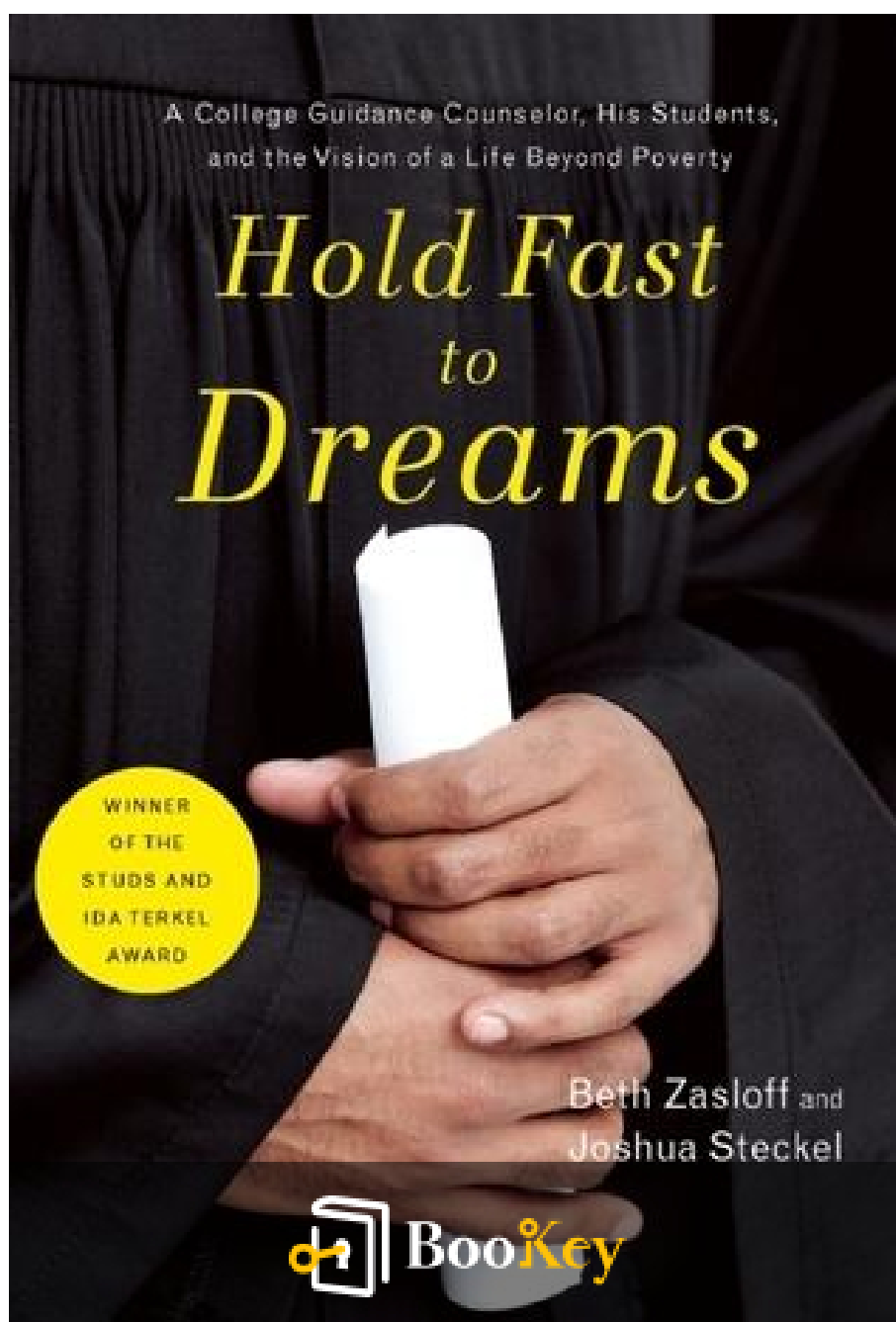


Hold Fast To Dreams PDF (Limited Copy)

Beth Zasloff



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Hold Fast To Dreams Summary

Transforming Futures: Navigating College Admissions for
Underserved Students

Written by New York Central Park Page Turners Books Club

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About the book

In "Getting In, Getting Out," Joshua Steckel recounts his transformative shift from being a college counselor at a private school to working in a public high school in Brooklyn, New York. This transition exposes him to the daunting realities faced by low-income students navigating the college admissions landscape. These students, often encumbered by the dual burdens of poverty and systemic neglect, grapple with a myriad of challenges that complicate their aspirations for higher education.

Steckel meticulously chronicles the journeys of ten distinctive students, each embodying the struggles and triumphs inherent in the pursuit of college. Through their experiences, he captures the intricate dynamics of college applications, revealing the societal barriers that frequently hinder marginalized populations. The students' narratives reflect not only their resilience but also challenge prevailing assumptions about the significance and accessibility of higher education.

