

Dear Friends of More Than Bootstraps,

Please take a minute to read about our recent activities and accomplishments. None of these would be possible without your encouragement and support!

It takes  
**MORE THAN  
BOOTSTRAPS**  
to succeed



For more information, follow us on social media and visit our website-  
[www.morethanbootstraps.org](http://www.morethanbootstraps.org). Thank you!

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## Passaic High School Fellows and College Student Leaders

The More Than Bootstraps partnership with the Passaic Public Schools is well underway. Our college student Leaders are mentoring the high school Fellows as part of our mission to increase the number of first-generation students entering and succeeding in higher education.



The MTB Fellows for 2020-2021 academic year, all high school juniors, are **Jennifer Angel, Marisol Coliente, Ashley Delgado, Abigail Huitzil, Catherine Librado, and Juliana Suarez.**

Our MTB Leaders, graduates of Passaic High School who are currently in college, led the recruitment process for the high school Fellows after completing the summer training program in August 2020. The Leaders for 2020-2021 are **Rogreka Clayton, Michelle Contreras, Dhruvi Rana, Jocelyn Gonzalez, and Johana Lastor-Montes.**



**All students in the MTB program receive monthly stipends, laptop computers, and access to emergency resources to help them with the many non-tuition expenses of higher education and to enable them to devote time to come together as a community of success.**

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*STUDENT TESTIMONIAL: "MTB positively impacted my confidence about going to college by surrounding me with students and former students with a similar situation as me and allowing me to learn from them, it makes me feel less stressed."*

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**MTB Second Annual Martin Luther King Day Event**

More Than Bootstraps officially launched on MLK Day in 2020, a few months after we obtained our 501(c)(3) certificate of tax exemption. Despite the challenges of COVID, we have made significant progress since then. To celebrate, we held a Zoom celebration on MLK Day 2021 (January 18). Our guest speaker was **Jessica Gonzalez**, a Passaic High School and first-generation college graduate who now works as an analyst for the U.S Justice Department.



Jessica was introduced by **Ashley Delgado**, the MTB high school Fellow who interviewed Jessica last year when the MTB high school students were tasked with making a presentation about a PHS first-generation college graduate. Several Fellows identified that task as one of their favorites:

*"My favorite part of my work this fall with MTB was interviewing Passaic high school alumni that have amazing careers now. It made me realize how successful I can be if I work for it. It was an awesome experience!"*

*"My favorite part of my work this fall with More Than Bootstraps would have to be interviewing college graduates and finding out what they are currently up to. It has reassured me that it does not matter where you come from, but where you are heading to."*

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## Navigating Family Expectations Workshop



One of the tasks we asked our MTB high school students to complete was to initiate a conversation with family members about their plans for higher education. Issues regarding leaving home and finding the resources to pay for college can be particularly difficult for first-generation students, so we followed up with a special workshop facilitated by Dr. Abisola Gallagher, EdD, a licensed psychologist and cognitive-behavioral therapist.

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**STUDENT TESTIMONIAL:** *"I joined because I'm a first generation student with huge goals but I wasn't sure how to get from point A to point B."*

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MTB recruited three interns from the [Rutgers University Master of Social Work \(MSW\)](#) program. **Yisel Gonzalez**, **Olivia Sharp** and **Mahogany Summers** support the college and high school students and their families.

MTB collaborated with the [Union Innovation NJ Alliance \(UNINJA\)](#), to secure refurbished laptops for the students in our program. UNINJA provides free or low-cost devices to fight the digital divide and technical support in order to democratize computation.

We are also working with the [Passaic Optimist Foundation](#), whose mission is to provide hope and positive vision through scholarships, grants, mentorship, educational guidance and the values instilled through community service. They seek to bring out the best in Passaic students and we are confident that we can collaborate to amplify the success of both organizations.



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### More Than Bootstraps in the News!

We have been grateful to receive some media attention, which has helped us spread the word about our work. You can read coverage of MTB in the *Westfield Patch* and in *ROI-New Jersey*. Audrey also published a piece in *The Hill* about the struggles of first-generation students to continue their studies during the pandemic.

[ROI-NJ.com article](#)

[TAP into Westfield article](#)

[Op-Ed in The Hill](#)

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STUDENT TESTIMONIAL: *"The aspect of creating connections outside of the program with college graduates and having guest speakers has made me believe that college is possible."*

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### Two MTB High School Fellows Accepted Into Rutgers Business School Pre-College Enrichment Program

MTB celebrates the fact that high school Fellows **Catherine Librado** and **Abigail Huitzil** were accepted into the [Rutgers Business School Pre-College Enrichment Program](#) and are taking their first step into higher education. RBS – PREP students, high-performing high school juniors, enroll in a Management Skills course and can earn 3 credits toward an undergraduate business degree. The program exposes participants to careers in business, life skills, and issues surrounding diversity.

The students were supported by their MTB college student mentors, **Rogreka Clayton** and **Dhruvi Rana**. Catherine noted that MTB has helped her focus on her future despite the challenges of the moment and, in her words, "get outside her comfort zone and open connections with people."

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STUDENT TESTIMONIAL: *"I'm undocumented, so I solely depended on state aid and scholarships to pay for school. I wish I understood sooner that going to community college*

*would've helped me sooner financially for my case scenario and that there is no embarrassment going to one to make sure I am not burdening myself or my family finance."*

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## Support the Students in More Than Bootstraps

To date, **More Than Bootstraps has raised over \$81,000** to support our students in Passaic. Our Facebook fundraisers and e-mail solicitations for GIVING TUESDAY were particularly successful. Thank you for all your support!

We have received cash donations from eighty individuals. In-kind contributions from board members cover all administrative expenses, so all donations go directly to fund student stipends. Institutional support includes a \$250 matching gift from the CME Group Foundation, \$1,000 from Temple Emanu-El and the \$2,500 grant from the KearnyBank Foundation.

We plan to double the numbers of students in MTB next year so we need your support! A contribution of **\$75** will cover the monthly stipend for a high school Fellow. A gift of **\$300** will enable a college student to give her time and expertise to a younger peer. A **\$1,000** donation will cover the stipend for a new Leader in our summer training program for 2021.

Please consider making a gift from your **donor-advised fund** or supporting More Than Bootstraps through your purchases on [AmazonSmile](#).

Checks can be sent to: **421 Highland Avenue, Westfield, NJ 07090**

Venmo: **@morethanbootstraps**

Paypal: **[paypal.me/MoreThanBootstraps](https://paypal.me/MoreThanBootstraps)**

**More Than Bootstraps is a 501(c)3 organization - Tax ID 83-2245008**

**DONATE  
Today!**

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MTB was founded by educators who understand the significant obstacles that first-generation college students face on their journey into and through higher education. To succeed, they need **[More Than Bootstraps](#)**