

MAKIA HAMILTON

From homeless shelter to college dorm: EST makes it possible for Bay Area teen.



For nearly three years, Makia Hamilton was homeless.

That unstable life—of bouncing from hotels to rat-infested shelters with her family, of never feeling safe—left the teenager depressed.

“At school I was always trying to keep a good face, like ‘everything is O.K.’ It honestly wasn’t,” said the 18-year-old, who lived in Oakland until her family was evicted.

Makia missed days of school, her GPA dropped and she thought the ordeal would ruin her chances of attending a university.

But when Makia heard about a scholarship to tour historically black colleges with Educational Student Tours, she applied and won. As a junior in high school, she visited Norfolk State University and felt “this is the place for me.”

“I said, ‘I really love this school, but my options are community college.’” Makia said, recalling advice she’d heard at her high school.

Being homeless had left her at a disadvantage, but Makia had strong support: Gregory and Yasmin Delahoussaye and EST. The couple promised, “We’re always going to be here for you.”

They helped Makia at every step of the way, with the admission, financial aid and housing processes. Now Makia is a freshman at Norfolk State and enjoying a good life.

“I’m scared, but I’m excited,” said the aspiring entrepreneur. “It’s a good opportunity. It’s a lot different from California, but I like it a lot...Without [EST] I honestly wouldn’t be here.”

Sometimes it’s still hard for Makia to believe she survived those tough times, and that she is now a college student.

Through her relationships with EST and her mentor that they provided her, she has learned to accept help and is grateful. She hopes EST supporters will continue to make gifts so other students can receive assistance.



CONTACT

DR. YASMIN DELAHOUSSEY

BLACKCOLLEGETOURS.ORG

(310) 215-9522 • YASMINDE@ICLOUD.COM

CHARLES JOHNSON

For Charles Johnson, a tour of historically black colleges was the first step of a life changing journey.

Yasmin and Greg Delahoussaye took Charles and other students to universities, museums, and historical sites in the South. "It's hard to put it into words the meaning of it, how it affected me," Charles recalled. "It was just a great experience. It was overwhelming too, in a good way."

That experience motivated Charles to apply to Clark Atlanta University, a university he had not heard about before the tour. But navigating the admissions and financial aid processes was not easy for Charles, who is a first-generation college student and a former foster child raised in Oakland.

The Delahoussayes stepped in to help with a commitment that left Charles in awe.

"Dr. Delahoussaye has just been great, using her networks to get me connected," Charles said.

"She went above and beyond."

The Delahoussayes connected Charles with help in the financial aid office; they helped find him a job; and they assisted him with locating affordable housing. To make his transition from the Bay Area to Atlanta easier, the Delahoussayes created a circle of support—alumni mentors and Clark Atlanta students.

"She connected me with some great people that I still talk to this day to help me get around," Charles said.

Charles, who transferred from College of Alameda, is now a junior majoring in social work. His goal is to work with foster youth, to provide them with the kind of support he could have used during his time in the system.

As he works to achieve his goals as a student at Clark Atlanta, Charles knows he is not alone. When he needs assistance, EST is just a phone call away.

"It's been tough, don't get me wrong," Charles said. "But they just made it easier. I know a lot of people don't have this support."



LANIYAH CACHO

On her journey to earn a nursing degree, EST is a lifeline.

In the summer following her sophomore year, Laniyah Cachó faced financial challenges that threatened to end her studies at Tuskegee University.

“I was so stressed out,” she recalled. “I didn’t know what I was going to do. I didn’t know if I was going to be able to come back.”

Then Laniyah realized she didn’t have to face those challenges alone. The resourceful student reached out to her mentors at Educational Student Tours for help. In a matter of months, Yasmin and Gregory Delahoussaye tapped their network of donors for support, helped Laniyah apply for scholarships, and helped make housing arrangements.

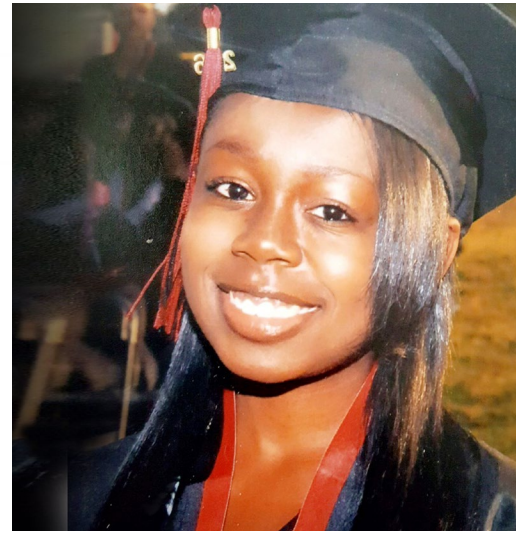
“Dr. Delahoussaye has done everything in her power to make sure I made it back for the fall semester,” Laniyah said. By the start of the fall semester, EST had raised \$10,000—enough to cover Laniyah’s fees and other expenses. Laniyah was ready to continue working toward her goal of earning a bachelor’s degree and becoming a registered nurse.

This is the role EST plays in the lives of many students who take the tour. Laniyah’s father is a strong supporter of her education, but the family needed more. EST provides students like Laniyah with ongoing support and mentoring.

When Laniyah was 7-years-old, her mother was killed by her boyfriend. Laniyah’s father raised her in a South Los Angeles neighborhood near Manual Arts High School, and she is the first in her family to attend college.

Laniyah has thrived at Tuskegee. She sees her future success through the lens of family and community. When Laniyah earns her degree, her siblings will see that they can achieve as well. Laniyah plans to use her nursing skills to improve the health outcomes of African Americans.

EST is helping her transform her dreams into reality. “I’m so grateful for everything [Educational Student Tours is] doing for me,” Laniyah said.



CONTACT

DR. YASMIN DELAHOUSSAYE

BLACKCOLLEGETOURS.ORG

(310) 215-9522 • YASMINDE@ICLOUD.COM