As Steckel delves into their stories, he humanizes the distressing statistics regarding low college attendance and graduation rates among these students. Highlighting their perseverance and tenacity, he illustrates how a counselor's unwavering belief in a student's potential can ignite hope and foster change. Ultimately, the book underscores the transformative power of education and the vital role of support systems in helping students overcome

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obstacles, thereby painting a vivid portrait of the struggles and successes that characterize the college admissions process for those from underserved backgrounds.

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About the author

Summary of "Hold Fast to Dreams" by Beth Zasloff

In "Hold Fast to Dreams," Beth Zasloff weaves a rich tapestry of human experience, encapsulating the universal themes of resilience and hope. Through her exploration of various characters' lives, Zasloff illustrates how dreams shape identity and foster connections.

The narrative unfolds through a series of interlinked vignettes, each centered around different individuals navigating their own struggles and aspirations. Among these characters is Emily, a young aspiring artist grappling with self-doubt while trying to break out of her small-town confines. Her journey reflects the theme of perseverance, as she learns to embrace her creativity despite societal expectations.

Another pivotal character is James, a middle-aged teacher who faces the challenge of reinvention after his career takes an unexpected turn. Through James, Zasloff highlights the importance of adaptability and the pursuit of passion, even in the wake of adversity. His interactions with students illuminate the profound impact of mentorship, illustrating how guiding others can rekindle one's own dreams.

As the chapters progress, readers are introduced to a diverse cast, including

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an elderly woman named Marjorie, who reflects on her life choices and the dreams she once held dear. Her poignant recollections serve as a reminder of the significance of both fulfilled and unfulfilled aspirations in shaping one's legacy.

Zasloff skillfully employs vivid imagery and lyrical prose, enriching the narrative with a sense of introspection. The interplay of past and present allows readers to witness the characters' growth, as they confront their fears and embrace their ambitions. Along the way, Zasloff emphasizes the connections forged through shared dreams, culminating in a poignant reminder of the community's role in personal journeys.

Ultimately, "Hold Fast to Dreams" invites readers to reflect on their own aspirations, encouraging them to pursue the dreams that define them. Through her compassionate storytelling, Beth Zasloff inspires a sense of hope, urging each of us to hold fast to our dreams, no matter the obstacles we may face.

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Chapter 1 Summary: 1. Riding Backward: Nkese and Dwight

Chapter 1 Summary: Riding Backward: Nkese and Dwight

Introduction to New Challenges

Joshua Steckel steps into his new role as a college counselor at the Secondary School for Research in Brooklyn. Overwhelmed by the responsibility of guiding economically disadvantaged students, particularly first-generation college applicants, he is acutely aware of the hurdles these students face in pursuing higher education.

Building Relationships

In his early interactions, Josh connects with a senior named Nkese, who is eager for support during the college application process. Despite her limited skills, Nkese displays a fierce determination to succeed, revealing a strong will to overcome her obstacles.

School Background and Environment

The Secondary School for Research is defined by its tumultuous history;

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once a failing institution, it has been restructured to better serve its diverse student body. Many students come from economically strained backgrounds, and the school's stringent security measures highlight ongoing concerns for safety, impacting the overall learning environment.

Josh's Background and Motives

Reflecting on his past experiences at an elite private school, Josh is motivated to provide equitable educational opportunities to those underserved by the system. He grapples with the systemic inequities that frequently restrict low-income students, fueling his commitment to help them navigate the college admissions landscape.

Nkese's Personal Journey

Nkese's backstory is marked by tragedy; she has endured the trauma of her father's death and grappled with instability at home. This turbulent upbringing has shaped her into an advocate for herself and her peers, as she seeks to reclaim agency over her education and future.

Struggles with Education and Identity

During her conversations with Josh, Nkese articulates her aspirations while acknowledging the barriers erected by her past educational experiences. This



candid exchange fosters a growing realization within her about the profound impact of her environment on her academic confidence.

The College Application Process

As Nkese and her peers delve into the college application process, Josh offers essential guidance despite the overarching constraints of limited resources. Initially excited, Nkese soon experiences overwhelming anxiety as she contemplates acceptance rates and financial implications of her college choices.

Challenges from Home and Personal Circumstances

Tensions arise as Nkese navigates her mother's conservative outlook on education. Her mother's reluctance to support her aspirations beyond New York City clashes with Nkese's desire for independence and personal growth, creating internal conflict.

Reflections on Class and Opportunity

With Josh advocating for his students by communicating with admissions officers, Nkese faces a rollercoaster of mixed results throughout the admissions process. While she secures a few acceptances, the sting of rejection from schools that once felt within her reach weighs heavily on her.



Nkese's Academic Transformation

The chapter portrays Nkese's evolving understanding of her educational landscape. As she works toward self-empowerment, she also confronts feelings of resentment regarding the systemic inequities that have hindered her educational journey.

