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Untitled

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Social Justice Autobiography, by Tyler Anerson

I, Tyler Anerson, Inmate M36799, am a product of the system. I was born into the world destined to fail. My mother was a crack addict at fourteen when she had me. She had two other kids before turning seventeen. DCFS (Department of Children & Family Services) took us from her and put me and my brothers in foster care. They kept one of my brothers in Chicago, IL, our hometown, but moved me and my middle brother to Peoria, Illinois—a four-hour drive away from the family I haven't seen since I was nine years old.

I was put into four different foster homes, each one presenting a different type of hell. The caseworkers left me and my brother to fend for ourselves. Our cries for mercy and compassion fell on deaf ears to our white caseworkers. We finally got adopted in our last foster home, but she turned out to be worse than all our other foster homes combined. She treated us like slaves, beating us with anything she could put her hands on, for small infractions like watching her when she cooked, or watching somebody kiss on tv (even if it was a Disney movie). Feeding us was optional even though we didn't lack for food. We couldn't ask for any of it. Sometimes we went all day just eating once.

I ran away at age fifteen, tired of the way I was being treated and being ignored. Every time I ran away, the police would pick me up and take me right back. Not once did they ask or possibly care about why I wanted to run away all the time. They offered my foster mom assistance on whooping me. In their eyes, they felt more compassion for my adopted mom, who had to put up with the problem Black child. Not once did the police think that she was the problem. Despite all that I still wanted to do, my life went downhill after high school because I lacked the motivation to do the right thing.

I came to a crossroads: Here I am a high school graduate and I have nothing to show for it, surrounded by people who didn't have a diploma but who had more money than the teachers. I was easily influenced by these people because even though they were living wrong, they treated me right. When I had nothing, they gave me everything I wanted: a family. Now that I'm locked up for a crime I didn't commit, they still stand by my side, accepting me because they know I'm not the monster they paint me as. They knew the odds were stacked against me and that what the DA or indictment papers say don't matter because they knew me since I was a runaway fifteen-year-old and they trusted me in their house around their family and kids. I did nothing to break

that trust then or now. So, I might not be accepted in a white gated community. But I will always be accepted in my hood because we all we got.

Genre:

Social Justice Autobiography

Tags:

Foster care; social workers; police brutality; community belonging