New Narrative Rising
by Kaila Love

I was sittin' in the college and career center, not sure what to do
The army wants to enlist me, but I still wanna go to school
The recruiter says that I can have it all, all I gotta do is sign
But I just can't bring myself to put my name on that line
I politely decline, not knowing I'll be back a week late
But this time, it's a another meeting that would change my fate

I'm sitting at that same table, but now it's all different
Monica tells me a new plan that peaks my interest
She works for a nonprofit focused all on college access
An opportunity that can take me beyond my current address
Where I don't have to be limited by the place I come from
I learned about first-gen grads and that I could become one

That day was everything in how it affected me
I didn't realize that would be a pivotal moment that would change my trajectory
All cause she came and sat next to me
Listened and took a chance, instead of simply nexting me
I saw I wasn't a failure, it was a system failing me
I had the capacity to earn a degree
But if Monica didn't step in, that would never be

Cause I wouldn't even know college could help me rise out my neighborhood
How could I imagine something I'd never seen?
If I'd never been exposed, how can I even dream?
I wasn't raised by my parents, but neither made it past middle school
Never having the chance to make education a power tool

I went from doing fractions to theory of action
Fantasizin' about what could happen,
if one's life road wasn't determined by a zip code
If the pipeline to prison was replaced with a cradle to career
And every statistic was shattered, 'ntil inequality disappeared

If I can just get people to listen and make shifts in the system
We could strive together in this mission
We could uphold the vision
Break down the limits that our society has held up
'Cause we aren't starting from scratch, the roadmap's been developed
We know about the power of collective impact
Connecting communities
Just like today, coming together in unity

I know the work can be lonely, you can't always see the outcome
And with so much need, it feels like it might never be done
So if you need, slow down, but please don't ever stop
Remember why you started, this is more than just a job
A new narrative is rising, we're on track for a new plan
That spans from Cincinnati to San Fran

So take a deep breath, fill your lungs with renewed energy
So if you lose your sense of purpose, come back to this memory
Tap into potential, knowing you can change a life
Despite the struggle and the strife
You're the reason someone thrives
And you'll never be alone cause together, WE WILL STRIVE

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