Conclusion: The Journey Forward

As graduation looms near, Nkese grapples with a complex mix of emotions, oscillating between disappointment and hope amidst her surroundings. Her relationship with Dwight, another student facing similar challenges, becomes a crucial element in their quest for identity and success against the backdrop of their educational struggles. Together, they navigate the path toward a more empowering future.



Chapter 2 Summary: 2. With Whom Do You Make Your Permanent Home? Mike and Abby

Chapter 2 Summary: With Whom Do You Make Your Permanent Home?

In his second year at the Secondary School for Research, Josh sets up a college office, cleverly repurposing an old supply closet into a welcoming space for students. His enthusiasm is palpable as he takes on the mentorship of two particular students, Michael "Mike" Forbes and Abigail "Abby" Benavente, both of whom are about to embark on the intricate journey of college applications.

Mike and Abby initially have their sights set on local community colleges, but as they engage with Josh, their potential for admission into more selective institutions begins to unfold. Josh reflects on his experiences with many students who struggle to balance academic aspirations alongside personal responsibilities, suggesting that both students possess the capabilities to aspire higher.

Abby, a vibrant and resilient student living with lupus, becomes an integral part of Josh's office, not only assisting with clerical tasks but also spearheading fundraising initiatives for a College Fund to alleviate application fees for her peers. Her determination and spirited personality



provide a beacon of hope, proving that strength can shine even amid health challenges.

Conversely, Mike's journey is marked by adversity. After relocating from Georgia to Brooklyn, he grapples with declining grades and frequent absences, which Josh fears may derail his college aspirations. Researching Mike's circumstances reveals a turbulent home life; a devastating house fire has left him and his family homeless, forcing them into a shelter. This upheaval causes Mike to feel increasingly disengaged from the application process.

Amidst these struggles, Mike wrestles with the emotional weight of his experiences as he attempts to draft his college essay. While he tries to channel his feelings into his writing, he finds it difficult to articulate his emotions. However, he draws comfort from caring for his younger brothers, an act that grounds him during these turbulent times.

As the college application process becomes more complex, with state programs aimed at supporting economically disadvantaged students becoming pivotal, Abby flourishes academically. In contrast, Mike finds himself overwhelmed by his troubling circumstances and the considerable pressure to succeed. Despite these challenges, both students remain determined to pursue their dreams.

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As deadlines loom closer, Mike and Abby navigate their respective trials, which test their resilience and commitment. Josh, steadfast in his belief in their potential, passionately advocates for their futures, fostering hope that, with the right support and determination, both students can thrive in a college environment that recognizes and nurtures their strengths.

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Chapter 3 Summary: 3. Take the Brooklyn Out of You: Nkese and Dwight

Chapter 3 Summary: Take the Brooklyn Out of You

In August 2007, Nkese and her brother Dwight Nkese Rankine leave their home in East Flatbush, Brooklyn, to embark on new academic journeys at Bates College in Maine and Guilford Technical Community College in North Carolina, respectively. This marks a significant transition for Nkese, as she steps onto the Bates campus, an environment that is both stunning and multifaceted, with a noticeable push toward diversity led by President Elaine Tuttle Hansen during the college's convocation. While the college has a historic commitment to coeducation and inclusivity, the reality of social integration proves challenging for Nkese.

As she immerses herself in this new atmosphere, Nkese grapples with the unfamiliar social dynamics at Bates. The sense of exclusion looms large as she navigates a community where heavy partying and established social connections among students from elite private schools make her backgrounds in public schooling feel inadequate. This social tumult is compounded by the harsh realities of academic pressures, particularly in a demanding freshman seminar focused on writing and critical thinking. Nkese finds herself overwhelmed and struggles with language and public



speaking, particularly as her Brooklyn deep-rooted background becomes a source of misunderstanding among her peers.

Further complicating her journey are discussions surrounding race and class, which expose the biases held by her classmates. Nkese strives to articulate her Afro-Caribbean identity and combat the stereotypes associated with being from Brooklyn. This dialogue creates tension within the student body, leading to administrative efforts to address the growing divides along racial and socioeconomic lines.

In contrast, Dwight's experience in North Carolina at Guilford Technical Community College is marked by success and personal growth. Eager to break from his past, he dedicates himself to his studies, achieving a remarkable 4.0 GPA during his first semester. As Dwight reflects on his previous struggles, he finds empowerment in his academic accomplishments while also confronting the ongoing prejudices he faces in his new surroundings.

Despite the distance and different paths they have taken, Nkese and Dwight maintain their bond with regular communication throughout their initial college year. However, Nkese ultimately decides not to return to Bates for a short-term session, overwhelmed by her challenges and needing a break. Their experiences serve as poignant reflections on the broader themes of identity, belonging, and the trials of aspiration in settings far removed from



their Brooklyn roots.

