new people who want to learn new things and interact with new people.

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All are welcome. And I think that's any club on campus, really. So just once again, great organizations. Another one, not really a club, but the Balfour-Hesburgh scholars program. I'm Balfour-Hesburgh scholar, and it's a program that's for minority students or low income students. You're invited to apply before you enter into your first year after you've been accepted into the University. So, yeah, that was like a great source of people coming from different backgrounds, even some similar backgrounds to myself where I was able to kind of make new friends.

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And then from when I made friends with them, they introduced me to their friends across campus, or like their freshman year roommates, so I was just meeting so many new people and making so many new connections. You start one place and you end up like in a completely other one and you meet so many great people. I've been having such a great time. I can't believe we're already to our closing question.

Savannah has been such an amazing guest so far. And so to close out, what has your and the experience given you so far, do you think?

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Yeah. So as a current sophomore, again, I came into Notre Dame in the peak of COVID, with masking everywhere, and just really limiting ourselves, but I really feel like I already have gotten like a great ND experience, like I'm challenged again academically and I feel like I'm constantly pushing myself and also, like everywhere I go, I feel like I'm doing like something for the greater good, and being a part of service clubs and just getting to know the people in my dorm, and there's just so much to the ND experience.

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And like, I really feel like I get my personal experience just has been like pretty great so far. And like just my favorite part about ND is how challenging it is because I think it's good to be challenged, and it's good to use your mind and to just really put in the work, but also it's like so fun and like football games and hanging out with roommates and going to like dorm events and going to Mass. All of these different things, like everyone's ND experience again is their own and everyone's is valid.

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And for my own experience, it's just been great so far. I'm looking forward to the next two years. And yeah, again, there's so many great things about ND, always room for improvement, always room to grow, and so I'm excited to see what else Notre Dame has to offer for other students. And yeah, I'm pretty good, pretty good time so far. What about you Tajae?

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Yeah, that was great to hear, Savannah. Before I even say my response, I heard you mentioned football and a quick shout out to Savannah. Savannah is on the band. Savannah, you have to tell them what instrument you play. I know this is like not on necessarily the topic, but I think we have to talk about it for a second.

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Yes, I'm in the marching band. I play the clarinet. It's been super fun. I definitely recommend if you're in the marching band, in high school or if you're kind of interested in learning an instrument like it's so much fun, all the different sections and we travel with the football team, hopefully go to bowl games. We didn't go these past couple of years, but all for safety and everything, but football and sports is such a big part of Notre Dame. And so if you love that, you'll really dive right into it. And even if you don't love it there's other clubs and sports out there for you to get involved in. But yeah, definitely shout out to the marching band, love football, love it all.

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No, that's great to say. And as you were saying, there really is something here for everyone. And that's what I've like gone from my Notre Dame experience because while I might not be the biggest football fan, I definitely go in and participate in all the fanfare. There really is so many different avenues where I've been able to meet different friends and then just really once again make these like great connections you hear about that are going to last forever and you find your people. And as you were saying earlier, Savannah, even though those people may not look like you or come from similar backgrounds, you're going to find your "home under the dome," as they say, where you just meet the people who really make

this experience your a unique and the experience, and I think that's what it's given me, and that's like my favorite part and what I'm most grateful for.

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So, Savannah, once again, thank you so much for coming on to the first episode of the new season of College Bound. It was amazing having you here. Can't wait to see you in person on Tuesday for our meeting. But do you have any closing thoughts you want to add?

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So yeah, this has been a great episode again. Thanks Tajae, for having me on. I'm happy I was able to share my experience. And then again, once you guys come to Notre Dame wink-wink, you will have your own experience and the pros and cons, ups and downs, but overall, again, this has been a great time and a great college experience so far. And yeah, I've loved being on here and talking about my stuff, so it's been great. Thanks for having me.

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All right. Thank you again so much, Savannah. It was truly great, and thank you all so much for listening. And please stay tuned for all the new episodes of the new season of College Bound, and please don't forget to follow us and check us out on our social media accounts. We are @NDadmissions on Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. I hope I got all of them down. We have a nice big portfolio, so please check us out and have a great rest of your week.