

Life *After* High School

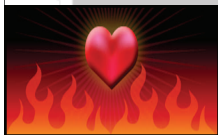
September 2010

Welcome to another issue of *Life After High School*, an e-Newsletter for high school students filled with personal stories written by young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 about their life *after high school*.

What you think you know and the reality about what life may be like after high school may surprise you. We hope that you read all of the stories and that at least one, if not all of them, will help you think differently about your future.

If you like what you read, please tell your friends. If you received this copy from someone else, please sign up for your own at www.inreachinc.org.

INSIDE *Life After High School*



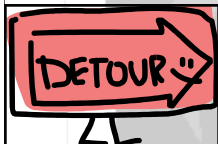
Follow Your Heart by Tanaya Gable



The 13th Grade??? by William Armstrong



Start Preparing Yourself Now! by Miasha Walters



Imperfection Makes for the Most Beautiful Outcomes by Courtney Proctor



IN REACH, INC.
Preparing Students For College, Work and Life

3102 63rd Place ■ Cheverly, MD 20785 ■ 301.789.7250
www.inreachinc.org ■ inreachcares@inreachinc.org



FOLLOW YOUR HEART

Tanaya Gable, 22, College Graduate - May 2010

There are two sides to every story. For every feeling or thought there is binary opposition. By the dawn of my life as undergrad college student, I had come to know these pairs all too well. Looking back at the four years I spent at Lincoln University, matriculating and evolving, I couldn't side completely with happiness or sadness. The time gone by is all a theory of relativity now, for time waits for no man and definitely no woman. The week prior to my graduation, I thought about the day I would walk across that stage and bellow into a new sea, a new chapter of life, and my mind was raced. I had crazy thoughts and feelings. Happiness—finally able to rid myself of the stress of crazy time management, irate professors, and the heap of other traditional college worries. But sadness I could not reject. I would be saying goodbye to a place that, for the most part, had been home for the past four years.

College is a particular type of lifestyle that can be blissful to the young and optimistic. I could not deny the beautiful relationships and friendship I had acquired over the years. Each person, had served a different purpose; some inspiring, some not, but all unique. And now, I was being ripped from this life I had come to love and know so well and was dashing straight towards something different, something new. No longer would I benefit from the immediate company of my favorite friends or the intense and exiting atmosphere that was college. I was torn. I knew exactly what I wanted to do after graduation. My passion for writing was what I decided would take me to the next chapter of my life. But getting to that point would be a journey. I suppose better planning and harder work would have landed me job or internship in my field subsequent to graduation. Unfortunately, I had not sealed that fate. Not feeling sorry for myself though, I am positive that the road I have chosen will take me where I need to be. And now I feel fresh. Similar to the gleaming feeling that once filled me as an entering freshman, I am at the dawn of a new day.

It is impossible for me to sum up all of what I have experienced during my time as an undergrad. The experience, the memories, the history—all carry much weight. My personal growth; however, being the heftiest. I have been blessed enough to seek and find answers and information that have served as essential tools of growth and development. When I think of what my life would have been like had I not decided to attend Lincoln, I can't imagine my life at all. Life reveals you to yourself and undoubtedly, goes on. Now I am harnessing all my energy and focus to cultivate both personal and financial stability for myself. My plans for the future are both hazy and clear. Although I understand the importance of planning and preparation, I have always believed that following the heart is essential to obtaining the souls happiness. I urge anyone considering the pursuit of higher education to follow their heart. There is no one path for each person. And while I have been blessed enough to have received an higher education, I am still faced with the hardships of living in a society with undeniable economic crisis and the journey to ensuring success for myself and my future is uneasy.

Within the past four years, I have learned so much. Perhaps more about myself than any area of interest. I have learned that procrastination is a disease that can eat away at you and how passion is the essential to progression. Life is one big road with lots of signs. The ones you choose to follow or detour from are up to you. With peace and willingness you are able to achieve anything, even the things you might not have had in mind to begin with.



The 13th Grade???

William Armstrong, 22, College Graduate—May 2010

The high school I attended had an obnoxious way of celebrating students going away to college. Morning announcements would always be cluttered with scrolling messages of who got accepted where, and what scholarships they received. The overly motivated Guidance counselors would advise for me to take control of my future, guiding me to send applications to three schools they knew I wouldn't get accepted to. By the end of the year, my graduation program would say that I would be attending "Community College of Baltimore County", or the more commonly referred "13th Grade."

