

**We can't afford not to educate girls and  
give women the power and the access that they need.  
~ Michelle Obama**

## *Opening the Doors*

Access and Opportunity are the gateways to success in life, but when access to education is denied – a child's future lacks opportunity and the doorway to success becomes even narrower. According to a study by a national youth interest group, the Young Invincibles, tuition and fees at both 4-year and 2-year institutions have risen by 28 percent since the Great Recession. Similarly, *College Board* states that the average cost of tuition and fees for the 2017–2018 school years was \$34,740 at private colleges, \$9,970 for state residents at public colleges, and \$25,620 for out-of-state residents attending public universities. Furthermore, the study also found that the burden weighs heaviest on African American's families who are historically earning less than their white counterparts; college costs take up an average of 63 percent of African Americans' family income, while for white families, it's 44 percent.

The college financial burden lays heaviest on students and families lacking access and opportunities, creating a need for organizations like the New York Urban League to step in for those who may otherwise be shut out. For 43 years The Whitney M. Young, Jr. Scholarship helped launch over 4,000 students on their college journey, awarding 20 million dollars in scholarships. Arva Rice, President of the NYUL, is proud of the work they have accomplished, "We have scholars who are working in civic service, in the State Attorney General's office and in Albany for the State Legislature, really in every sector imaginable." Rice is most impressed with the spirit with which the graduates give back to the Urban League, "As a result of the scholarship, the scholars are more inclined to be active in their communities and to give back anyway that they can, be it volunteering, mentoring or we have even had a graduate start their own scholarship programs with us. So the fact that the scholars go on to give back to others, I think is something that's very exciting for us."

## *A Scholarship Story*

As an active member of her high school community, Lauren Dorvil realized her dedication to public service early on. She served as the Founder and President of a group called "Inner Glow", which she initially created as a safe space for the young women of the all-girl academic community. Dorvil then expanded the group's purpose outward to the community, leading Christmas Toy Drives, hosting school programs, and raising money for UNICEF.

When it was her Senior year, Lauren looked for scholarships that recognized that commitment to public service and applied to the NYUL Whitney M. Young, Jr. Scholarship, which she heard about through her church. When the news came that she was actually awarded one of the three Ann S. Kheel Scholarships, Lauren and her family were thrilled. "My family was ecstatic," Lauren recalls, "they had seen me preparing my essay and prepping for the interview, and now it was all coming together. Through the Urban League's scholarship program, college was transforming from just a goal to a tangible and exciting reality." Not only did the Urban League help Lauren and her family finance her college education, but the NYUL also connected her to a professional network and Young Professional Mentor. "We were invited to the scholarship reception at the Macy's Executive Lounge, we were connecting with other students and professionals and I remember thinking "this is what I want my life to look like!"

Currently, Dorvil is double majoring in Communications and Africana Studies with hopes of working on Public Policy Issues. "I'm looking at the way that government and resources reach the community through a cultural lens. In a lot of the ways, it's what the Urban League strives toward, helping people in need by looking at the intersection between their local government and non-profit organizations and then asking, "what can we do for this community?"." Lauren implores others to get involved with the NYUL, "I would definitely encourage people to look into Urban League. They have so many resources for all age groups. This organization definitely kick-started my college career. Without this scholarship, my story would have been completely different."

### *Expanding Education*

At present, the NYUL scholarships pay for most recipients' first year of college, the NYUL wants to do more. Jeanine Conley, Chair of the Board of NYUL explains, "One of the things that we've wanted to do is make the program a four year scholarship. We all know, there is a need for the assistance throughout their entire four years of college." This is where the NYUL could use the support of the community to realize this goal.

Miss Dorvil's adds, "Receiving the Whitney M. Young Scholarship was a life changing experience for me. It made me realize that college was not only going to be possible, but that through hard work, support, and determination, that I could make my dreams come true."

As Lauren Dorvil reflected on Women's History Month, she brought up a name unfamiliar to most: Annie Turnbo Malone. Miss Malone was an African American entrepreneur, inventor, and philanthropist during the early 20th century. She was one of America's first black female millionaires. "She started her own haircare company prior to Madam C.J. Walker and she was just really strategic about her plan," shares Dorvil, "and her tenacity struck me: [Malone] was able to take an idea- a hair care product- and develop it into

a successful brand that was specific to black women's needs of that time. In doing so, she created jobs for these women through employment at her beauty school. Essentially, Miss Malone was granting extraordinary access to the women in these communities: and access to education yields opportunity." What Lauren Dorvil saw in this forgotten historical figure was what the New York Urban League has been about for almost a century: access and opportunity.

To learn how you can support the New York Urban League go to <https://www.nyul.org/>