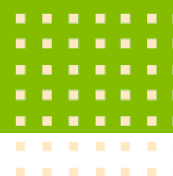




## Viewpoints

# Inspirational Stories From Foster Youth Who Overcame Challenges to Pursue College Dreams



Foster youth face a myriad of challenges in pursuing higher education, many of which stem from the instability and trauma often associated with the foster care system. One significant obstacle is the frequent school changes that disrupt their education, leading to gaps in knowledge and a lack of continuity in academic progress. These disruptions can result in lower academic achievement and diminished college readiness. Additionally, foster youth often lack a stable support network, making it difficult to navigate the complexities of the college application process, secure financial aid, and find housing. Without the guidance and encouragement that many of their peers receive from parents or guardians, foster youth are at a considerable disadvantage when it comes to preparing for and transitioning to college life.

Another critical challenge is the emotional and psychological toll of being in foster care. Many foster youth have experienced trauma, abuse, or neglect, leading to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD. These conditions can significantly impact their ability to focus on academics and maintain the resilience needed to succeed in college. Furthermore, the lack of a permanent family support system means that foster youth often face financial instability, making it difficult to afford tuition, textbooks, and other college-related expenses. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes providing targeted academic support, mental health services, and financial assistance tailored to the unique needs of foster youth. By implementing comprehensive support programs, colleges and policymakers can help foster youth overcome these barriers and achieve their full potential in higher education.

**Foster youth are seldom top-of-mind in efforts to promote broader college access, but many would aspire to attend and have the skills to thrive there, argues Royel M. Johnson, a tenured professor in the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California, in his forthcoming book.**

**The book, “From Foster Care to College: Navigating Educational Challenges and Creating Possibilities,” features the stories of 49 current and former foster youth nationwide who have enrolled in college, often by relying on the skills they gained while navigating the foster system.**



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