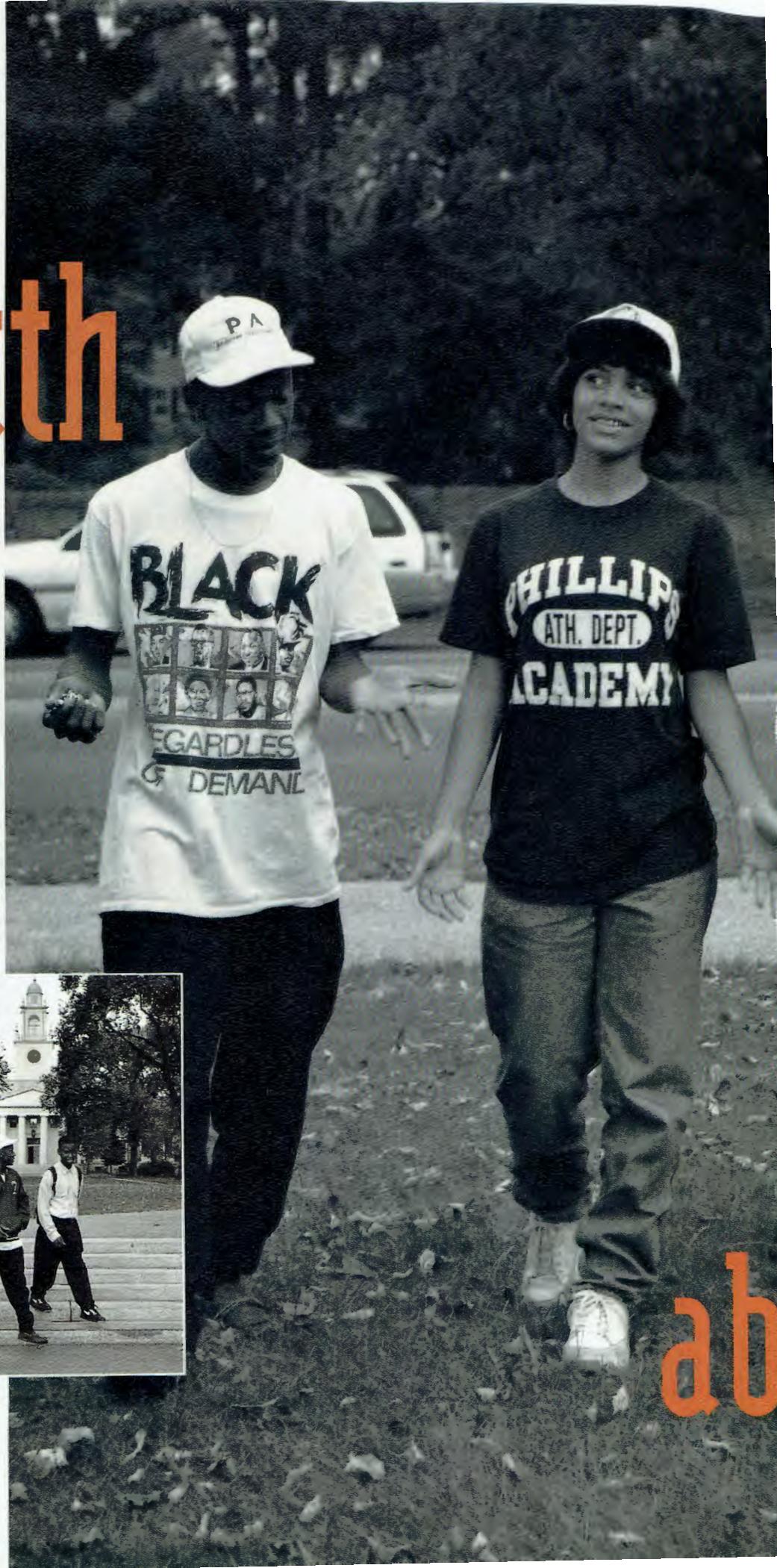


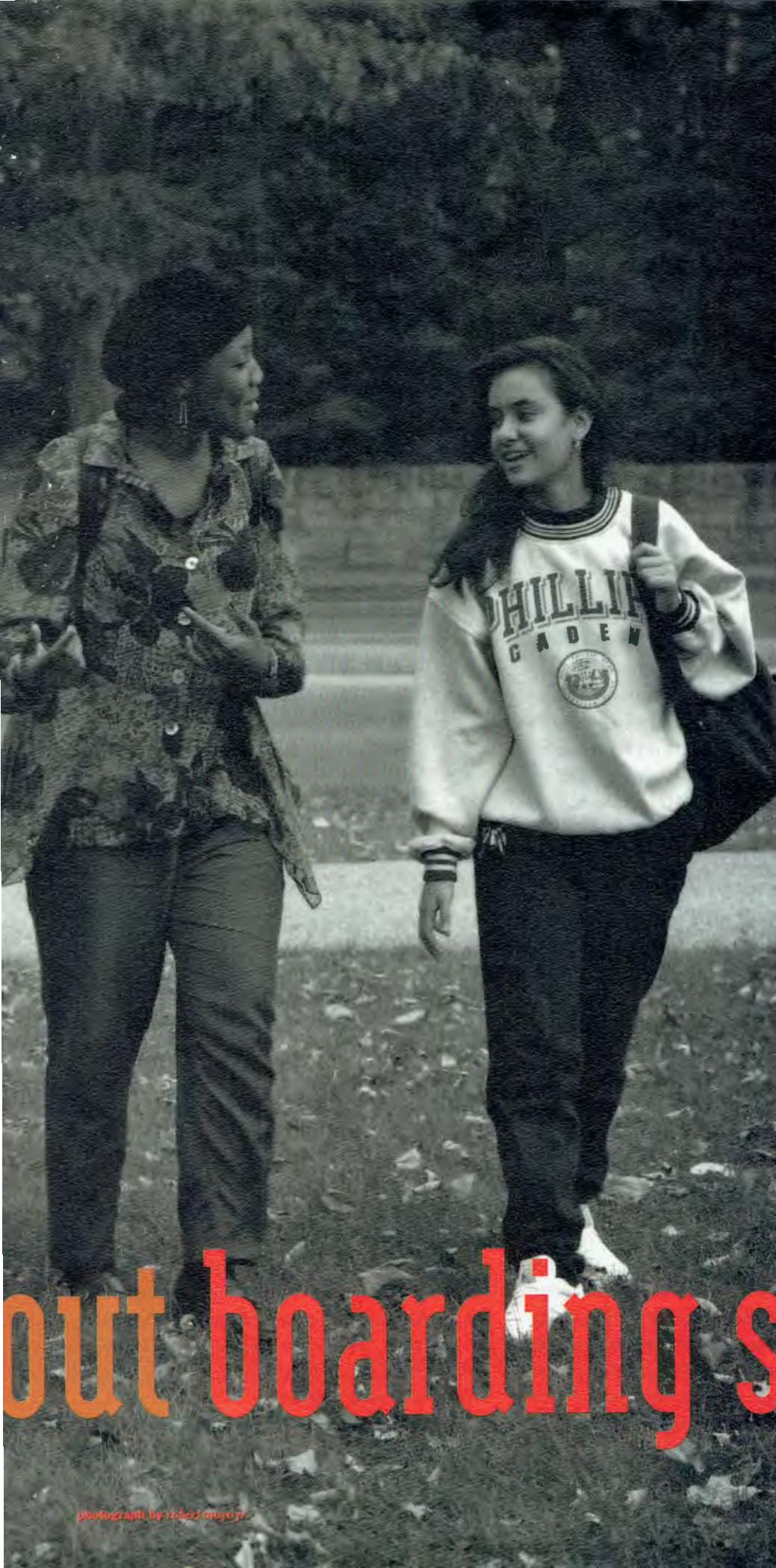
the truth

Ever thought about going to boarding school? When I was in ninth grade, my cousin was accepted to Phillips Academy in Massachusetts. I went to visit her for a weekend and was floored by the set-up. She was in a dorm room. It could have been a closet for all I cared, just the fact that she was chilling away from home (read: no parents) with two roommates. It seemed like every type of class or sport was offered. She didn't have to wear a uniform and check this: guys went to this school! I was hooked. I was singing the school anthem until my parents hit me with a reality check—too expensive. Needless to say, I finished my education in public school. But, believe it or not, many students and their parents are choosing boarding schools over public schools. Their reasons vary. Some want to escape failing public school systems of the “hood” or a bad home life. Others just want to get out of the city and try a new experience. After all, Tootie did make it look like fun at Eastland in the *Facts of Life*.



by sibylla nash

ab



According to Margaret Goldsborough at the National Association of Independent Schools, during the 1992-'93 school year, 2,565 African American students out of a total of 41,593 boarding students were enrolled in the nation's 265 boarding schools. Minority students—Hispanics, Asian Americans, African Americans and Native Americans—currently make up 23.8 percent of the total boarding school enrollment, Goldsborough says. Ten years ago, in 1982-'83, minority enrollment was only 10.8 percent, she says. Boarding schools offer plenty of advantages over public schools—the classes are much smaller, the work more challenging and most graduates go on to attend prestigious four-year colleges.