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Chapter 4: 4. Someone to Step Up and Pave the Way: Ashley

Chapter 4: Someone to Step Up and Pave the Way: Summary

Introduction to Ashley Brown

The chapter introduces Ashley Brown, a determined high school student with aspirations of becoming an obstetrician. Her first interaction with Josh, a mentor, occurred via email when she sought advice on early college admissions. Ashley's motivation was influenced by her passion for medicine and her challenging background, notably as the daughter of a single mother who struggled to make ends meet.

Ashley's Determination

In her correspondence with Josh, Ashley conveyed her ambitions and the difficulties she faced. Working part-time at New York Methodist Hospital, she diligently saved money to pursue her educational goals. Ashley's resilience and drive inspired those around her, including doctors and teachers who embraced their roles as mentors.

Support and Guidance

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Recognizing her potential, Josh took on the role of guide in Ashley's college application journey. Initially eager to apply early to colleges, Ashley accepted Josh's advice to fully engage in her high school experience, deferring intensive college preparations until her junior year.

College Application Journey

Ashley set her sights on the Queens Bridge to Medicine program, geared towards preparing students for medical studies. Despite the demanding academic challenges it presented, Ashley remained steadfast in her commitment, constantly seeking opportunities that would help her achieve her goals. Josh emphasized the importance of finding a college that suited her personally and academically rather than rushing through the medical pathway.

Scholarship Opportunities

As Ashley advanced through her preparations, she learned about prestigious scholarship programs such as Questbridge and Posse. Although her SAT scores fell short of Questbridge's requirements, Josh believed Ashley's strengths were better aligned with Posse, which prioritized leadership and collaborative skills.



Intense Preparations and Challenges

During the summer and fall, Ashley juggled her responsibilities as a student representative, college application preparations, and her rigorous academic workload. As deadlines approached, the pressure mounted, leading to stress

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Chapter 5 Summary: 5. Away from the Madness: Mike and Abby

Chapter 5 Summary: Away from the Madness

Introduction of Mike and Abby

In the spring of 2008, Mike Forbes and Abby Benavente, friends of Ashley, received their college admission results, marking a significant turning point in their lives. Abby, a determined student, basked in the success of multiple college acceptances, including the reputable Muhlenberg College and Hunter College. Meanwhile, Mike grappled with his future, his ambition clouded by familial responsibilities.

Mike's Dilemma

Mike's acceptance to Brooklyn College and other selective institutions presented him with a tough choice. Torn between pursuing higher education away from home or remaining in New York City to support his family during difficult times, he ultimately chose Brooklyn College, prioritizing familial duty over the traditional college experience. His friend Josh expressed frustration regarding Mike's decision, emphasizing the missed opportunities for exploration.



Exploration of College Options

As April arrived, Abby and Mike explored potential college environments, visiting schools like Union and Skidmore. Abby yearned for independence, seeking a space to grow apart from her chaotic home life, while Mike began to appreciate the college experience he had initially dismissed. Despite his inner turmoil, he started envisioning a life that diverged from the confines of his current reality.

Abby's Acceptance at Skidmore

When Abby received her acceptance from Skidmore, her supporters encouraged her to seize the opportunity as a chance for personal and academic liberation. However, her father's worries regarding her college life added weight to her excitement, highlighting the internal struggles she faced as she navigated her aspirations against the backdrop of family concerns.

Mike's College Decision

After visiting various colleges, Mike found himself drawn to Skidmore, despite a lingering hesitation to leave his familial obligations. He ultimately made the decision to attend Skidmore, experiencing a mix of excitement and apprehension about balancing his educational aspirations with family



responsibilities, particularly given his mother's ongoing health issues.

Family Struggles

Both Mike and Abby's families battled financial and emotional hardships. These struggles heavily influenced their college decisions, with Mike's home life further complicated by his mother's declining health, and Abby coping with her own health challenges stemming from lupus.

Beginning College Life

As Mike began his journey at Skidmore while Abby enrolled in Hunter's SEEK program, both faced early challenges. Mike navigated the structure of the Summer Academic Institute, which felt confining, while Abby's health issues led her to return home soon after starting, underscoring the reality that college life was more complex than anticipated.

Changes in Plans and Responses

Confronted with ongoing health concerns, Abby accepted her situation and decided to continue her education at Hunter, abandoning her initial dream of Skidmore. Meanwhile, Mike settled into his new life at Skidmore, contending with social pressures and academic demands that tested his resolve.



Mike's Growth and Relationships

Throughout his adjustment to Skidmore, Mike cultivated friendships and began dating Jamie, a significant milestone as he balanced this budding relationship with the responsibilities that still called him back to his family.

Conclusion

As Mike embraced the opportunities that college presented, he navigated the delicate balance between family obligations and personal growth. Both he and Abby faced distinct challenges rooted in their backgrounds and ambitions, their journeys reflecting the quest for independence in the face of inherited struggles and enduring hopes for a brighter future.

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Chapter 6 Summary: 6. Do You Know What It's Like to Live My Life? Kennetta, Angie, and Rafael

Chapter 6: Do You Know What It's Like to Live My Life?

