

From Foster Care to College



Embracing Higher Education for Foster Youth

JohnSeita.Com

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[FREE TRAINING MATERIALS](#)

[BOOKS](#)

[COMMENTARY](#)

[HISTORICAL PRESENTATIONS](#)

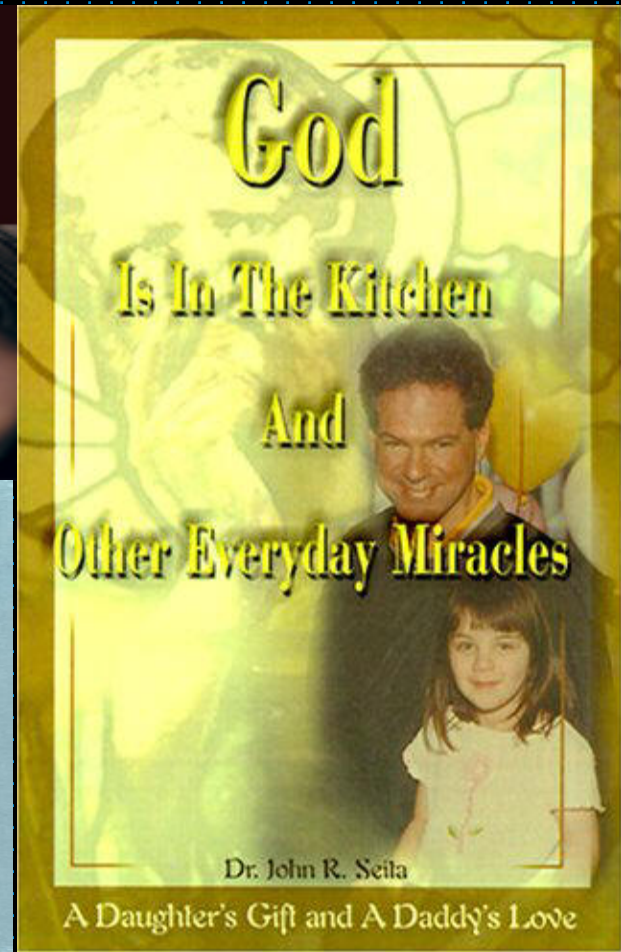
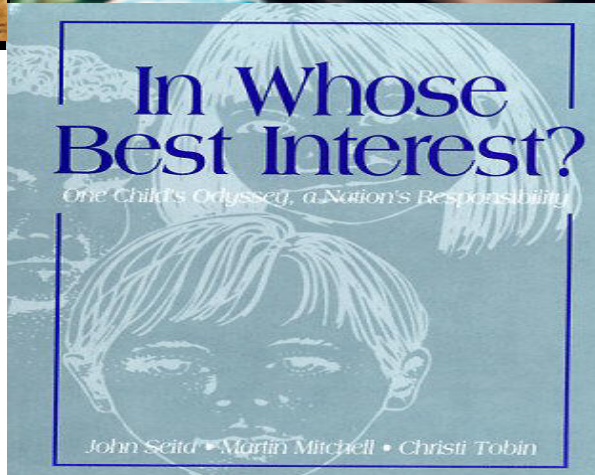
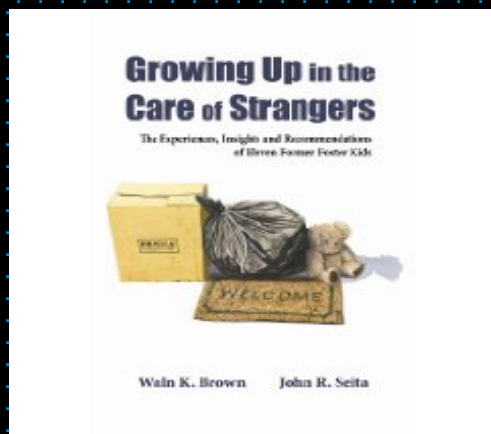
[PHOTO GALLERY](#)

[VITAE/RESUME](#)

[TEXAS REACH](#)



Body of Work



AGENDA

- ENVIRONMENT'S ROLE IN TRANSITION
- MY OWN FOSTER CARE AND TRANSITION EXPERIENCE
- MSU ORIGINAL RESEARCH
- POLICY PRACTICE SOLUTIONS
- MSU/WMU



Create Experiences for Lessons Learned

Insider's view

Inspiration and Hope

New skills/New Knowledge

Goldfish



Florida/Michig



LESSONS LEARNED

- CONTEXT MATTERS
- ENVIRONMENT MATTERS
- BOTH CAN HURT
- BOTH CAN HELP
- YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Learn or Not

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Atavism a (good/bad) Strategy



Atavism

GROOVY 70's
LEISURE SUIT





Behavior

SYMPTOM

FORM OF COMMUNICATION

GOAL DIRECTED

SEEKING TO MEET
DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

Ernest Hemingway



Norman Rockwell

((14))



