

# New Narrative Rising

## by Kaila Love

StriveTogether®

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

That will build a new future, a shift in the system  
But it's beyond the individual, it's a whole ecosystem  
Collaboration across sectors —  
Parents, teachers, directors  
Policymakers, other students  
Showing I'm not alone when going through this

Life is about choices, we're all met with a fork in the road  
Take risks or play it safe? Which way will you go?  
So often it's just a binary decision, but what if it wasn't?  
An abundance of choice — instead of two, you have dozens  
Wouldn't you agree that could make all the difference?

For kids who didn't fit into two paths,  
cause they were simply different  
I know I haven't gone down a traditional route  
I was probably only destined to be another high school drop out  
I can't help but think about where I would be  
If I wasn't given a shot at upword economic mobility

And don't get it wrong, every day's still a struggle  
But now I have a chance to see the world beyond just my bubble,  
to break generational curses  
By becoming the first kid in my family to make it out,  
and not have to become a sell out  
Now it's more than just me  
I am an impact that ripples throughout my whole community

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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