Introduction

As summer approached before his second year, Josh engaged in meaningful discussions with Christopher Hooker-Haring from Muhlenberg College. Their focus was on recruiting urban public school students, aiming to bridge gaps in college admissions for underrepresented groups.

Partnership Proposal

Recognizing the disparities in the college application process for low-income students, Josh proposed a strategic partnership between Muhlenberg College and the Secondary School for Research. His goal was to create a more equitable evaluation system that takes into account the unique challenges faced by these students.

Campus Visits

A significant milestone occurred when students from the Secondary School

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for Research visited Muhlenberg's campus. During this immersive experience, they interacted with college staff and explored the college's offerings. Kennetta, one of the students, was particularly inspired and expressed her desire to attend the college after the visit.

Personal Struggles

Throughout this journey, Josh gained insight into the personal hurdles his students faced. Their stories of resilience were powerful; Kennetta and Chiquita, in particular, shared experiences that highlighted the difficulties imposed by their environments. These candid discussions led Josh to reflect on how these challenges profoundly shaped their futures and aspirations.

Personal Essays

In English class, the students delved into writing personal essays that revealed the hardships that characterized their lives. Kennetta discussed the realities of living in a cramped apartment amid violence, while Chiquita recounted a traumatic event within her family. Angie, a standout student, courageously opened up about her insecurities and the tragedies that haunted her past.

The Role of Community and Support

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As they shared their experiences, a sense of empathy blossomed among the students, fostering a supportive community. This environment became vital as they prepared for the college application process. They learned the importance of articulating their struggles and aspirations, which was a significant step towards self-advocacy.

Individual Aspirations and College Decisions

With college application deadlines looming, each student faced the weight of personal and familial expectations. Kennetta was determined to apply to Muhlenberg, while Rafael, who worked tirelessly to support his family, began to envision college as a tangible opportunity rather than a distant dream.

Final Applications and Acceptance

The chapter culminated in the students submitting applications to various colleges. Among those granted acceptance were Kennetta, Rafael, and Angie, each grappling with the implications of their achievements and the fears and hopes that accompanied this new chapter in their lives.

Conclusion

As he reflected on the numerous obstacles his students faced, Josh pondered



whether the support from Muhlenberg would be sufficient to empower them to thrive in college and beyond. This chapter underscores the transformative journey of students grappling with their identities, aspirations, and the broader significance of pursuing higher education.

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Chapter 7 Summary: 7. Finding the Best Fit: Ashley

Finding the Best Fit: Ashley - Summary

Background and Transition to Williams College

In December 2007, Ashley Brown, having declined a finalist spot for the Posse scholarship, made the pivotal decision to attend Williams College after being accepted as an early decision applicant. She participated in the Williams College Summer Science Program and began her journey as a premed student, facing a manageable tuition bill of \$253 for her first year. This transition marked a significant step towards her ambitions, yet it also set the stage for unforeseen challenges.

Challenges at Williams

By June 2009, Ashley found herself in a difficult position. Grappling with homesickness and a pervasive sense of alienation as a low-income student of color, she felt out of place among her more affluent peers. Despite her hard work, her academic struggles, particularly her disappointment with a C in chemistry, left her feeling frustrated and questioning whether her sacrifices would ever lead her to medical school. This culminated in her decision to take a leave of absence to redirect her path.



Support and Transfer Decision

Understanding the toll this experience took on Ashley, her friend Josh sought assistance from alumni and reassured her that many students faced similar struggles. Nevertheless, by October, Ashley's resolve solidified; she applied for a transfer to the Sophie Davis program, a well-regarded nursing initiative. The decision to leave Williams for Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) came as she sought a more supportive learning environment closer to home.

Life at BMCC and Discovering Nursing

At BMCC, Ashley flourished in the nursing program, discovering a passion for the clinical aspects of healthcare that contrasted sharply with her previous experiences at Williams. She immersed herself in her studies and responsibilities, finding both joy and fulfillment, which reignited her academic motivation.

Personal Growth and Relationship Developments

During her time at BMCC, Ashley not only excelled academically but also embarked on a profound personal journey. She explored various religions, which contributed to her self-discovery, while simultaneously maintaining



strong family ties. Her dating life with a fellow student presented its own challenges, ultimately teaching her the importance of balancing personal relationships with her academic goals.

Conversion to Islam and New Directions

Embracing a new chapter in her life, Ashley converted to Islam, a decision that aligned with her evolving spiritual beliefs. With her mother's supportive yet cautious reaction, Ashley embraced her faith, which provided her with a sense of purpose and direction. Motivated by her calling to aid others, she focused on completing her nursing education.

Marriage, Motherhood, and Career Aspirations

Ultimately, Ashley married Ibrahim, a fellow nursing student, which added another layer to her life's journey. As she navigated her relationship and career ambitions, she expressed profound gratitude for the experiences that shaped her path. In December, she proudly completed her nursing program, reflecting on her education, marriage, and the anticipated joys of motherhood as pivotal milestones that had brought her fulfillment and a deep sense of purpose.