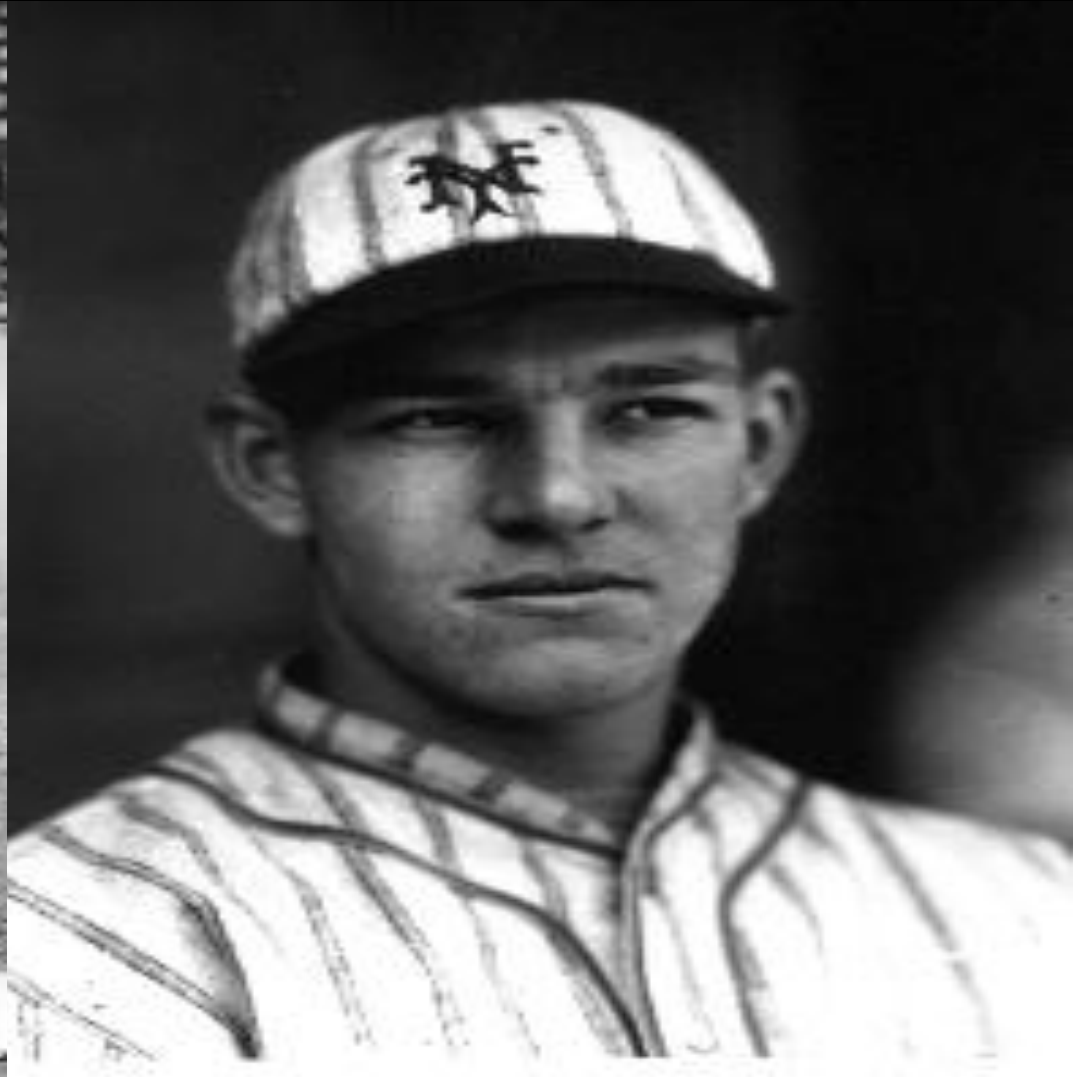




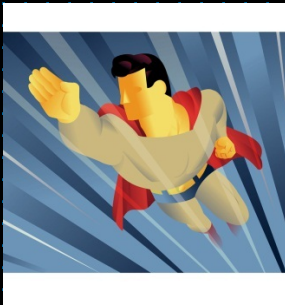
Miss Ott



Mel Ott



Lessons Learned!