To go to community college is considered a failure, and living at home was not something I was willing to subject myself to any longer. The recurring dream of a monotonous uniform yelling "paper or plastic" shook me to my core. I knew I had to find a college quick.

Life after high school is filled with changing people, places, and priorities. Those friends I could laugh with about what happened during lunch period would be the same friends I would have uncomfortable silences with when I came home from college. The places I was accustomed to in my hometown had come to resemble a playpen that I had outgrown. Priorities of getting a car, clothes, and the latest album were replaced by funding my future and a plan for getting to where I wanted to be as a person.

The scary three months after high school, my future was geared towards an Associate Degree in mediocrity. Community college was symbolic of my failures. It was my last resort. Going to a community college would mean that I was nothing more than average. Community College meant that the Universities I applied to did not want, or recognize me for any talents I had. Acceptance at Lincoln University would be my guiding light, no matter how dim it appeared. Now that I am preparing for graduation, I find myself going through the same cycle, I am uncertain of where I will be, and what I will be doing after college. In my four years at Lincoln I have learned that I am nothing average, and a life of mediocrity is something I refuse to prescribe to.

Life after high school is just one of many standardized tests every teen has to take. The passageway is marked with uncertainty, and the pen is dipped in hope. Without a proper course in what to be prepared for, the odds are stacked against you. Some of your peers fail, and some of the scores get boasted on the morning announcements, making the life of someone who didn't quite make it, the motivation to strive for better.



Start Preparing Yourself NOW!

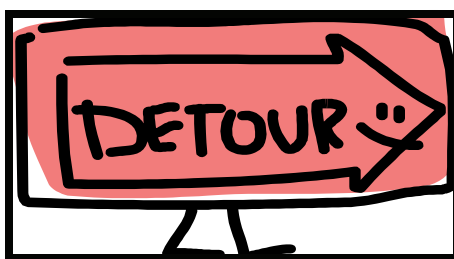
Miasha Walters, 20, college senior

Upon graduating from the Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) High School in Philadelphia, PA, I had pretty much figured out what I wanted to do with my life. I was going to college and I wanted to major in something that would put me closer to my dream of becoming a film director. My dream school was Hampton University in Virginia. Seeing as how they wanted me to pay \$40,000 in school loans, I decided to pass. Lincoln University had granted me a scholarship. It wasn't a full ride; but, paying only room and board was the closest I could get to it. So, that was it. I was going to Lincoln University and majoring in Mass Communications.

The road to Lincoln was not as easy as I thought. I caught senioritis my senior year at CAPA and my cumulative GPA lowered. Granted it only lowered to a 3.7 from a 3.9, but it was the principle. My counselor, Mrs. Thomas, was on my back about any and everything you could imagine. From college applications to senior activities to my GPA, I couldn't escape her. I decided then and there that I was going to take matters into my own hands. I was participating in all my senior activities. I was going to get accepted to all the colleges I applied to, and I was going to graduate. Today, I'm proud to say that I actually accomplished all of those goals.

The summer of 2007, I was supposed to be preparing myself to go away to school. But my mind was focused on more important things, or what I thought was important. I had a boyfriend who wasn't going to the same school as me and I wanted to spend as much time with him as I could. I had to stock up on supplies, clothes, and dorm gear for Lincoln. And, I had to still find a job so I could save up for school. In the end, I couldn't find a job, my relationship was on the rocks, and my father waited until August to take me college shopping. My summer was an eventful one, but I think it could've been more productive if I kept my priorities straight.

By the time I reached Lincoln University, I felt relieved. I was happy to get away from Philadelphia and I didn't have many worries. So I thought. During transition week, I had to gather all of my classes, make sure my financial aid was handled, and get used to having a stranger as a roommate. When classes finally started, I wasn't really prepared. I underestimated college courses and felt I could ease my way through my freshman year. I was wrong. The fun summer I had made me forget how school actually operated. If I could change anything about my summer, I wish I would have done something a little more stimulating than partying. Because of that, I went to Lincoln blind, or as my counselor Mrs. Thomas would say, "Eyes wide shut." I got too comfortable being at home with my mother to remind me about everything. All in all, it was a learning experience that forced me to remind myself that no one is responsible for my actions at college, except for me. College is a great learning experience. I just wished I was more prepared for it, academically and emotionally. My greatest advice to anyone going away to college is to start preparing yourself ahead of time. Save up, and study hard.