But what type of boarding school is right for you? There are all-girls schools, all-boys schools, coed schools, all-Black schools and predominately White schools. There are organizations that will help you prepare to get into boarding schools and offer financial, academic and emotional support once you are in. A Better Chance Inc., based in Boston, Massachusetts, and Prep for Prep, based in New York City, are two organizations that help African American students get in and stay in the schools. They walk you through the application process and help you prepare for the Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT), an entrance exam similar to the SATs used by independent (private) schools to screen candidates. These organizations also

out boarding schools

the truth about boarding school

continued from page 84

make it in the world. You deal with being a woman and a minority. All kinds of doors are open to us, including meeting many college recruiters. They put us in touch with different resources. Being here has taught me that if I put my mind to something, I can accomplish anything. My advice to



tiffany james, student at phillips academy, standing right.

prospective boarding school students is to be yourself, no matter what. If you try to turn yourself into them [White people], it's not going to work out. I've seen Blacks and Hispanics come here and change themselves, and it's hard for anyone to accept them. I know people who come here and they tell other people, "Oh, yes, I have a summer house," knowing they came from the city and don't have one. People lose respect for you when you try and be something you're not.

Gabe Rein, 11th grade, Salisbury School, Salisbury, Connecticut. Gabe is from Herndon, Virginia, and wants to major in business or pre-med when he goes to college. Salisbury is an all-male school.

The public school I went to had around 30 kids in a class, and it was cool. It wasn't a bad school, but the teachers didn't make you focus on your books. They didn't make it challenging. I wasn't doing badly in class, it was just that after school I was hanging out, running with the wrong group of kids. My parents were interested in finding alternatives for me, something that would keep me out of

photograph by tim morse

trouble and help me focus on my books. Boarding school is more disciplined.

It's been hard, but it's been a good experience. I have times when I call home and say I don't want to go here anymore. But there are just some times when I feel like the teachers here don't really want to get to know you.

There are only seven other Black guys here, but everyone is pretty cool. I have a hectic schedule—there's barely any free time because there is so much schoolwork. I do play on the school basketball team. Salisbury keeps your mind on the books. I'm grateful for the opportunity to get a good education. I have a scholarship that pays for more than half my > page 97

If you want to make the move to boarding school, here are a few places that will point you in the right direction:

A Better Chance Inc.
419 Boylston Street
Boston, MA 02116
617-421-0950

ABC places and funds motivated and talented African American students in private day and boarding schools. Services are free.

Institute for Independent Education
1313 North Capitol Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
202-745-0500

Offers reports, newsletters and other information on independent schools.

National Association of Independent Schools
1620 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-973-9700

Toll-free number for families of color to call for information is 800-343-9138. Also, to receive a free directory of the nation's boarding schools, call 1-800-541-5908.

Prep For Prep
163 West 91st Street
New York, NY 10024
212-769-4310

This organization offers a rigorous 14-month course and weekend study including intensive summer sessions for New York City seventh and eighth graders.

—s.n.

organizations to help you get there and stay there

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the truth about boarding schools

continued from 95

expenses. I think this experience will help me find my real potential because I'm studying a lot more and I get my work done. Attending this school has given me a better attitude. I've learned there are other things in life I can accomplish: I can go to college, get a good job. My advice to prospective students is to visit the schools to find out as much as you can beforehand. If there are any Black students, ask them about the treatment of minority students to see what it's really like.

Tiffany James, 11th grade, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. Tiffany is from Staten Island, New York, and hopes to major in either science or math in college. Phillips Academy is a coed school.

I went to a public school that was 90 percent Black and I was at the top of my class. I chose boarding school because of the high level of education I would receive. I also wanted to see what it would be like to live outside of New York City.

At first, I thought it was a great thing—independence was exciting. But as the years go on, the work piles up, and there's no time for relationships or friends. People here tend to form friendships with people they relate to most. And there was this one Black girl who had a clique of girls who took the stance that they didn't like any of the other Black students. They felt they didn't fit in because they didn't wear Cross Colours and listen to the same kind of music. We had a counselor come in and talk to all of the Black students to clear the air.

There's also tension on the campus because of unspoken racial issues. I'm on the board of the Afro-Latino Society. We have social functions and group discussions to try to learn things about one another, city life and how we feel as students of color. Recently, things have begun to improve. The chief of admissions is Black, and more Blacks are coming to the school. There's also a push by the administration to serve our needs.

To go to boarding school you have to realize that sacrifices are going to be made, and you have to be ready to make them. I feel that going to boarding school has given me a jump start for college. I've already been through the homesickness, and I'm prepared for the heavy course load. At Phillips, we all consider ourselves the leaders of tomorrow.