Special Talent/Gift



Special Interest

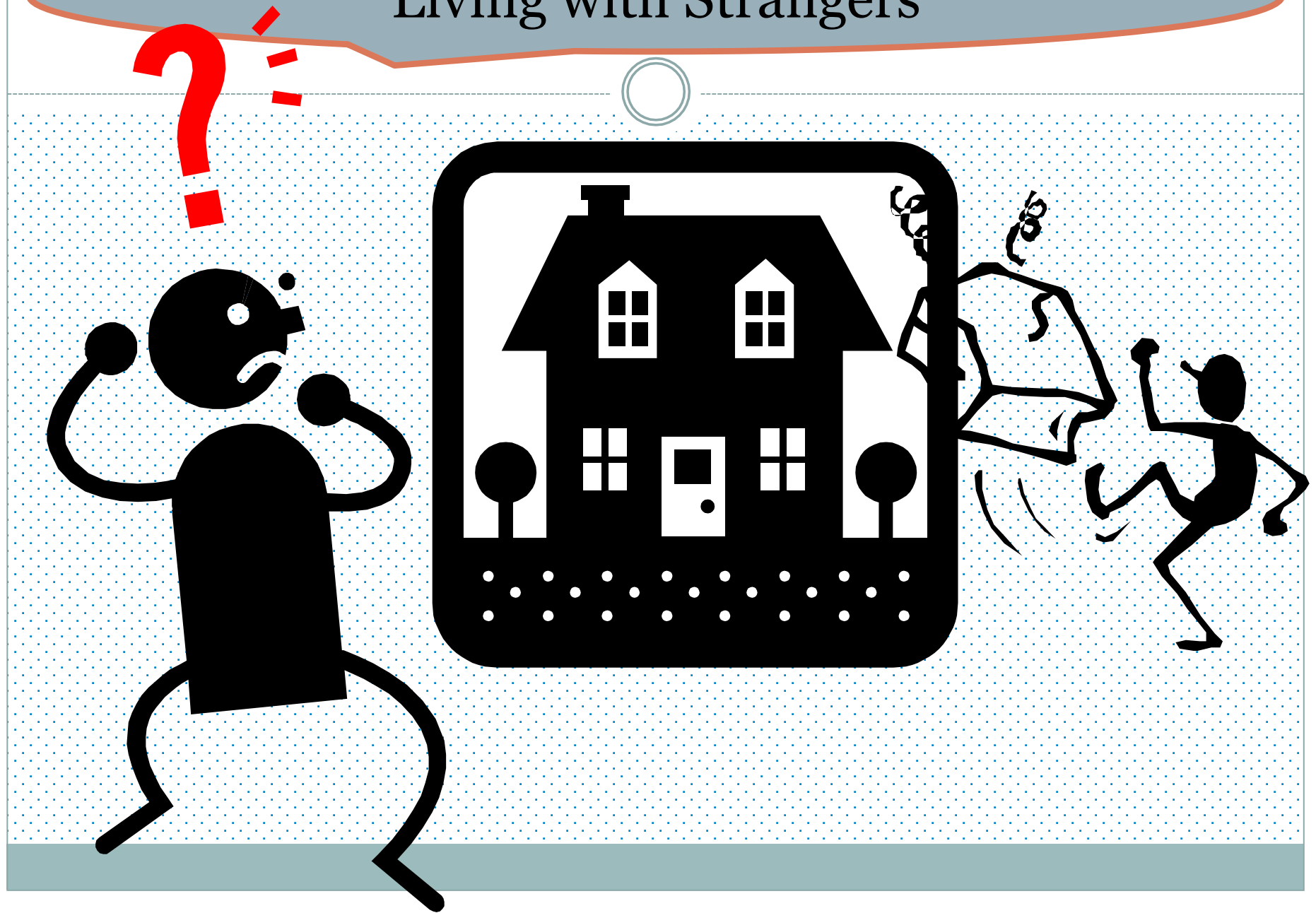


No more luck and pluck!

Rather than Reacting
to Problems

We are Responding
to Needs

Living with Strangers



Boys Home in Michigan???

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An all Girls school in Cleveland?

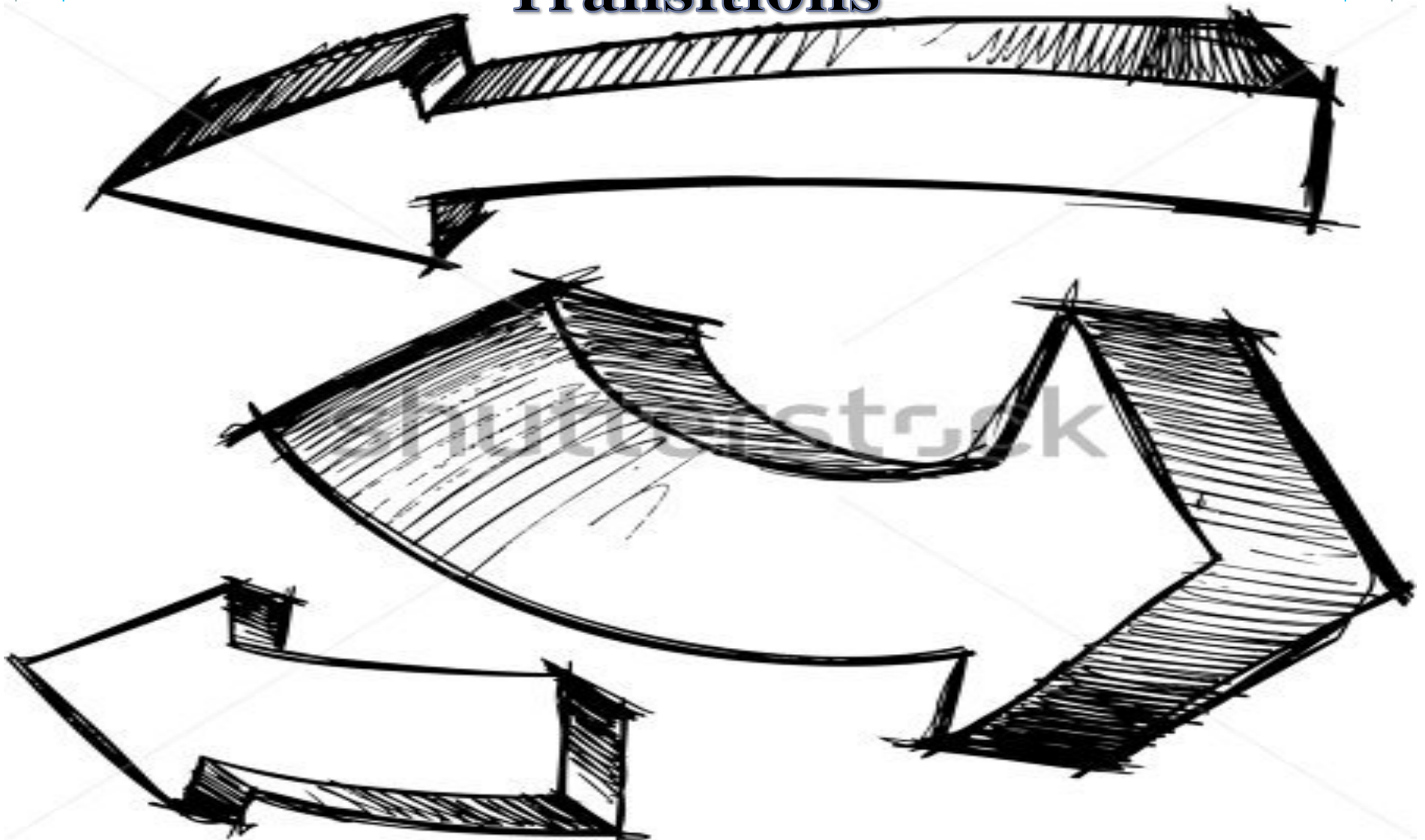
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Pathway to College Transitions



