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A Journey of 1,588 Miles: A Story of Success, Failure and Getting Back on Track

Khalil P. Huey

Iowa State University, kphuey@iastate.edu

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Khalil Huey

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Patricia Leigh

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A Journey of 1,588 Miles:

A Story of Success, Failure and Getting Back on Track

I had found out that I had been accepted to Iowa State University the summer of my junior year through an early application and had found out that I was receiving the George Washington Carver Scholarship Award during August of that year. I remembered how proud my parents were of me and how when they talked with family friends, that was the first thing that they would say. Needless to say, Iowa State had become a much higher ranked school in my mind and there was a genuine possibility that I would be attending. I began my senior year at Archbishop Riordan, a Catholic all-boys school in San Francisco, California, with all of that in mind but it was soon overtaken by the more pressing matters of daily life. During the summer before senior year, I had gone on a religious retreat with one of my high school's campus ministry team called the LIFE team and had met with other teams from Hawaii and Southern California. I formed a close bond with many of them and spent a good deal of my summer talking with them.

During my final year at Riordan, I pursued what I loved in my high school. I continued my theatre career as an actor in the fall play, *You Can't Take It with You*, and in the musical, "*Jesus Christ Superstar*". Theatre was a passion of mine in high school as I was always involved in the productions all four years, whether on stage as an actor, backstage as a stage crew technician or working for the director as a production assistant and performing background

research on the play and various items in the script. The theatre had always been a place of good times for me and it was where I was notified by email that I had been accepted to the University of California at Davis, my then dream school for a career in veterinary medicine, while backstage during a dress rehearsal for Jesus Christ Superstar.

Another aspect of my high school life was the campus ministry LIFE team. I was raised as a Lutheran growing up and attended a Lutheran grammar school. When I first attended Catholic high school, I experienced little culture shock and gladly participated in campus ministry. The LIFE Team was a team focused on Christian community building and sharing experiences. Over our retreat, we shared stories with each other and the other teams; we discussed our hopes, dreams and our doubts for the future. We all became like brothers to each other. My relationships with the other LIFE teams flourished as well to the point where I began a long-distance something with one of the LIFE team members from Maui, a girl named Jillian.

A final pursuit of mine during high school was academic excellence. Over my time at Archbishop Riordan, I strived for academic success in all my classes and consistently chose academically rigorous classes. I was greatly involved in the AP program at my school, to the point where I was able to transfer in about 18 credits into Iowa State. I was also a member of the California Scholarship Federation as well as the National Honors Society.

But like all good things, high school had to come to an end. By the time I had come to the end of my high school life, I had decided on Iowa State, much to the disappointment of my friends and classmates who were almost all staying either in the city or within an hour's drive. At graduation, I sat on stage and wore the cords of the National Honors Society and the California Scholarship Federation as a member in good standing, in a theatre that acknowledged me as its Thespian of the Year. All that was left was to take my diploma. Eventually, the President of the

school called my name; I took a breath, walked over to him, shook his hand and received my diploma. Well, I had done it. I finally graduated Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco, California and was moving on to a new chapter in my life.

Summer was dedicated to enjoying the remainder of my time in San Francisco with all my friends before college. I spent this time with family and friends. I was still recovering from the effects of my eighth surgery, this time surgery to correct my crossed eyes, and had double vision for a good part of the summer. But as the school year drew near, I was ready. I was all packed to go and my parents loaded up the car for the 1,588 mile drive from our house in South San Francisco to my dorm at Iowa State.

After forty-eight hours, three tickets and many dollars in gas later, we were there. I had been to Iowa only once before for orientation but now it just finally seemed real to me. I moved into my dorm, waved goodbye to my parents and they were gone. The first few months were somewhat hard, especially when I heard about my dog looking for me around the house and my little sister who always asked when I was coming home but stayed the course. I did not do much my freshman year in terms of involvement in Iowa State; I merely did my duty as a George Washington Carver Scholar and as a student. I was still very much back home, managing the quasi-relationship between myself and Jillian as well as my dealings with her friends, many of whom came to me with their troubles such as boys who walked the line between cruel and verbally abusive, their own fears for the future and their insecurities. My first year in college as an animal science major proved to be rather challenging for me. The courses just seemed too difficult and I was anything but used to the subject material and my grade-point average reflected this. With a grade point average below 2.0, I was in danger of not only losing my scholarship but losing my seat in college and I was not going to let that happen not after I had come this far in

life. I redoubled my efforts in the spring but I slowly come to the realization that veterinary medicine was not what my future had in store for me.

As summer drew near and my grades remained abysmal, I set in motion a redemption plan. I would spend the summer working to improve my grades at Iowa State and retake several of the classes I did poorly in. Throughout my summer, I studied, attended class and did the work to repair my grades. I ended the summer sessions with a grade of 3.33 which elevated my grade point average not only past the mark needed to stay in school but within striking distance of maintaining my scholarship. I could not fail now, not when I was so damn close to making it, next semester would be different. I swore it.

As my second year at Iowa State started, things were different; I had changed my major from animal science to undecided to history. History was much more of an interesting topic for me and one that I had loved since AP European History during my sophomore year of high school. Additionally, I had begun to involve myself in the clubs of Iowa State, I joined the kumdo club to embrace my Asian heritage and the trap and skeet club because I had never shot a gun before and I thought “Why not learn now?” In other respects, this semester was different as well. In August of 2012, Jillian decided to end our almost two year quasi-relationship as she was going to college. I accepted this as she was going to a new place in her life, moving from Maui to a town in California. I felt neither ill will nor any sadness and simply continued on doing what I was doing. I also noticed that the friends she introduced me to began to slip away as they too went off to college and found new relationships. Even the person who confided in me about sensitive things in her life talked to me less and less when she entered a happy relationship with a man at her school. Strangely enough, I was happy. In my mind, my purpose in my friendship with her was to make sure she was happy and had someone who cared for her. Now, my job was

done. Academic changes occurred as well; I loved my new curriculum and did fairly well in academics. After finals, I hope I did well enough to assure the maintenance of the George Washington Carver Scholarship.