

Whisper n Thunder

The Whisper of Native American stories, the Thunder of stories that demand to be told

Josefina's Story

~ Helen Oliff / National Relief Charities

It's scholarship time, and I'm always inspired by reading the narratives submitted by Native American students who apply for AIEF scholarships. AIEF stands for [American Indian Education Foundation](#); it's the educational program of National Relief Charities



This year, I was particularly inspired by the clear determination that came across in Josefina's story. This is what she had to say...

Ya'at'eeh, I am the Tobacco People, born of the Mexican Clan. My maternal grandparents are of the Many Goat Clan; my paternal grandparents are of the Mexican Clan. And this is everything that makes me Josefina B. I am a beautiful mixture of Mexican and Navajo values.

I am also blind in one eye and can't walk a straight line to save my life, but I recommend that you do not underestimate me. I am an advocate against underage drinking and alcohol abuse. I am a Sun Devil from Arizona State University focused on becoming a social worker.

Originally from northern Arizona, I grew up on the Navajo Reservation where I was taught my Native language and traditions.

As a junior in high school, I planned to study architecture and design and build homes on my reservation. That summer, 2008, I was hit by a drunk driver. My skull was cracked open and after a two-week coma, I was told I'd never graduate high school and never walk again. Instead, I went back to school and in May 2009 walked across my graduation stage with a 4.0 GPA and ranked as #3 out of 600 students.

I refused to let the doctor rob me of my potential. I did not care that I was blind in one eye or could only use one hand – I am strong enough to help people on a mental level and that is what I plan to do with my life.

Thus far in college, I've volunteered with an intertribal club, creative writing group and a national youth leadership organization. My goal was always to create an environment where equality exists.

In my free time, I also volunteer with the at-risk population in Arizona, working through a Native American community service organization, a homeless shelter, a union high school district, and an urban Indian center.

Knowing that I make a difference in the lives of people is how I wake up every morning and what pushes me to become a social worker. The diverse people I assist inspire me to keep moving toward my goal. I only have a few

semesters left before I can return to my home reservation as a fully trained and practicing social worker.

Native American students like Josefina and countless others deserve a fighting chance for a college education. For the 2013-14 academic year, AIEF awarded scholarship funding to 164 American Indian undergraduate students and 38 graduate students – all tribally enrolled Native Americans who dream of a college education.

We wish our AIEF scholars and students everywhere the best and encourage all of you to keep working toward your goals. It only takes a dream, hard work, and determination like Josefina.

“Everyone who is successful must have dreamed of something.” - Maricopa Proverb

Related Links:

American Indian Education Foundation: <http://www.aiefprograms.org>

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