Foster Care Transition



Obstacles to Higher Education

Freedom!

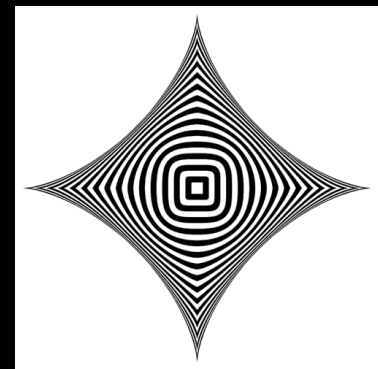


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This is Freedom?

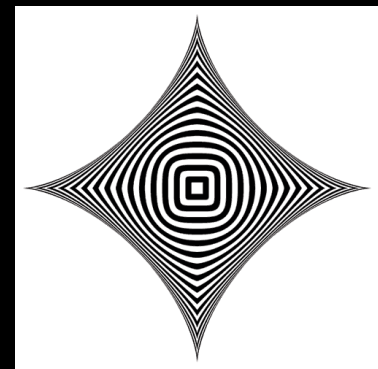


At least when I was an eight-year-old in the child welfare system there was some required pretense on the part of others to care about me and keep track of my whereabouts..



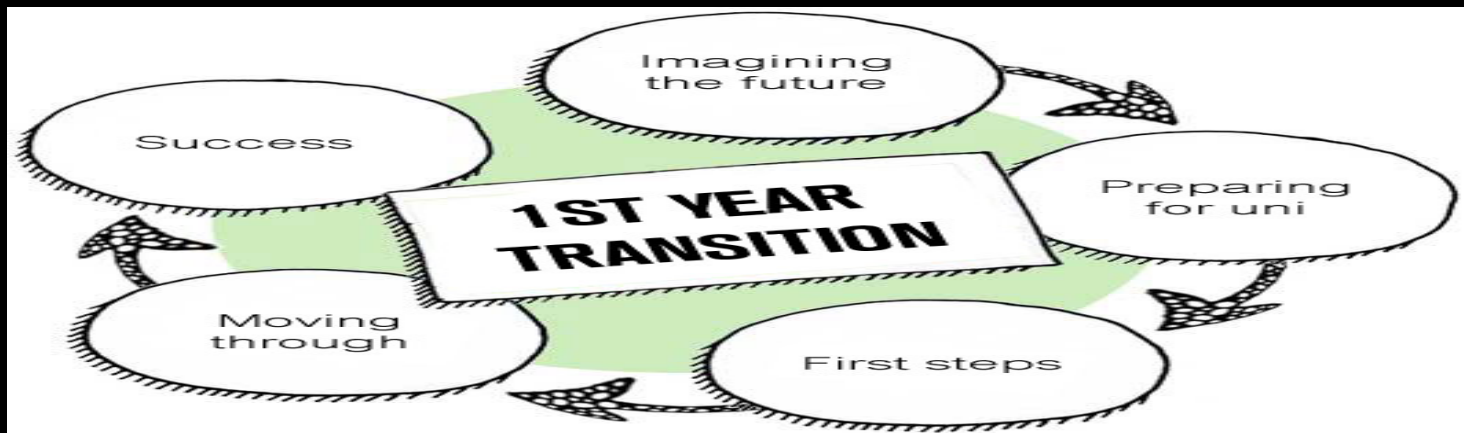
FREEDOM?

