



McCLAURIN SOLUTIONS **Where Ideas and Creativity Merge**

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DR. IRMA McCLAURIN, GRINNELL COLLEGE ALUMNA, IN FILM ON EDUCATION REFORM AND 1968 YALE SUMMER HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM DISTRIBUTED FREE IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

Dr. Irma McClaurin, a consultant and Grinnell College alum, is one of the people featured in a new documentary on the defunct Yale Summer High School. At a time when the country is erupting with concern about education reform, school success, and the growing Achievement Gap, “Walk Right In, The Story of Yale Summer High School,” tells a story of education reform success. McClaurin is the former President of Shaw University, a past Associate VP at the University of Minnesota and the Founding Executive Director of the first Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center in North Minneapolis, the Culture and Education Editor for Insight News of Minneapolis, and a former tenured professor at the University of Florida and the University of Minnesota.

In the summer of 1968, a group of 110 boys and 30 girls (the first women to attend Yale before it was officially co-ed) from America’s inner city, rural areas, and Reservations gathered at the Yale University Divinity School to participate in an educational experiment based on a curriculum of “Great American Books” that included The American Constitution, Native Son, Antigone, and The Communist Manifesto. Although the New Haven newspapers described the White, Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Indian American, and Asian American students as “underachievers,” no one told them they weren’t supposed to excel. The majority did so at YSHS and afterwards.

Dr. McClaurin’s story is particularly telling. She grew up in the projects of Chicago with a single mom from the age of eight years old. Her father had a second grade education and her mother had dropped out of high school. Schooled in the residentially segregated educational system of Chicago, Dr. McClaurin attended an all-girls vocational high school and trained to become a secretary. She worked her way through school as a legal secretary and took college prep classes, encouraged by teachers, and not discouraged by family who had never attended college.

McClaurin, along with the late Tonda Woolfolk, left Chicago for New Haven in the summer of 1968, following the riots triggered by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She had been selected by Mundelein College (now closed) Upward Bound Program to participate in the Yale Summer High School. The curriculum, though experimental, was rooted in a diverse selection of “Great American Books” and offered youth often classified as high potential, but “underachievers a unique learning experience.

Larry Paros, the YSHS director from 1967-68, documents the impact of this transformational summer in a film completed with his own funds. He is giving away FREE copies in February and March (www.walkrightinthemovie.com) to spark a new conversation on Education Reform. YSHS shows what is possible. Those who receive the film are asked to post their screening dates and comments/reviews on the film’s website and Facebook page. Also, the film was accepted by Culture Unplugged for free streaming on its website: (<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/11452/Walk-Right-In>).

Contact: McClaurin Solutions, Media Relations: [mcclaurinsolutions@gmail.com/](mailto:mcclaurinsolutions@gmail.com) @mcclaurintweets