Imperfection Makes for the Most Beautiful Outcomes

Courtney Proctor, 20, college senior

Senior year of high school had been too perfect to leave behind the comfort and security that took years to build. My grades were more than decent; I had the perfect friends, perfect boyfriend, and my soon to be perfect university. Philadelphia University was my first choice because it was away from home but not too far. The city part of it was also appealing and it was close enough to New York, a city I always wanted to explore. I never once glided a pen across a college application, never typed a university/college in a Google search engine, and never opened up any kind of book to research majors – one of my biggest flaws to start my life after high school.

I spent all night looking at the stars and talking about the future with my then boyfriend who would be attending Temple University, 10 minutes away. The day I left to go to Philly, my dream of perfection had been clouded by a realization that things will no longer be the same. Tears dripped down one cheek behind the window of a car that saw a blurred male physique, a blurred whiff of perfection, watching me drift off towards the future. We would reunite a couple days later but as my thoughts of Maryland became more distant, anticipation, anxiety and a scary nervousness replaced breathes of air.

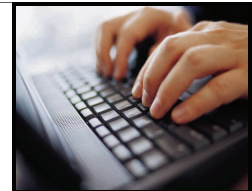
The first two things that come to mind as I reached my all girls dorm: the campus is beautiful and I seem to be the only brown person on my floor. I've gone to all white schools before but the comfort of another black person would have made me feel more at ease. I spent 3-5 days a week at Temple when I was not in class. I ended up making friends and losing all of them within a month because of my attachment to my boyfriend, my comfort. Within a little more than two months, I ended up losing my relationship with my boyfriend, my friends, and almost my sanity. I hated my roommates and my grades were trash by the end of my first semester. Drinking and smoking became my only safe haven from reality. In my sophomore and junior years, I became more and more frustrated with my major resulting in failed classes and loss of focus.

As a fourth year college student, I still couldn't tell you the best way of preparing for college aside from adequately researching schools, majors and assessing your personal interests. The rest is relative to your own personal attributes that may change or stay the same depending on the different situations that you may encounter. However, what I have learned and accepted is greater than any type of preparation I could have received. And without the hands-on experience along with decent morals and individual judgment, life after high school and college would be that much more difficult. So with that said if you must "prepare", prepare with the intentions that change and growth occurs simultaneously and shouldn't be classified as bad or negative but different.

I actually love Philly now and would love to stay a little longer. My comfort zone has definitely expanded but still has more room for growth. I've gained some of the truest friends and learned to tolerate my major enough to keep me striving for my own personal goals. College is a place where you really refine the person you will likely become as you get older. I can't say that I completely regret life after high school because I have learned that imperfection makes for the most beautiful outcomes.



Write for Life *After* High School



**Do you like what you have read?
Are you between the ages of 18 and 24, or know someone who is, with a story to tell?
In Reach is always looking for young people to share their stories. . .**

Meant to be inspirational and to encourage teens to consider their options, **Life *After* High School** highlights the differences between what the writers thought life would be like while they were in high school and the reality of what their lives are really like now. If you know a young person who would benefit from this type of insight, encourage her/him to sign up for future issues.

Interested in sharing your story? Send an email to tsmith@inreachinc.org with your name, email, telephone number and a brief description about your story. The more stories we have, the more frequently we will publish this periodical.

ABOUT IN REACH

Founded in December 1999, **IN REACH** is a youth-driven, community-focused 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, non-profit organization positioned to respond to the unmet developmental and academic needs of children and youth living in Prince George's County, Maryland.

IN REACH believes that students should always be *in reach* of a quality education, opportunities in their communities for development and, ultimately, their dreams. In order for **IN REACH** to be successful at helping all students reach this goal, we prepare them for college, work and life.

IN REACH fulfills its mission through a combination of efforts organized in three core strategic areas—advocacy, outreach and public engagement; direct services; and special initiatives—to:

- ◆ Engage students in academic-based opportunities and programs,
- ◆ Advocate for the improvement of all systems affecting children and youth particularly public education, and
- ◆ Create forums for interested parties serving children, youth and their families, to share in the exchange of ideas and information.

IN REACH envisions healthy, productive and prepared young adults in every family.





LIFE AFTER
HIGH SCHOOL