



“1 in 5 college students is a parent. This podcast is about them.”

1 in 5 vividly profiles students who are parents pursuing their education while raising a family and working. Today, more than one in five college students (22%) are parents.

Given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, guests also share the challenges they faced working, studying, parenting, and staying healthy from home. New episodes will be released every Tuesday from February 16 to March 25, 2021.

From [Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#), *1 in 5* episodes feature in-depth conversations with student parents and those who advocate for them in the fields of education, philanthropy, non-profit, and research, among others – including Ascend’s [Parent Advisors](#) who inform our [Postsecondary Success for Parents \(PSP\) Initiative](#).

Jesus Benitez: It was one of those nights and I’m like, “Yeah, this cannot be it. This cannot be it. I’m killing myself almost 12, 15 hours a day.” And I’m like, “Yeah, I cannot do this. I cannot do this no more.”

Waukecha Wilkerson:

We are very tenacious. We are resourceful. We are persistent. We know how to take no and turn it into yes.

Pamela Kirkland:

I’m Pamela Kirkland, a reporter and audio producer. We just heard Jesus Benitez and Waukecha Wilkerson, two of the student parents at the heart of 1 in 5, a new podcast from Ascend at the Aspen Institute. Jesus and Waukecha represent the 22% of college students today who are also parents, hence our name, 1 in 5. They’re remarkable for their strength and determination, for their hard work to lift themselves up, and their families, for navigating the complex and often unforgiving world of higher education, and for striving to make scores of dedicated student parents more visible to their campus communities and institutions, where they’re often overlooked and uncared for.

Many are enrolled in community college. Most are women. And many are single parents. 1 in 5 will challenge the misconceptions about student parents.

Michela Martin: Maybe part of the reason why student parents remain invisible too is that there really is a different kind of stigma about parenthood. There’s this idea that

you chose to be a parent, maybe you should have waited until you were done with school.

Kirkland: 1 in 5 will recall the victories along the way, like when Waukecha had her aha moment.

Wilkerson: I said, "That's it! It's psychology." Like this is the moment that people talk about when they say, "Oh, just take your classes and you'll figure it out. I said, "This... I'm having that moment. It's psychology."

Kirkland: We'll examine how student parents reinvent, challenge, and push themselves to create new futures for themselves and their families.

Benitez: He's 11 years old, so he's very, very smart. He's so logical. He loves games. He loves being outside.

Kirkland: Every week, you'll get to know a student parent on their own terms, speaking about what's important to them and guiding us to a deeper understanding of how their challenges are also our challenges. You'll also witness the difference a two generation approach can make in supporting students like Michaela, Waukecha, and Jesus, because when parents succeed, children succeed.

Martin: And I was just like, "Yep, I'll just have this baby and it'll be healthy, and happy, and I'll just go to school with it, and then it'll go to daycare."

Kirkland: 1 in 5 is produced by Lantigua Williams & Co. Listen and subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon Music, and everywhere you listen to podcasts.

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