# From Homeless to Harvard



At this time of the year, many families are making summer plans in anticipation of, at least for some kids, the next step in their educational journey being college. In our household, my niece is eagerly preparing for college with campus tours and symposium attendances for advanced college credits. However, how many of us ever consider the fact that a number of these aspiring college students are actually homeless? Homelessness rates in this country are at extraordinary proportions. So the idea that many of the displaced could be high school students really shouldn’t come as a surprise; but somehow it still is.

According to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), the Department of Education (DOE) reported that public schools identified nearly 1,065,794 children as homeless over the course of the 2010-2011 school year and 1,258,182 children over the course of the 2012-2013 school year. In addition, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) indicates that approximately 80 percent of homeless families are headed by a single mother. This of course, only comprises data inclusive of those families and/or students that, despite shaming and the stigma associated with homelessness, divulge the reality of their living situation.

CNN recently aired a segment discussing this phenomenon, with a spotlight on David Boone. In 2012, he was a Cleveland, Ohio high school senior who at 14, had his family home destroyed by a

local gang because he refused to join them. According to *huffingtonpost.com*, that resulted in David and his four siblings being split up, taking shelter wherever they could, because their mother couldn't afford a new house. On some nights, the teen had no choice but to sleep on park benches. But instead of allowing these circumstances to detour him down a destructive path in life, the teen chose to remain focused, dedicated and undeterred. That resilience culminated in acceptance into numerous colleges throughout the nation, including Yale, Princeton and Cornell, with David ultimately selecting Harvard University!

Fast forward 2 years later, in an interview with CNN's Don Lemon, David, who is now preparing to enter into his junior year as a Computer Science major, spoke about his experiences, of which he also shared in CNN Film's, *Ivory Tower* . While admitting that life for his family in Cleveland has not really changed since his departure for Boston, he has noticed a shift in his family dynamic and plans to utilize his education to help his Mother and siblings in the future. When asked to share his opinion on the value of college, David states, "College isn't the route for everyone but the value of college for me is that I get to find what I love, and I get to chase that and do that for the rest of my life. If you're not going to go to college, you need to have a plan; failing to plan is just planning to fail."

So many children have the world at their fingertips, yet still struggle to make good decisions regarding education. But kids like David, despite life's difficulties and unfathomable circumstances, still manage to remain diligent and undistracted in pushing forward. That in itself is a true testament to truly pursuing betterment of life for not only themselves but for their families as well. As such, these kids are to be commended and supported as they strive to escape from the struggle of displacement and destitution.

What do you think we can do, as a nation, to eradicate homelessness of children? Do you know any homeless aspiring college students?