July 2026 Alumni Spotlight: Jodi Anderson Jr., BA '22, MA '22.

Jodi Anderson Jr. is cofounder of Rézme, a fair-chance hiring technology platform he started to help employers hire justice-impacted talent and to automate the discovery and filing of government hiring incentives. He built Rézme around one conviction that came straight from his own life: People who have not had ideal experiences should still be able to capture the full economic value of their talent. He was incarcerated from his teens into his early twenties, and an early college program reached him while he was inside. That program (taught by Cornell professors) is the reason he made it to Stanford, and it's the reason he does everything he does now. Alongside Rézme, he cofounded PipeDreamers Foundation, a nonprofit bringing tech education to justice-impacted and underserved youth, and he's a researcher at Stanford's Accelerator for Learning. During the GSE he completed his POLS field project in collaboration with Cornell's Criminal Justice and Employment Initiative, and after graduating he held a Cornell appointment as director of technological development. His throughline is simple: Use technology to help people capture the economic value their talent deserves to improve their lives.

What led you to Stanford and the GSE?

I didn't take a traditional road. In the summer of 2014, I sat in my first Cornell class as an incarcerated student at Auburn, through the Cornell Prison Education Program. Books were the one thing they would give you an unlimited supply of, even in solitary, so I read. Over time I earned 90 college credits, which reduced my sentence by several years and gave me a path I never thought was available to me. When I got out, I transferred those credits to Stanford and finished my bachelor's degree.

The GSE came next because of one question I couldn't stop asking myself: What if I tackled the criminal justice system *through* education and technology? I enrolled in the master's program in Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies to chase exactly that, with a focus on policy and technology. Being in Palo Alto, surrounded by people building things, made the impossible feel buildable.

How did your education and time at the GSE inform your career and life path?

The GSE gave me the lens I use every day. I came in with lived experience and a problem I cared about, and the program gave me the rigor to do something with it. My training was grounded in the learning sciences and in data and research methods, always pointed at real impact and

outcomes rather than theory for its own sake. The methodology I carried out of there was research to practice to scale, and I still run everything I build through that sequence.

What truly made the difference was the blend. Entrepreneurship courses, research classes, and business classes sitting side by side in one curriculum. I had not experienced anything that intense or that integrated anywhere else, and that mix is what let me turn an idea into an actual company. A lot of it crystallized through Stanford's Accelerator for Learning, where I started connecting early-stage edtech ideas to the learners who need them most.

The GSE also taught me to design for the people who are usually designed around, not for. I think about that constantly: The folks who most need resources are usually the ones least likely to receive them, and good technology can change who gets reached. That combination is what I built Rézme on, what became PipeDreamers, and what drives my work in the world.

Who were the key stakeholders or mentors in your journey?

The first mentors were the Cornell professors who walked into a prison and treated us like students worth teaching. I had been told by prison authorities that I was "unteachable." They acted like that was nonsense, and that changed the trajectory of my life.

At Stanford, a few people changed my path directly. Richard Shaw, Stanford's Dean of Undergraduate Admission and Financial Aid, was my first advisor when I arrived as an undergraduate, and he helped me find my footing on a campus I never expected to reach. GSE Dean Dan Schwartz gave me the scholarship that made the master's possible and introduced me to the Stanford Accelerator for Learning, which became home base for so much of my work. And Keith Bowen's course is where the idea for Rézme became a real product. That class is where I built the first versions and started treating this as a start-up rather than a hope.

And on the building side, my brother and PipeDreamers cofounder Dante Richardson and my Rézme cofounders (from the GSE, I might add) have been central to taking the ideas from the classroom into something real and operating in the world.

What key events or memories have shaped your experience to date?

That first Cornell class inside Auburn in 2014 is the moment everything turns on. It's where I started to believe a different life was possible.

Another moment that stays with me: At a Cornell Prison Education Program graduation inside Auburn, in the middle of a snowstorm, Doris Buffett flew in by helicopter to be there. Watching someone go to that length told me that academia and education actually valued us as contributors to knowledge, not just as people to be helped. That was when I started taking all of it seriously.

At Stanford, one of my favorite memories is wandering into a campus start-up expo and realizing technology could be a tool for the exact problem I'd lived. There wasn't an app for that yet, so I set out to build one, and that was the start of Rézme. I also coordinated the Stanford Arts-Based Diversion Program around that time.

The memory I hold closest, though, is a project a group of us students built together. We partnered across Stanford, the Law School, the CS department's Code in Place program, and the Stanford Center for Professional Development to bring computer science courses to incarcerated youth in detention centers across California. The classes helped them work toward employment, and in some cases earn time off their sentences. At their graduation, we brought in people from Google, Quora, LinkedIn, Reddit, Uber, Figma, and Meta to meet the students and mentor them toward tech careers once they came home. Watching that room come together is the moment I knew this was my life's work, and it became the foundation for PipeDreamers.

What are you doing now, and what's next?

Right now most of my energy goes to Rézme. As cofounder, I'm the one carrying the original vision forward: getting fair-chance hiring technology into the hands of frontline employers and making the legal and incentive side effortless for them. In parallel, I'm part of an NSF research project with Cornell's ILR School studying the stressors of the job search for justice-impacted individuals. I'm also still researching at Stanford's Accelerator for Learning, running PipeDreamers, and serving on boards at Jobs for the Future's Center for AI & the Future of Work, the Responsible Business Initiative for Justice, and Howard University Law's AI Initiative.

What's next is the question I find most urgent: How does AI reshape the pathways to opportunity, and how do we build the on-ramps so underserved people can actually use these new tools to enter the economy and capture opportunity? Powerful technology usually reaches the already-resourced first. I want to make sure that this time, the people who need it most are not last in line.

What advice or message would you like to share with alumni peers, future graduates, and aspiring GSE students?

Breaking into a path no one who looks like you has traveled can feel herculean. I know that feeling intimately. The thing I'd tell you is that the unfamiliar path is usually the one worth taking, and education is the lever that makes it possible. For me, books in a cell turned into credits, credits turned into Stanford, and Stanford turned into a company built for the people I left behind.

My real advice is this: Pick the hard problem on purpose. Choose something intractable that actually matters, because when you do, you end up pointing your whole network and every resource you have at something worthwhile, and the reward if you pull it off is far bigger than anything safer you could have chased. And understand that the network around you at Stanford wants you to solve real problems. It will marshal resources to help you, from coursework to connections to software tools to other dedicated, mission-aligned people who want in on the work.

So build for the people who are usually left out of the design. Stay a little arrogant about what you're capable of, especially when someone tells you what you're not. And remember that your hardest chapters are often the exact qualification the work needs.