Chapter 8: 8. Forward Movement: Nkese and Dwight

Chapter 8: Forward Movement: Nkese and Dwight

Introduction

Two years after graduation from the Secondary School for Research, Josh receives an invitation from Boris Komarovskiy to join him for a baseball game at CitiField. This gathering includes friends Candace Jones and Nkese Rankine, where they catch up on life and share their recent experiences.

Nkese's Journey

Nkese has undergone significant personal growth during her time at Bates College, where she is double majoring in politics and women's and gender studies. Initially uncertain about her academic abilities and contemplating transferring, she found her place within the campus, growing involved in student life. Her newfound enthusiasm for the German language and culture inspired her to participate in outreach programs.

Over her sophomore year, Nkese blossomed socially, cultivating deep relationships and embracing diversity in her friendships. Her engagement in Women of Color meetings and community volunteer efforts underscored her



growth and commitment to meaningful change, demonstrating an ability to adapt while remaining authentic to herself.

Updates from Classmates

As Josh reconnects with fellow graduates, he learns of various successes and challenges among peers. Aundre Walker is thriving as a DJ, while Kory Fleurima has faced struggles at York College, ultimately withdrawing due to personal issues. Despite obstacles, many classmates like Roshney Licorish and Ravell Robinson report transformative college experiences.

Dwight's Accomplishments

Meanwhile, Dwight Martin is excelling at Guilford Technical Community College, boasting a perfect 4.0 GPA and earning multiple technical certificates. His hard work pays off with a job offer from Comair, a step aligned with his aspirations in aviation maintenance. Although starting in an entry-level position, Dwight quickly proves his worth, earning promotions and advancing in his career.

Nkese's Academic and Activism Developments

In her junior year, Nkese participates in a study abroad program in Europe that enriches her academic experience and broadens her worldview. This

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exposure reignites her commitment to social justice, fueling her involvement in campus organizations. After organizing a forum in response to a hate crime targeting a friend, she confronts mixed reactions; nevertheless, she remains focused on fostering inclusive discussions at Bates.

Nkese's Graduation and Outcomes

By her senior year, Nkese has profoundly influenced her college environment, securing leadership roles that advocate for diversity and support systems for multicultural students. Josh attends her graduation, celebrating her achievements as she prepares for her next professional chapter, a testament to her academic and personal growth.

Dwight's Post-College Life

A year later, Josh visits Dwight, who now faces challenges after Comair's unfortunate closure led to job loss. Although struggling emotionally with uncertainty about his future, Dwight seeks solace in personal interests like biking and fitness. His aspirations remain unclear, but he expresses a desire to support others, reflecting his ongoing quest for purpose.

Conclusion

The journeys of Nkese and Dwight illustrate the multifaceted transition from



high school to adulthood. Their stories weave together themes of educational success, self-discovery, social activism, and perseverance through life's challenges. Both exemplify resilience and adaptability, highlighting the crucial role of supportive communities in their paths toward fulfilling futures.

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Chapter 9 Summary: 9. Room to Grow: Mike and Abby

Room to Grow

Abby's Unexpected Journey into Motherhood

In an unexpected twist, Josh learns via Facebook that former student Abby Benavente is pregnant, which is surprising given her ambitious academic aspirations. Abby expresses her mixed emotions about the pregnancy, revealing both excitement and nervousness. Choosing to see a midwife rather than opting for a hospital birth, she feels this aligns better with her needs, especially considering her history of health challenges due to lupus. Despite the unexpected nature of her pregnancy, Abby finds unwavering support from her family and decides to embrace the journey of motherhood.

Health Struggles and Misdiagnosis

Abby reflects on her long battle with lupus, a chronic illness that had once overshadowed her life and aspirations. After undergoing comprehensive medical evaluations, she receives the encouraging news that she no longer requires treatment for the condition, allowing her to experience a healthy pregnancy. This milestone prompts Abby to ponder how her life and academic choices might have been altered had her lupus been properly



diagnosed earlier.

Navigating Challenges as a New Mother

As Abby embraces her impending motherhood, she acknowledges her reliance on family support as crucial for navigating this new phase of her life. Although she expresses regret over opportunities missed during her college years, she remains steadfast in her dreams of creating an innovative school that stimulates curiosity. Passionate about furthering her education while nurturing her child, Abby's goal is to positively impact the lives of underprivileged children.

Mike's Rise and Academic Success

Across campus, Mike grapples with his freshman year struggles at Skidmore, determined to elevate his GPA. Taking on new responsibilities and immersing himself in campus activities, Mike's hard work pays off as he excels academically. His journey is shaped by the unique challenges he faces as a person of color in a competitive educational environment, highlighting the importance of resilience and adaptability.

