



BLACK EXCELLENCE ALUMNI NETWORK

Jabari Spruill '96

Jabari Spruill '96 is a distinguished alumnus of Porter-Gaud School in Charleston, South Carolina. His journey at Porter-Gaud was filled with rich experiences and a strong academic foundation that set him up for future success.

Raised by his single mother in Columbia, South Carolina, Jabari's early years were marked by frequent moves due to his mother's education and career. These moves included stints in Nashville, Tennessee, and Marion, South Carolina, before they finally settled in Charleston. Jabari attended public school in Charleston before transitioning to James Simmons, a predominantly Black Catholic school, and eventually to Porter-Gaud School in eighth grade.

At Porter-Gaud, Jabari was the only Black student in his class from eighth grade until graduation, which presented social and academic challenges. However, he found support and inspiration from teachers like Vaughan Mazursky, his eighth-grade geography teacher, who played a pivotal role in his educational journey. Vaughan Mazursky was the first teacher who truly saw Jabari's potential and inspired him to excel. This connection was significant, highlighting the importance of representation and mentorship in education.

Academically, Jabari excelled in history and physics, his favorite subjects. His passion for learning was ignited by teachers like Dr. Laughner and Dr. Slayton, who challenged and supported him throughout high school.

Outside the classroom, Jabari was highly involved in extracurricular activities. He participated in basketball and football, forming lasting connections with his teammates and coaches. His involvement in these activities showcased his dedication and leadership skills. Jabari had a memorable experience when he bumped into an old coach who had coached against him. The coach remembered Jabari's key play that helped win a state championship, saying, "I remember looking at the film and being like, you know, Who is this kid?"

Jabari's journey at Porter-Gaud prepared him well for his undergraduate studies at Oberlin College. He initially majored in biology before switching to African American studies, finding a diverse and inclusive environment that contrasted with his high school experience. At Oberlin, he participated in football and track, further developing his athletic and academic skills.

After graduating from Oberlin, Jabari embarked on a successful career as an Independent School Administrator. At every school where Jabari has worked, he has been committed to helping others feel accepted, loved, and respected, drawing on his own experiences to support and mentor students. Notably, he had the opportunity to mentor Samantha German '10, who went on to become a successful journalist in Mississippi.

Jabari's journey is also marked by personal resilience and a deep connection to his family. He speaks fondly of his mother, Ida Lakisha Johnson Spruill, who was a significant influence in his life and career. Her legacy continues to inspire Jabari in his work and personal life. Additionally, Jabari's son is following in his footsteps, attending an independent school and experiencing a similar educational environment.

Jabari's journey is a testament to the strong foundation provided by Porter-Gaud School. The school's commitment to academic excellence, diverse extracurricular opportunities, and supportive teachers played a crucial role in shaping him into the accomplished Black educator and advocate for belonging that he is today. His experiences as the only Black student in his class, coupled with the mentorship and representation he received, have empowered him to champion equity and belonging in his professional life.