Now that I was eighteen, however, society expected me to assume one hundred percent of the responsibility for my own behaviors. Despite this fact, the childcare system had not prepared me for what I was currently experiencing or what was to come



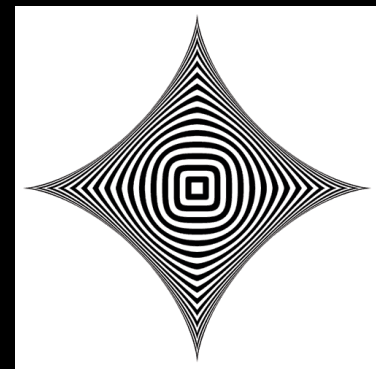
This is Freedom?

- I felt like a failure for my limited ability to cope in this brave new world. I did try to reach out for help, but felt only limited success in doing so.



This is Freedom?

The people around me seemed to keep saying, "You can do it," but no one told me how. Their advice lacked utility and common sense. I felt spiritually, socially and economically disconnected.



Transition Time

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- HOMELESS
- UNEMPLOYED
- BANKRUPT
- ARRESTED
- KICKED OUT OF COLLEGE
- FIRED FROM MULTIPLE JOBS
- COULD NOT MAINTAIN RELATIONSHIPS
- ABANDONED



Obstacles to Higher Education

- Financial Support
- Year-round Housing
- Lack of Mentors and Adult Guidance
- Academic Preparation and Support
- Socialization and maturity
- Legal, Medical, Counseling Needs
- System Navigation (DHS, Medicaid, Courts)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



Transitioning Out of Foster Care: Health Care Supports and Challenges



**FORMER YOUTH IN FOSTER
CARE DESCRIBE THEIR HEALTH
CARE STATUS AND
EXPERIENCES NAVIGATING
THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

Project Description-History



- **Recent research indicates:**
- **Foster care alumni suffer from significant health disparities:**
 - **Physical Health concerns**
 - ✦ Diabetes
 - ✦ High Blood Pressure
 - ✦ High Cholesterol
 - ✦ Thyroid Disease
 - **Mental health Concerns**
 - ✦ Anxiety
 - ✦ Depression
 - ✦ Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - **Sexual Health concerns**
 - ✦ STD's
 - ✦ Early parenting
 - **Dental Health**
 - **Alcohol and Substance Abuse**
 - **Social Health**
 - **Health Care Access**
 - **Navigating the health care system** is largely understudied and unknown.

Transitioning Out of Foster Care: Supports and Challenges



Methods:

- Administration of a questionnaire
- Administration of the Network Orientation Scale
- Focus Groups
- Individual interviews

The project identified the following:

- Kinds of physical and mental health problems alumni had experienced prior to placement, during placement, at during the transition out of care
- Health care safety net; i.e. access to health insurance
- Quality of services received, access to services
- Community assets that support health care
- Degree/nature to which social relationships impacted health care status

