

27 Rags To Riches Stories That Will Inspire You To Chase Your Dreams

By **January Nelson** Updated October 14, 2018

Rags to riches stories are meant to motivate you. They show you that anybody can achieve their dreams, no matter how much money their parents had in the bank account when they were younger or how many dead-end jobs they had to work in order to pay the rent. *Celebrities look like they are living fabulous lives — but it wasn't always that way.*

1. YouTuber Casey Neistat lived on his friend's couch: Left home and had a kid at ~16, went to New York, lived on his friends' couch, made movies with his brother, moved to YouTube, and now is a multi-millionaire who has owned a company.

2. Ed Sheeran had next to no money: Moved to the states trying to make it in music with next to no money and somehow Jamie Foxx saw one of his performances at a small bar. Jamie saw something in him and told him he wanted to help him. Ed slept on his couch for 6 weeks as Jamie did his best to help him in his pursuit of his dream. Jamie got him a gig at the Apollo Theater in NY and if you don't know the Apollo is a mostly black theater so having white musicians and stand up comics is fairly uncommon. Ed goes on stage with a ukulele in front of a full crowd and performs. Got a standing ovation and a encore. The rest is history.

3. Snoop Dogg was arrested for selling drugs: Snoop Dogg is considered a West Coast king but it wasn't always an easily won title. Cordozar Calvin Broadus, Jr. was born in California's Long Beach neighborhood. During a time when the hood was overrun with gang wars, young Snoop had to pick a side. Broadus joined Rollin' 20 Crips as a teenager and was frequently arrested during his high school years for selling drugs. It wasn't until he found the outlet of rapping with friends Warren G and Nate Dogg that Snoop took his mind off the streets.

4. The founder of Cirque du Soleil worked on the street: The Canadian-born Guy Laliberté began his circus career busking on the streets: playing accordion, walking on stilts and eating fire. He gambled by bringing a successful troupe from Quebec to the Los Angeles Arts Festival in 1987, with no return fare. The bet paid off, and the circus group was eventually brought to Las Vegas, where they became the world famous Cirque du Soleil we know today.

5. Arnold Schwarzenegger lived without plumbing or a phone: One of the richest action stars of all time, Arnold Schwarzenegger is a seven-time Mr. Olympia with a net worth of \$400 million and a resume of movies that earned \$4.73 billion at the worldwide box office. He also boasts the title of the 38th governor of California. When he was born in 1947, however, his homeland of Austria was devastated by World War II, and the future "Governator" lived in a home with no plumbing and no phone. Hunger-based riots plagued the streets outside his door.

6. Mark Wahlberg used to sell drugs: The *Ted* actor dropped out of school at the age of 14 to become a street thug, who sold drugs and indulged in gang wars. Wahlberg also had to serve a 50-day sentence in prison for a violent assault on two men. His current estimated worth is around US\$ 165 mn.

7. Eminem had a rough childhood: By ninth grade, he dropped out of high school and decided to pursue music full time. It took performing and local rap battles, working dead-end jobs and creating a crazy alter ego, the famous "Slim Shady," to get noticed by the likes of Dr. Dre.

8. The creator of Forever 21 worked three jobs: Do Won Chang is the famous face behind Forever 21, who much earlier immigrated to the United States from South Korea, in 1981. Before

he founded Forever 21, he worked three jobs simultaneously, as a gas station clerk, a janitor and a coffee shop employee. That period lasted for three years before he founded the company and opened its first clothing store, in 1984. This family business grew quickly by taking advantage of the benefits of “fast fashion.” Forever 21 is now multi-national and has 480 locations across the world. It has also managed to bring in \$3 billion per year. And the next generation has been taken into the company, as Chang has brought his two daughters on board.

9. Celine Dion grew up in a poor family: Born the youngest in a family of 14 children, Celine Dion suffered tremendous poverty because her parents could not make ends meet to provide equally to all their children. Nonetheless, ‘her heart went on’ with her love of music. She started performing in small events, slowly acclaiming fame as a teen star with an angelic singing voice. With the support from her loving family, she endeavored to win multiple awards at a young age, and more as she grew up to be a hit singer. Her current net worth of \$800 million speaks volumes of what she has achieved in her lifetime, because she had to mortgage her home just to release her first record. It also points out Dion’s never-ending dedication and passion for music.

10. Selena Gomez couldn’t afford gas: Her mother was just 16 years old when she gave birth to Selena and had to work several jobs just to keep a roof over their heads and put food on the table. She also revealed, “I remember my mom would run out of gas all of the time and we’d sit there and have to go through the car and get quarters and help her get gas.”

11. Walt Disney was unemployed for a while: He used to be the cartoonist for the school newspaper. Disney went through the jobless phase where no one hired him, and his brother had to help him out with his job search. He went from rags to riches by starting out with advertisements and going on to animating his own cartoons.

12. Shania Twain sang to put food on the table: Twain was so poor growing up in rural Canada, her parents would have her sing in bars on weeknights to bring in money for the family. She’s also talked about how she and her sister were almost always hungry. Today, Twain is one of the world’s best-selling artists of all time, having sold over 75 million albums worldwide. She is also the best selling female artist in the history of country music, with a net worth of around \$350 million.

