

## Reflections from the Class of 1998

**By Désirée Hartson Gold and Sandra Sohne-Johnston**

Do you remember where you were when you learned that Nelson Mandela had been elected the first black President of South Africa or that Princess Diana had been killed in a car crash? We learned that even though life is fleeting, one person can have a profound impact on the world.

Do you remember how you felt when OJ Simpson was accused of murdering Nicole Simpson? Although we were deeply divided as a community we found the space to argue vigorously about race in America. One of the most important lessons came from Forrest Gump who taught us that complicated matters sometimes aren't that complicated after all.

We probably don't remember as clearly every single class we took, or the conversations we had in the Common Ground or in the dorms. We've forgotten which exams we studied for and the countless papers we researched and wrote. Yet, those everyday moments defined our character just as much as, and in some cases more than, important world events. As we watched what was happening in the world, as we laughed with singer/songwriter Billy Joel, listened to author/activist bell hooks, and politician John Major, studied for the MCATs, or were recognized for an accomplishment, we resolved to become better doctors, lawyers, educators, parents, accountants, and more. We were compelled to make a mark at F&M and in the world. At our 15<sup>th</sup> year reunion, we can celebrate what we have achieved and can look forward to how much more we have to accomplish knowing that F&M gave us a solid foundation.

## **Reflections from the Class of 1998 Extended Version**

**By Désirée Hartson Gold and Sandra Sohne-Johnston**

Do you remember where you were when you learned that Nelson Mandela had been elected the first black President of South Africa, that Princess Diana had been killed in a car crash, or when news broke that Dolly the Sheep had been the first mammal ever cloned? We learned that even though life is fleeting, one person can have a profound impact on the world and that the impossible was possible. As a result, we became champions of the underdog and volunteered countless hours of service through events such as Our Neighbors, Ourselves.

Do you remember how you felt when OJ Simpson was accused of murdering Nicole Simpson and was later found innocent? Even though we were deeply divided as a community we found the space to argue vigorously about race in America. One of the most important lessons came from Forrest Gump who taught us that complicated matters sometimes aren't that complicated after all. We learned to support each other at sporting events and became brothers and sisters in a variety of fraternities and sororities.

We probably don't remember as clearly every single class we took, the first person we met on campus, how much we earned from our campus jobs, the conversations we had in the Common Ground or in the dorms. We've forgotten which exams we studied for and the countless papers we researched and wrote, the number of times we rewrote our senior thesis, which neighborhood we cleaned up during Our Neighbors, Ourselves or who sat on either side of us at convocation or commencement. Yet, those everyday moments on campus defined our character just as much as, and in some cases more than, important world events. These moments taught us to become critical thinkers and leaders, allowed us to feel compassion for others, to celebrate personal accomplishments and to weather difficult times. As we watched what was happening in the world, as we laughed with singer/songwriter Billy Joel, listened to author/activist bell hooks, and politician John Major, studied for the MCATs, selected our majors, found an internship or were recognized for an accomplishment, we resolved to become better doctors, lawyers, educators, parents, accountants, and more. We were compelled to make a mark at F&M and in the world. At our 15<sup>th</sup> year reunion, we can celebrate what we have achieved and can look forward to how much more we have to accomplish knowing that F&M gave us a solid foundation.