Recognizing Potential and Overcoming Barriers

Mike emphasizes the need for educational institutions to recognize the

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potential of students like him, noting that many face struggles that go unnoticed in traditional assessment metrics like grades. His insights resonate with Susan Layden, who champions a deeper understanding of the diverse challenges students encounter in their academic paths.

Life Transitions and Future Aspirations

Through the lens of Abby's life transformation into motherhood, Josh observes the dual path both Abby and Mike are taking. Despite the challenges of raising a child, Abby commits to continuing her education. Simultaneously, Mike embraces his entrepreneurial spirit, successfully operating a video production company and taking on a teaching role with Teach for America, ready to give back to his community.

Family Dynamics and New Beginnings

As time passes, Abby joyfully celebrates her child's first birthday while Mike graduates from Skidmore, marking significant milestones in both their lives. Transitioning into a leadership role in his family, Mike makes the pivotal decision to move them from a shelter to a more stable home in Durham, North Carolina, where he establishes new rules and expectations for his younger brothers.

Conclusion: Full Circle

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In reflecting on his journey, Mike recognizes the weight of his responsibilities as a guardian. His experiences underscore themes of personal growth, accountability, and the transformative power of education and supportive environments. Both Abby and Mike's narratives illustrate the distinct yet parallel paths of ambition and resilience, embodying the spirit of navigating life's challenges with determination and hope.

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Chapter 10 Summary: 10. Undocumented American Dream: Aicha and Santiago

Chapter 10 Summary: Undocumented American Dream: Aicha and Santiago

In January 2008, Aicha Diallo, a passionate junior at the Secondary School for Research, faced the harsh reality of a budget cut announced by principal Jill Bloomberg. This reduction in funding sparked outrage among students, leading Aicha to establish "Students Against the Department of Education Budget Cuts." She organized rallies advocating for the rights of underprivileged students, fueled by her own experiences as an immigrant from Guinea. Having transitioned from a comfortable life in Conakry to the financial struggles of Brooklyn, Aicha developed a deep understanding of social justice and the importance of education.

Throughout her academic career, Aicha excelled while contending with the fear of her undocumented status. She and her father were seeking asylum to secure educational opportunities, knowing that an unfavorable decision could lead to deportation. She communicated her predicament to influential figures, including New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, hoping to draw attention to the systemic barriers faced by many undocumented students.

In contrast, Santiago Hernandez, another student from the same school,

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migrated from Mexico under challenging circumstances. Like Aicha, he faced obstacles due to his undocumented status, which severely limited his educational prospects. Despite his determination to pursue higher education, Santiago often found himself working low-wage jobs to support his family, a reality that added pressure to his aspirations.

As Aicha navigated the daunting college application process, her hopes were met with challenges stemming from her family's financial difficulties and her status as an undocumented student. Many colleges rejected her applications, but her resolve remained unshaken. With support from mentors like Josh, her dedicated college counselor, Aicha continued to push forward, embodying the resilience required to pursue her educational dreams.

Together, Aicha and Santiago's stories illustrate the struggle for the American Dream faced by undocumented youths. Their journeys reveal a profound narrative of resilience and determination amidst structural barriers, highlighting their collective quest for educational opportunities and a brighter future.

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Chapter 11 Summary: 11. Let's Change Lives: Kennetta, Angie, and Rafael

In Chapter 11, titled "Let's Change Lives: Kennetta, Angie, and Rafael," Cynthia Amaya, an admissions officer at Muhlenberg College, shares her insights from working with three students from the Secondary School for Research: Kennetta Christian, Angelica Moore, and Rafael Padilla.

Reflecting on her own journey as a first-generation college student, Cindy's commitment to recruiting students of color stems from her struggles during her academic years, particularly the lack of diversity at Muhlenberg, where only 5% of the student body was multicultural at the time of her attendance.

Cindy collaborates with Dean Christopher Hooker-Haring to address these diversity challenges by forging partnerships with underserved public schools, thus creating pathways for talented students to access higher education. This initiative leads to the establishment of essential support systems, which historically had been inadequate for minority populations at Muhlenberg.

The chapter delves into the personal experiences of Kennetta, Angie, and Rafael as they navigate the complexities of college life. Kennetta engages in performance groups to balance her family obligations and emotional stress, revealing her creativity and resilience. Rafael, initially feeling isolated, longs for the vibrancy of urban living, confronting the academic challenges that



come with his new environment. Meanwhile, Angie encounters misunderstanding and stereotyping from peers, which catalyzes her growth into a strong, self-aware community leader.

Throughout their collegiate journey, mentorship plays a vital role in their development. Support from figures like Cindy and Professor Kim Gallon aids Kennetta and Angie as they confront their unique challenges. Rafael, facing academic downturns, ultimately discovers renewed motivation through the encouragement of his mentors.

As the chapter progresses, it captures the transformation and maturity of the three students, showcasing their determination to succeed despite adversity. By the end, they not only graduate from Muhlenberg but also emerge as influential figures capable of making a positive impact within their communities. The narrative reinforces the importance of mentorship, community, and institutional support in fostering diversity and success in education.