13. Oprah Winfrey was born into poverty: Winfrey was born into a poor family in Mississippi, but this didn’t stop her from winning a scholarship to Tennessee State University and becoming the first African-American TV correspondent in the state at the age of 19. In 1983, Winfrey moved to Chicago to work for an AM talk show that would later be called *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

14. Sarah Jessica Parker was on welfare: The 49-year old actress may be an old timer in the movie industry but long before she found stardom in the TV series *Sex and The City*, Sarah Jessica Parker and her family lived on welfare for many years. Growing up in Nelsonville, Ohio, Parker said in an interview that her family seldom celebrated Christmas, birthdays, and other family occasions. She vividly remembers living with no electricity and their phone lines cut because they couldn’t pay the bill. Today, Parker’s net worth has risen to \$90 million.

15. Daniel Craig used to sleep outside: The Bond actor Daniel has many critically acclaimed films in his kitty, but according to Hollyscoop, the actor used to sleep on park benches during his struggling days. He is worth an estimated US \$65 million.

16. Leighton Meester’s mother gave birth in prison: Leighton Meester may portray the rich spoiled brat Blair Waldorf without any difficulty, but Waldorf’s fictional life is nothing compared to Meester’s actual upbringing. Meester’s mother gave birth to her while serving time in prison and was raised by her grandmother for most of her childhood in Mango Island, Florida. When Meester mother got out, the two went to live in New York, where Leighton started a career as a model. In 2007, they

relocated again, this time to Los Angeles, where she eventually managed to get a break in the show business. She is slated to star in three films, set for release this year.

17. Chris Pratt lived in a van: After cutting his teeth playing sidekicks and funnymen, the character actor was immediately promoted to the A-list when he was named the MCU's Star-Lord, going on to secure gigs fronting 2015's *Jurassic World* (and the sequel) as well as sci-fi tentpole *Passengers* and a *Magnificent Seven* remake. Turn back the clock to the late '90s, however, and there were no red carpets and caviar, only shag piles and fleas—he was living in the back of a van with a friend.

18. Tyler Perry was physically abused: He was a victim of physical abuse, courtesy of his father, to the point of him even attempting suicide. Inspired from 'The Oprah Winfrey Show', he started immortalizing his life on paper, only to discover the joy of writing and eventually the desire to be a professional story-writer. He then began to create musicals and stage plays on sentimental themes, slowly building himself up to be one of the most successful playwright of modern times. His current net worth stands at \$400 million, exemplifying how perseverance can always end up on top.

19. Leonardo DiCaprio lived in a dangerous town: The actor used to live in a seedy LA neighborhood where he saw drugs, poverty, prostitution, and violence at a very tender age. He told *The Times*, "It goes back to that neighborhood. It came from the fact that I grew up very poor, and I got to see the other side of the spectrum." Now DiCaprio's net worth is estimated at \$245 million.

20. Mila Kunis acted her way out of poverty: Kunis may be worth \$55 million now, but she hasn't forgotten her roots. She's even publicly vowed that her and Ashton Kutcher won't raise entitled children. And we guess the reason for that is pretty clear. It's because she knows how it feels to be poor.

21. Halle Berry lived in a homeless shelter: The Oscar winning actress ran out of money when she moved to US to become an actress. She even stayed in a homeless shelter. During an interview to *Star Pules*, Berry said, "It taught me how to take care of myself and that I could live through any situation, even if it meant going to a shelter for a small stint."

22. Hilary Swank lived in a trailer park: Long before she became the *Million Dollar Baby*, Hilary Swank had to endure the hardships of poverty. Growing up, Swank lived in a trailer park back in Washington with only her mother to care for her and her two siblings. Swank's father left the family when she was young. When her mother lost her job, the family decided to take a chance at life and moved to California. Living in their car, Swank and her family worked on several jobs before they could afford an apartment. Swank's break came when she got a lead role in *Boys Don't Cry*. The award-winning actress now lives well and beyond her former state, with \$40 million stashed in the bank.

23. Steve Jobs could not afford college: Jobs was given away for adoption by his biological parents and he became interested in electronics after his foster dad showed him the joys of technical tinkering in their garage. He had to drop out of college, because his education was costing his foster parents a lot. He used to return Coke bottles for money and live on free meals at the Hare Krishna temple. A hippie who used to trip on LSD, Jobs went from a technician in Atari, Inc. to becoming the CEO of Apple Inc.

24. J.K. Rowling dealt with poverty: Born in a lowly English family, Rowling battled depression, suicidal tendencies and poverty to become one of the most loved British authors in the world for her hugely popular Harry Potter series. Highly imaginative as a kid who thrived on stories, she drew from her surroundings and the people in her life as inspirations for the books which have now become one of the biggest movie franchises. From her humble beginnings, she has gone on to become one of the most powerful women in the United Kingdom.

25. The manufacturer of Ray-Ban and Oakley lived in an orphanage: Del Vecchio was one of five children who could not be supported by his widowed mother. After growing up in an orphanage, he went to work in a factory making molds for auto parts and eyeglass frames, where he lost part of his finger. At 23, he opened his own molding shop. That eyeglass frame shop expanded to the world's largest maker of sunglasses and prescription eyewear. Luxottica makes brands like Ray-Ban and Oakley, with 6,000 retail shops like Sunglass Hut and LensCrafters. His estimated net worth is now above \$10 billion dollars.

26. Kevin Smith maxed out his credit cards to follow his dreams: Maxed out all his credit cards to make the movie Clerks. If it failed he would have been completely fucked.

27. Jim Carrey lived in a van: Comedian-turned-actor Jim Carrey boasts a net worth of \$150 million and a resume of movies that have grossed nearly \$4.9 billion worldwide. But before a role on "In Living Color" launched the Canadian comic's career in 1990, things weren't so smooth. At 12 years old, the actor was homeless and living in a van after his father lost his job

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