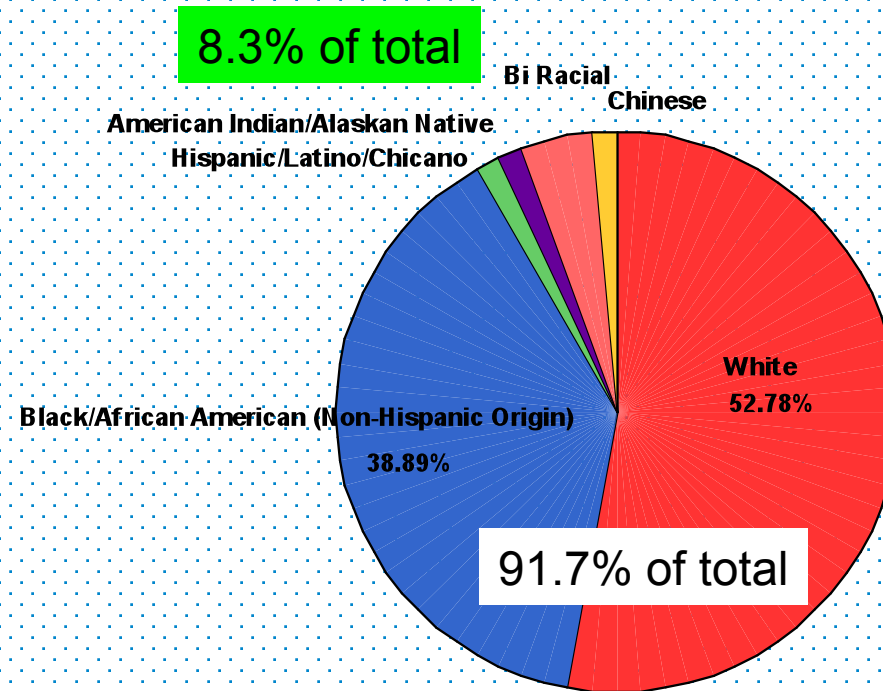
Preliminary Findings: Demographics

Type of Interview (n = 72)	
No Interview	4
Individual	19
Focus Group	50

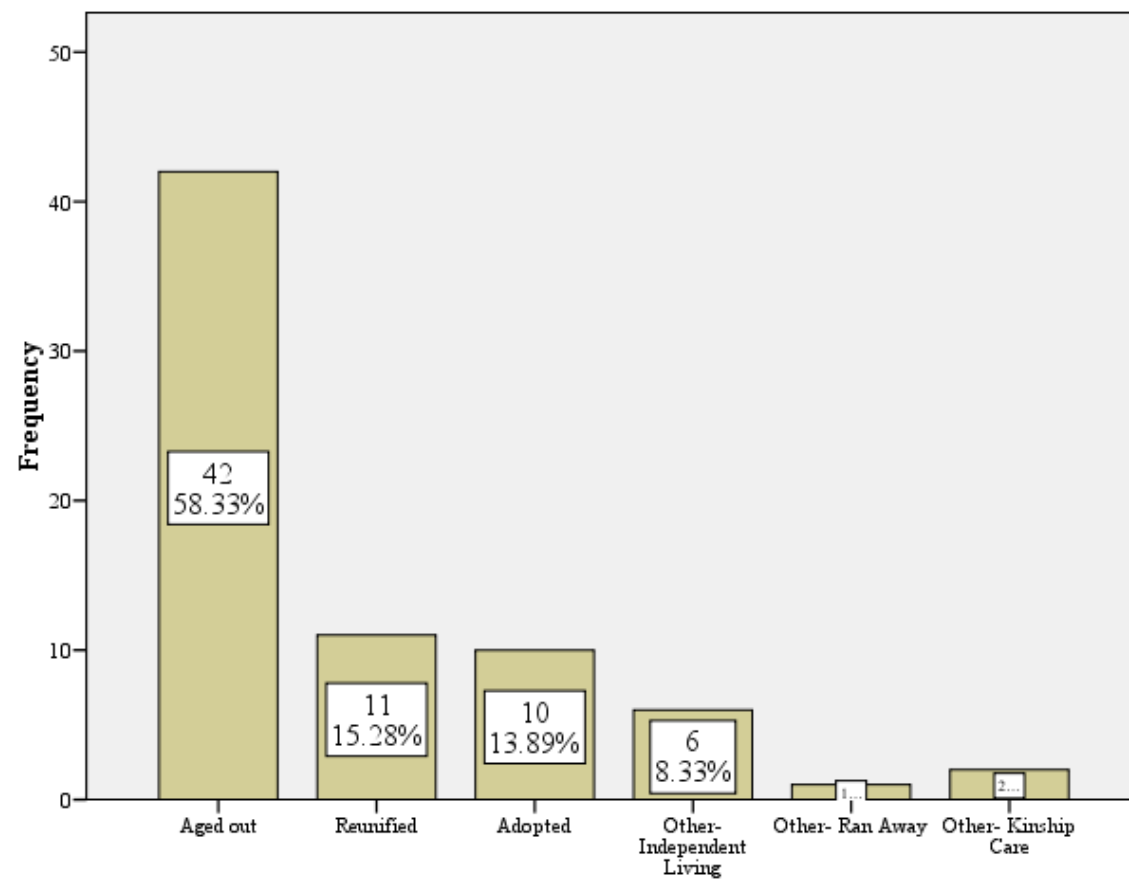
Gender	
Female	65% (47)
Male	35% (25)

Education	
Less than HS	44% (31)
More than HS	56% (40)

Race/Ethnicity (n = 71)



Foster Care Experience



Q4. Which situation best describes your experience as it relates to foster care?

Findings

Drug Use		Health Insurance	
No	73% (46)	Private	27% (19)
Yes	27% (17)	Public	44% (31)
(12 or 71% Marijuana)		None	30% (21)
Have Unmet Needs		Depression	
Medical	21%	No	68%
Dental	49%	Yes	32%
Vision	24%	Suicidal	14% (10)

Descriptives

Current Health Status		Number Years in Care	
Excellent	26%	Mean	7.1
Very Good	33%	Median	6
Good	22%	Mode	4
Fair	17%	Number of Placements	
Poor	2% (1)	Mean	5
		Median	4
		Mode	1

NOS Comparisons



- Participants have significantly higher NOS scores than the general population norms (one sample t-tests, $p < .001$)
- Simple linear regression found that the number of foster care placements was significantly predictive of NOS scores
 - Number of placements accounts for 12.3% of the variance in NOS Scores
 - For every five placements (the mean), NOS will increase by 2.88 points ($p = .004$)

Selected Case Studies-Maria



- Age 38, Placed in care at 16 for parental neglect. Suffers from Anxiety and Depression, suicidal tendencies
- Has never had access to health insurance since aged out at 18. Suffers from panic attacks in college, impacted ability to attend classes, had access to campus counseling services, lost access to services when graduated
- Hasn't seen a dentist in 6 years
- Mental health conditions impact relationship with spouse
- Currently employed as a foster care parent for a private agency

Case Study-Nathan



- Age 24, Placed in care at age 11 due to sexual and physical abuse, aged out. Suffers from ADHD, bipolar, anxiety, insomnia, migraines, chronic sinus infections, learning disability, hasn't seen a dentist since 2003.
- Lacks social relationships, looking to enter college

Case Study-Lisa



- Age 22, Removed at age 8, aged out. Suffers from Diabetes, and Asthma. Lost access to Medicaid in Dec. 2006 when she turned 21. Struggling to afford medications for physical disabilities.
- Has not been able to complete college or secure or maintain employment because of side effects of not being able to take meds.