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Chapter 12: 12. The Will to Aspire: Aicha and Santiago

Summary of Chapter 12: The Will to Aspire: Aicha and Santiago

In this chapter, we explore the intertwined journeys of Aicha Diallo and Santiago Hernandez, two undocumented students pursuing their educational dreams against considerable odds.

Aicha's Journey and Aspirations

Aicha Diallo, motivated by a desire for educational advancement, sets her sights on Amherst College, attracted by its supportive community. However, after not receiving a response from her preferred school, she enrolls at Manhattanville College through financial aid. Initially, she faces challenges adjusting both socially and academically. Nonetheless, a turning point occurs when she bonds with fellow African students, sparking her interest in international studies.

Following a successful asylum hearing that offers her newfound hope, Aicha begins considering more prestigious institutions like Barnard and Amherst for future transfers. Throughout her college experience, she juggles academic pressures with family responsibilities. Ultimately, she decides to remain at Manhattanville for her sophomore year while laying plans for her



transfer.

Santiago's Struggles and Growth

Santiago Hernandez grapples with the despair of his undocumented status, initially relegating himself to low-wage jobs to support his family. After suffering health complications related to his kidneys, he makes a shift to construction work but soon, spurred by the encouragement of a friend named Janet Wu, rekindles his college aspirations. Santiago diligently saves money to enroll in Kingsborough Community College, defying skepticism about the value of further education for someone in his situation.

Despite ongoing health issues and financial hurdles, he is propelled by a yearning for self-respect and a brighter future. His relationship with Janet plays a crucial role, providing him with support as they both confront familial and societal expectations.

Aicha's College Experience

Once at Manhattanville, Aicha experiences highs and lows. She secures a prestigious internship with the Clinton Foundation, which teaches her vital lessons in time management and balancing her multiple responsibilities. As she reaches graduation, Aicha reflects on her journey, acknowledging the financial struggles and social challenges that diverged from her initial

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expectations.

Santiago's Ongoing Journey

Santiago's path remains tumultuous with health setbacks and financial strain.

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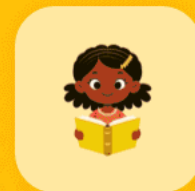
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Chapter 13 Summary: Conclusion: College Material

In the **Conclusion**, Josh contemplates the significance of college as a universal aspiration, illustrated through personal anecdotes about his nephew, Noah, who exhibits an early affinity for higher education. This contrasts sharply with the sentiments of many public school students who feel alienated from such aspirations due to the barriers they perceive, leading them to believe that attending college requires extraordinary effort. The pervasive lack of awareness surrounding educational opportunities serves to further marginalize these individuals.

In **Biases in Perception**, Josh highlights the detrimental role that adults' biases play in shaping the identities of young students. Many adults prematurely label certain students as "college material," inadvertently skewing expectations. He argues that while college is not a requisite for everyone, it is crucial to ensure that alternatives to higher education are visible and attainable for students from all backgrounds. The weight of the college conversation differs significantly between children who see college as an option and those who do not, affecting their aspirations and motivation.

In discussing **Opportunity and Luck**, Josh reflects on the resilience of his students, emphasizing that their successes are often intertwined with elements of chance. Drawing on a 2012 study by Shaun Harper, he notes that



many successful Black male students attributed their accomplishments more to luck than to innate ability. This realization underscores the importance of motivation and the relevance of educational content tailored to students' lived experiences.

The chapter titled **Need for Comprehensive Support** stresses the necessity for all high schools to offer thorough college counseling. Josh advocates for a distinct array of educational pathways—ranging from four-year institutions to vocational training—that need to be clearly articulated, especially for first-generation college students. School counselors are pivotal in this mission, as they help students navigate their options and secure financial aid.

Moving to **Empowering Undocumented Students**, Josh asserts the urgent need for supportive measures aimed at helping undocumented individuals pursue both education and citizenship. Legislative initiatives like the DREAM Act are essential for expanding access to higher education for these underserved populations.

In **Cultivating Supportive Environments**, Josh discusses the importance of colleges fostering nurturing structures that promote student success. He calls for specialized programs providing mentorship and a supportive community to aid students, particularly in community colleges where graduation rates tend to be low.



The chapter on **Engaging with Diversity** calls for all members within academic institutions to actively engage with diverse perspectives and experiences. This engagement is vital for creating an inclusive educational environment that reflects broader societal discussions about equity, access, and inclusion.

Finally, in his **Vision for Future Generations**, Josh expresses his commitment to guiding his students beyond the cycle of poverty through education. He emphasizes the importance of addressing not only economic outcomes but also the deeper quests for identity and purpose that students embark on. He advocates for equitable access to these transformative educational journeys, affirming the belief that every individual deserves the opportunity to realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to society.

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