

Real Life 101 Scholarship Fund Grants Empty Promises to Young Black Men

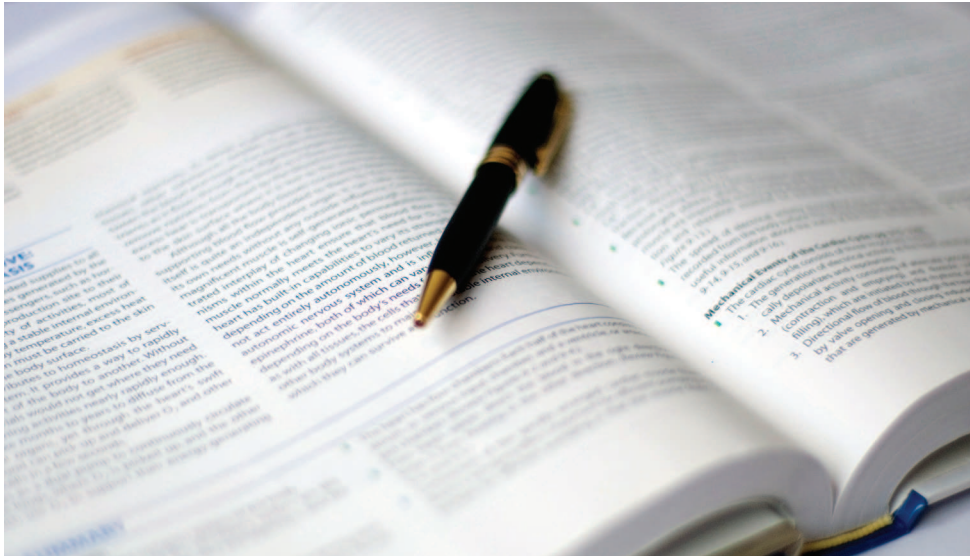


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Real Life 101, a Detroit-based nonprofit that provides scholarships for African American males, was not able to procure funds for scholarships this year for the first time in the organization's 17-year history - leaving some recipients unable to enroll in school.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The names of the students and parents have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals and their families.*

By **Chris B. Bennett**
The Seattle Medium,
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Nine months ago, 18-year old Jason Smith* was on top of the world. He had graduated from high school, been accepted to his college of choice and had just been awarded a scholarship worth up to \$10,000 from Real Life 101, a non-profit organization out of Detroit, Michigan that provides college scholarships to African American males. The unsolicited scholarship offer was a direct result of the 100 Black Men gathering that took place in February of 2016 at Southshore Pre-K-8 School in Seattle. The event, which drew national media attention, saw over 200 Black men greet students and provide them with encouragement as they entered the school building. Shortly after hearing about the event,

Real Life 101 reached out to the school with an offer to fund scholarships for Black males who previously attended the school.

Jason's mother, Lisa Smith, said that the scholarship was a blessing that could really help alleviate the financial pressures she and her husband were facing to pay for Jason and his older sister to go to college while maintaining a household of five children.

"It was like winning the lottery," said Smith. "We all, Jason included, were very excited."

According to Smith, the excitement didn't last very long. She said they registered her son for college in September, and sent over all the paperwork requested by Real Life 101 in order for them to provide funding directly to the school. The family eventually received a notice from the school that the scholarship funds had not been received and that Jason's registration was in jeopardy of being dropped. Smith reached out to Real Life 101 and was informed that the funding

we can for our children and education is what's going to help them in the future, especially our young men."

Smith continued: "It was really like pulling the carpet from under Jason's feet, because he was so excited to be go-

year for up to five years); a new laptop computer; a computer backpack and be paired with a certified Real Life Mentor while in the program. The young men did receive the computer and backpack as promised. However, nearly one year after the

but that he has received compensation for books from the organization totaling about \$225. According to Jones, he was in jeopardy of losing his on-campus housing when he reached out to the organization during the fall semester about

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Unfortunately, Jason Smith was not alone.

Last year, Real Life 101 awarded scholarships to 10 African American males in Seattle. The awardees were supposed to receive: \$10,000 in scholarship funding (payable at \$2,000 per

initial announcement, the organization has failed to provide scholarship funds to the students who are currently enrolled in school, and instead of providing mentors the awardees were "directed" by the organization to "Find Your Own Personal Mentor."

One of the awardees, William Jones, said that he has not received the scholarship funds yet,

the status of his scholarship. Although they did not have the funds in place at the time, the organization did provide him with leads for other scholarships that he could apply for. Eventually, he took out student loans to help cover the remainder of his expenses for the semester.

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Movies cont'd from pg 6

I, about the grief-stricken fiancée (Paula Beer) of a late German soldier (Anton von Lucke) who forges a friendship with the mysterious Frenchman (Pierre Niney) she finds placing flowers on his grave. Cast includes Marie Gruber, Johann von Bulow and Ernst Stotzner. (In French and German with subtitles)

Mean Dreams (R for violence and profanity) Coming-of-age drama about a fed-up 15 year-old girl (Sophie Nelisse) who runs away from home with her protective new boyfriend (Josh Wiggins) to escape being beaten by her corrupt cop father (the late Bill

Paxton). With Colm Feore, Ryan Blakely and Joe Cobden.

Song to Song (R for profanity, sexuality, nudity and drug use) Tawdry tale of seduction and betrayal, set in Austin, revolving around the love triangles which develop when a couple of struggling songwriters (Ryan Gosling and Rooney Mara) enlist the assistance of a music mogul (Michael Fassbender) with a trophy waitress girlfriend (Natalie Portman). Cast includes Cate Blanchett, Benicio del Toro, Val Kilmer and Holly Hunter with cameos by Patti Smith, Iggy Pop and Flea.