Case Study-Danica



- Age 33, Removed at age 7, in and out of care through age 18. Suffers from Depression.
- Currently employed at a social service agency
- Due to frequency of moves while in care, Danica, who rents an apartment, moves frequently and chooses to live out of her suitcase-literally does not unpack, because that is her norm.

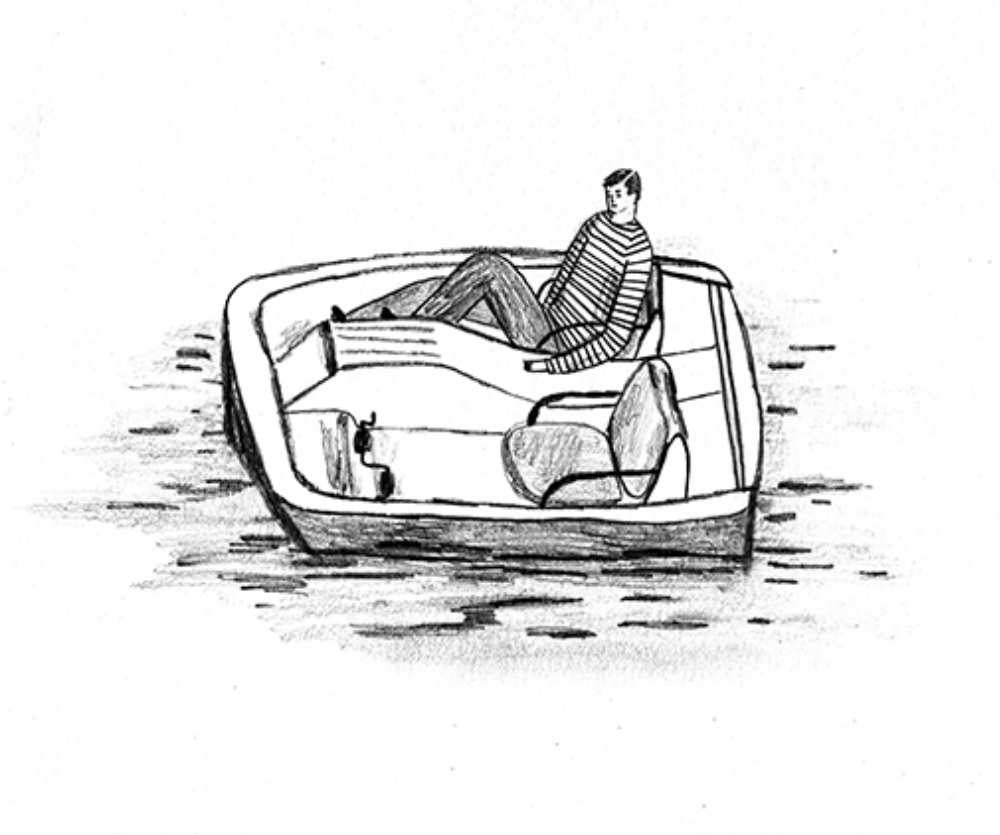
Case Study: James



- Age 25, Entered foster care at age 3, aged out at 20. Suffers from obesity, chronic heart problems, and asthma
- Identifies as a gay male
- High school drop out, struggling with homelessness.

General Research

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General Research



- Research has proved that long-lasting loneliness not only makes you sick; it can kill you. Emotional isolation is ranked as high a risk factor for mortality as smoking

A PARTIAL LIST OF THE PHYSICAL DISEASES
THOUGHT TO BE CAUSED OR EXACERBATED
BY ABANDONMENT WOULD INCLUDE

- ALZHEIMER'S
- OBESITY
- DIABETES,
- HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
- HEART DISEASE, NEURODEGENERATIVE DISEASES
- CANCER—TUMORS CAN METASTASIZE FASTER IN LONELY PEOPLE.

General Research

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- A key part of feeling abandoned is feeling rejected, and that, it turns out, is the most damaging part.
- When someone is on high alert for years at a time, then blood pressure would rise, and the part of his immune system that fends off smaller, subtler threats, like viruses, would not do its job.

General Research

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- While Cole discovered that loneliness could hasten death in sick people, Cacioppo showed that it could make well people sick—and through the same method: by putting the body in fight-or-flight mode.
- Functional magnetic resonance imaging scans showed that the experience of being snubbed lit up a part of the subjects' brains (the dorsal anterior cingulate cortex) that also lights up when the body feels physical pain.

General Research

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- Hormones would flood the body, his tissues would swell up, and white blood cells would swarm out to protect him against assault. If this state of inflamed arousal subsided quickly, it would be harmless. But if the individual stayed on high alert for years at a time, then blood pressure would rise, and the part of the immune system that fends off smaller, subtler threats, like viruses, would not do its job.