Coming back to the community is hard, not because of the immersion in White culture, but because of being so far away from people you're close to. I've never really pinpointed my goals, but I do know that I want to give back to the community because of the sacrifices that were made to send me here. I want to give others the opportunity I was given. ☺

SIBYLLA NASH, a junior at the University of Southern California, in Los Angeles, still wishes she had gone to boarding school.

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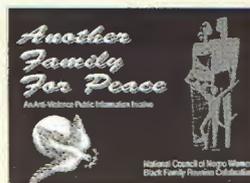


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So what's the scoop on being young, gifted and Black in a boarding school? The truth is it definitely isn't easy. Most students agree that it takes a bit of getting used to and that strong family support is needed. Check these stories.

Shomari Andrews, 11th grade, Piney Woods Country Life School, Piney Woods, Mississippi. Shomari is from Brooklyn, New York, and plans to major in music education in college. Piney Woods is an all-Black, coed school that helps high-risk teens.

At Piney Woods, you don't have to worry about watching your back, you don't have to pretend to be hard for protection because everyone is about education there. And people are friendly, even if they don't know you. When I went to public school in New York City, I was cutting classes, hanging out

with the wrong crowd and I still made a 75 (grade average) with virtually no class participation. Here, I can't cut class because the school is so small. Class sizes typically range from three to 21 students.

The teachers here are outstanding. They are all Black, and most of them live on campus. Whether it's staying after class to help or pushing you to do your best, the teachers really go that extra mile for you because they all expect you to excel to the best of your ability. The president gives you \$50 if you make all A's on your report card—which isn't easy. Each class lasts two hours a day, and they are not coed, so we can focus on our books. After choir practice, I spend two to three hours a night on homework. Some teachers give a lot of homework. My dad made me join the choir, but I really like it. We traveled a lot with the choir and we won almost every competition in our division. I sang first tenor. Next year, I want to play basketball or run track. At Piney Woods, they have a work-study pro-

"the first year was rough... the school work is a big leap. it's like going to college"
-malika moore, emma willard school

gram which cuts down the cost of tuition. I worked on the farm. And I will never forget that experience! I had to cut grass and feed the pigs.

The students here are all right. Of course, you have your little groups who are up to no good. Usually they are here because their parents forced them to come. But for the most part, everyone is really nice and helpful. Kids are from all over—Detroit, Chicago, California. And Piney Woods is really strict. People get kicked out of school for fighting, having sex, gambling, disrespecting teachers or dorm masters and getting pregnant. On weekends, we can watch a movie in the rec room, just socialize or

attend a school-sponsored dance. On Sunday, we go to church. We have study hour from 7 to 9 at night every Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. We have to stay in our rooms and study. I had a rocky start at first. When I came to Piney Woods, I had a 2.0 grade point average, now I have a 2.9. And this is my first semester here.

Malika Moore, 11th grade, Emma Willard School, Troy, New York. Malika is from Schenectady, New York, and may major in accounting, advertising or fine arts when she goes to college. Emma Willard is an all-female school.

My dad told me about boarding schools. I was going to a public school, and I think public schools are limited. My high school was too social. It wasn't the type of place you could say, "I'm going to get my work done" because there were always people concentrating on doing everything but work. We visited Emma Willard, and I didn't need to look any further. The campus was beautiful, and the people were friendly.

The first year was rough; I was coming from the city, and I wasn't used to a lot of the rules. The school work is a big leap. It's like going to college. I didn't do well academically my first year, but this year, I'm doing better. Making friends was the easiest part for me 'cause I'm a very outgoing person. On weekends, the Weekend Committee plans trips to the mall, dinner, roller/ice skating or the movies. You also get the chance to know people outside of Emma Willard.

But the main benefit is my education, and it goes beyond academics. You learn how to > page 95

The seven historically Black/Latino boarding schools in the U.S are:

Chinquapin School
 2615 E. Wallisville
 Highlands, TX 77562
 713-426-5551

Christ Temple Academy
 P.O. Box 5401
 Meridian, MS 39301
 1-800-558-9783

Laurinburg Institute
 P.O. Box 1575
 Laurinburg, NC 28352
 910-276-0884

Pine Forge Academy
 P.O. Box 338
 Pine Forge, PA 19548

Piney Woods Country Life School
 Highway 49
 South Piney Woods, MS 39148

Redemption Christian Academy
 192 Ninth Street
 Troy, NY 12180
 518-272-6679

Southern Normal School
 P.O. Box 408
 Brewton, AL 36427
 205-867-4831