



J.T. Flowers gives credit to family members, coaches and teachers for his academic success. He personally thanks his mom, Jeana Woolley (pictured), a grandmother who helped raise him, and a teacher, Mark Halpern, as the people who motivated and supported him to become the man he is today.

A Rhodes Scholar

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

I am now. So that's my mother, my grandmother, my coaches, my teachers, my friends, my community, and the city at large."

Flowers said he was only a "sub-par student academically when he was heavily recruited for playing basketball back in high school. But After a torn ligament at the beginning of his junior year, colleges began pulling scholarship offers. The only school that stuck with him through the process of turning his grades around to an acceptable level for college was Yale, Flowers said.

An assistant coach there told him the path he would need to take to even stand a chance of getting admitted. That involved performing at his best during his senior year, taking advanced courses, then applying for and attending a boarding school on the east coast called Choate Rosemary Hall and performing well there, too.

"I kind of put my head down, plowed my way through school [...] and then ended up getting into Yale," Flowers said.

He continued playing basketball at Yale his freshman year, but sustained another injury, a separated shoulder, that rendered him

unable to play. For Flowers, basketball had been an "escape" from the rough neighborhood of his upbringing, but now it was a burden. That's when he said he really had to do some soul searching.

"Because I had so heavily rooted my conception of myself in my identity as a basketball player that I didn't know what I was without basketball, I had to figure out who I was and what I stood for, uh, and what I cared about and what I was interested in."

One of the ways Flowers found his identity was through spoken word poetry. He joined a group called Word Performance Poetry.

"That afforded me the opportunity to take a deep dive, uh, not only into evaluating and reflecting on the experiences that have shaped me into the person I am."

He realized his background of coming from a low income family and black community ignited a passion in him for studying access to opportunity and socio-economic mobility, hence the political science degree.

Flowers invested his mind in academics, created an organization, "A Leg Even," that offers mentoring, tutoring, and faculty support to low-income students like himself at Yale.

"People from my neighborhood [...] we're so rarely afforded the second chance that I was extended," Flowers said.

Flowers said the neighborhood he grew up in was plagued with gang violence, drug related crime, and lack of educational and economic opportunities for African Americans like him.

"I remember being in like second or third grade and inviting kids over to my house for a play date and having them come back to me and be like, 'oh my parents said they don't feel comfortable with me going over to [laughs] to your house...it's not safe over there,'" Flowers remembered.

Flowers' future is bright. He plans on pursuing two master's degrees—one in Comparative Social Policy and one in Public Policy—and starts his Oxford studies in October 2018. After his studies, he plans to return to Portland indefinitely.

Flowers credits his mother, Jeana Woolley, his grandmother who helped raise him, coaches, and a teacher, Mark Halpern, as the people who motivated and supported him to become the man he is today.

"I stand on the shoulders of so many. Know that I will never forget that," he said.







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