

Who are the Opportunity Scholars Bloggers?

[Angelica Robinson](#)

Hometown: New Orleans, LA

College/University attending: Dillard University



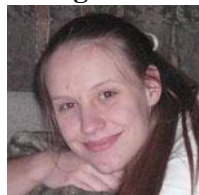
Having to rebuild her home at age 15 due to Hurricane Katrina showed Angelica that she had the strength to overcome any obstacle and at the same time nurtured her passion for writing as an outlet for the horrors she witnessed. She has chosen to stay in New Orleans to attend Dillard University where she plans to parlay her love of writing into a Mass Communications/Journalism major.

“My mother always told me that education is the only way out, so this [opportunity] will be a significant stepping stone towards my education at Dillard University, where I’ll be able to contribute to the university by sharing with those around me my life experiences and lessons learned through writing. I will share my experiences with others through my writing, and allow them to enter a world that is uniquely my own. Hopefully my writing will inspire and give others strength to continue fighting their wars and to find the courage to open up their world.”

[Ashley Roberts](#)

Hometown: St. Peter, MO

College/University attending: Illinois Wesleyan University



Following time in foster care and the tragic death of her guardian uncle from cancer, Ashley is putting herself through Illinois Wesleyan University, refusing to become a statistic like her alcoholic, drug addict mother and relishing the opportunity to further prove what she is capable of achieving.

“I have more of a want and need to go to college than anyone I know. I am putting myself through college and some are still telling me that I shouldn’t bother. I refuse to let that happen. I am not nor will I ever be a statistic. I have reached a point in my life where I have finally been given the chance to show that I am my own person. This is my opportunity to be who I am and show what I am capable of succeeding.”

[DaLonn Pearson](#)

Hometown: New Haven, CT

College/University attending: St. John’s University



DaLonn, an *A Better Chance* scholar, who moved away from home at the age of 15 to further educate himself and be the first in his family to graduate from high school, serves as an African-American role model for his younger siblings and other young children in his community by showing how his hard work has paid off as he starts his freshman year at St. John’s University.

“I have worked extremely hard to get to where I am now. I balance school, sports, and multiple jobs and I give back to my community by working with younger students. I have been the first in my family to graduate high school and move on to college. It’s more than just me, however. I am also representing my family. This makes me even more determined to achieve my goals, and I feel this [opportunity] will contribute to my success.”

[Duylam Nguyen-Ngo](#)

Hometown: Richmond, VA

College/University attending: Babson College



Despite growing up in a dangerous neighborhood, Duylam, a budding entrepreneur of Asian-American descent, is eager to pursue a business degree at Babson. He credits his single mother with inspiring him to be the first in his family to go to college.

“No one in my family ever went to college but I knew I wanted to set a precedent for my entire family.”

Jesse Sanchez

Hometown: San Diego, CA

College/University attending: Harvard University



Jesse, who aspires to be the first Latino mayor of San Diego, overcame the obstacles of poverty and gangs to go to Harvard as not only the first person in his family to attend college but also as a source of pride for his culture and community.

"Even though I dreamed of going to college, the negative social stigmas that resonate through my neighborhood almost led me to give up on that dream. I hope to be the role model that many of the students in my community lack. I want to prove that academic success is possible, no matter what obstacles one may face."

Joe Dingman

Hometown: Pueblo, CO

College/University attending: Occidental College



Aspiring politician Joe Dingman hails from Pueblo, CO and after serving as a delegate to The American Legion's Boy's Nation and working on numerous campaigns for prominent Federal, State, and Local lawmakers, he is excited to start Occidental College as the first in his family to go to college.

"I am tremendously fortunate to have beacons of support who made my college goals attainable. I know people live their entire lives for the realization of a college education."

Khadijah Williams

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

College/University attending: Harvard University



Never having had a stable place to live, Khadijah has made education her anchor and is thrilled to have achieved her dream of leaving Skid Row and attending Harvard. As a homeless student, she has a unique perspective on education and hopes to contribute to the improvement of urban schools.

"Because my mentors have shown kindness for me, I am committed to giving back in the same way. As an individual who has been through many setbacks and has succeeded despite obstacles, I understand what it takes to succeed. I am committed to passing on the knowledge and the tools for success to tomorrow's youth."

Lysa Vola

Hometown: Jensen Beach, FL

College/University attending: Williams College



Adopted at the age of five along with five of her siblings, Lysa has overcome many hardships including her dad becoming disabled, her parents' divorcing and filing bankruptcy, and the necessity to predominantly raise her younger sibling while juggling her academics and extracurricular activities. Despite these challenges, Lysa has excelled academically and is attending Williams College with the hope of one day becoming a pediatrician.

"I never pictured high end colleges to be affordable for my family. I always had the drive to succeed in reaching all of my goals; I just lacked the financial assistance in doing so."

Seanna Leath

Hometown: North Little Rock, AR

College/University attending: Pomona College



Originally from North Little Rock, AR, Seanna has traveled close to 2000 miles to attend Pomona College in California, where she plans to expand upon her love of science and medicine in her goal to improve her family's life as well as the condition of countless others.

"I feel the next step in advancing my life experience is my journey to college. While high school has set the foundation for my thirst in learning, college is the next phase: the sunrise on my horizon."

Tereza Ponce de Leon

Hometown: Saint Paul, MN

College/University attending: Augsburg College



When Tereza got pregnant in high school, she refused to let her pregnancy and the subsequent birth of her son hinder her pursuit of being the first among her family to go to college. She is excited to attend Augsburg and is ready to take on the challenge of balancing being both a young mother and a college student.

"When I got pregnant I could have taken the easy way out and switched to an alternative learning school for pregnant teens my senior year but I didn't. I'm proud of myself for how I was able to do well in school and didn't try to use having a baby as an excuse to do poorly. I knew that doing well in school would not only help me, but also my son. I used him as my motivation to work harder."