

Change the Narrative Fellowship Program

Devon's Story

"Every obstacle is an opportunity.
"When life gives you, lemons make lemonade",
Look on the Brightside."

Sure, optimism is cool, but how do you expect me to be optimistic after losing four years of my life to a system that failed me? There I sat, in a dim lit basement room with an assortment of chairs that were placed on this penny-colored of the Media, Pa Municipal court room. I sat in one of the green chairs. I was hoping green would give me more luck than I had experienced in the last year. 169 charges ranging from felonies in the first degree to misdemeanors in the third charges were filed against me for a crime I was coerced into participating in by my abusive ex-boyfriend at the time. It took one misdemeanor to set my family back another 200 years.

I went to college. I graduated as with my bachelors and became a first-generation college student. I got a good job working in finance. I saved my money. Invested my money. Got a nice apartment. Volunteered in my community. Fed the homeless. Saved a babies from burning homes. I did everything right. You would think the judicial system would have had domestic violence advocates in that courtroom petitioning during my sentencing. I mean, I was a first-time offender receiving the same punishment as a repeated offender already on probation for the same crime we were in court for.

So I lost my job, my car, my invested money, my nice apartment, and my respect in my community. Perfect. Sprinkle a little court and probation fees, add \$48,000 in college debt, mix in the inability to get a stable job, and you got a poverty pie.

African American adults are 5.9 times as likely to be incarcerated than whites. So, I'm calling you out! I'm calling out all white men who control the laws, narratives and the fate of black people to check your privilege. Our judicial system is a part of a bigger ploy to keep white men wealthy and in power and black people impoverished. Because turning the cheek still makes you a part of the problem.

Sorry not sorry.

Learn more about the Change the Narrative Fellowship program [here](#).