HPA AXIS

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- The HPA axis initiates the fight-flight response, which
- includes the following :
 - Stress hormones are released into the blood.
 - Blood vessels of the digestive tract are constricted so
 - more blood is available for extremities (arms and legs).
- Hypothalamus-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis-protects against external threats
- Immune system- protects against internal threats such as bacteria and viruses.

HPA AXIS

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- Visceral organs experience inhibition of growth-related
- functions of digestion, absorption, excretion, etc.
- The immune system is suppressed.
- Conscious brain functions are slowed.
- The HPA axis is a remarkably well-designed system for
- handling acute stresses. However, it was not designed to be continuously activated, as it often is in our modern stressful
- environment

WHAT TO DO?

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Family Privilege

The abundance of benefits, mostly invisible, that accrue from membership in a stable family.

- **MENTORS WHO PROVIDE CONSISTENT AFFECTION**
- **EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY**
- **BOUNDARIES, LIMITS AND EXPECTATIONS**
- **OPPORTUNITIES**
- **ROLE MODELING**
- **BELONGING**
- **SAFETY**
- **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**
- **SPIRITUAL VALUES**

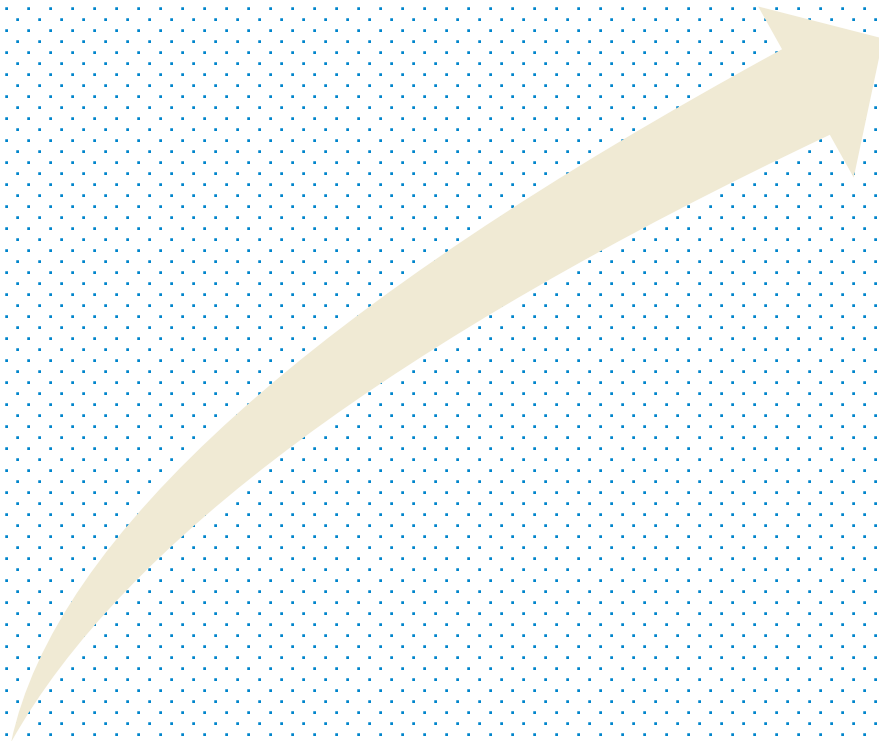


Family privilege

The desire to be part of a family always tugged at me, even though I never consciously thought about it. It was just there, deep down in that dark place, as were all my feelings, hopes and dreams, and sometimes I could not hold it back” (Folman, p. 150 in Brown and Seita, 2009)

Guiding Principles

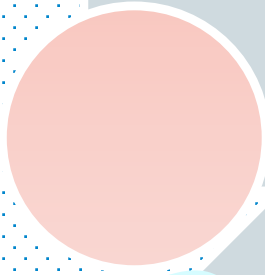
Values/Mission



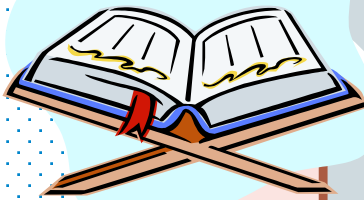
Guiding Principles



Connections



Continuity



Dignity

Opportunity





Connections

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Connections to a Caring Adult:

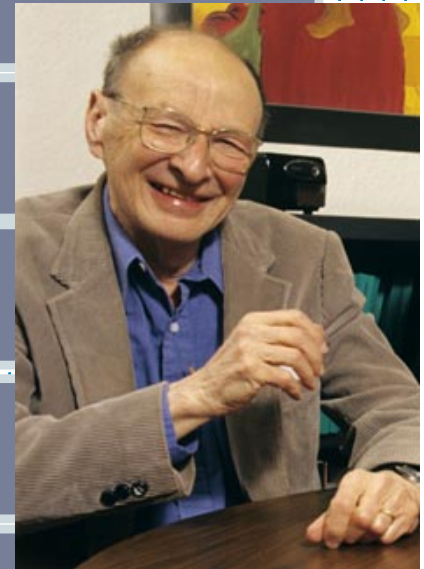
All children and young adults need at least one person who is irrationally crazy about them.

Community Connections

Career Connections

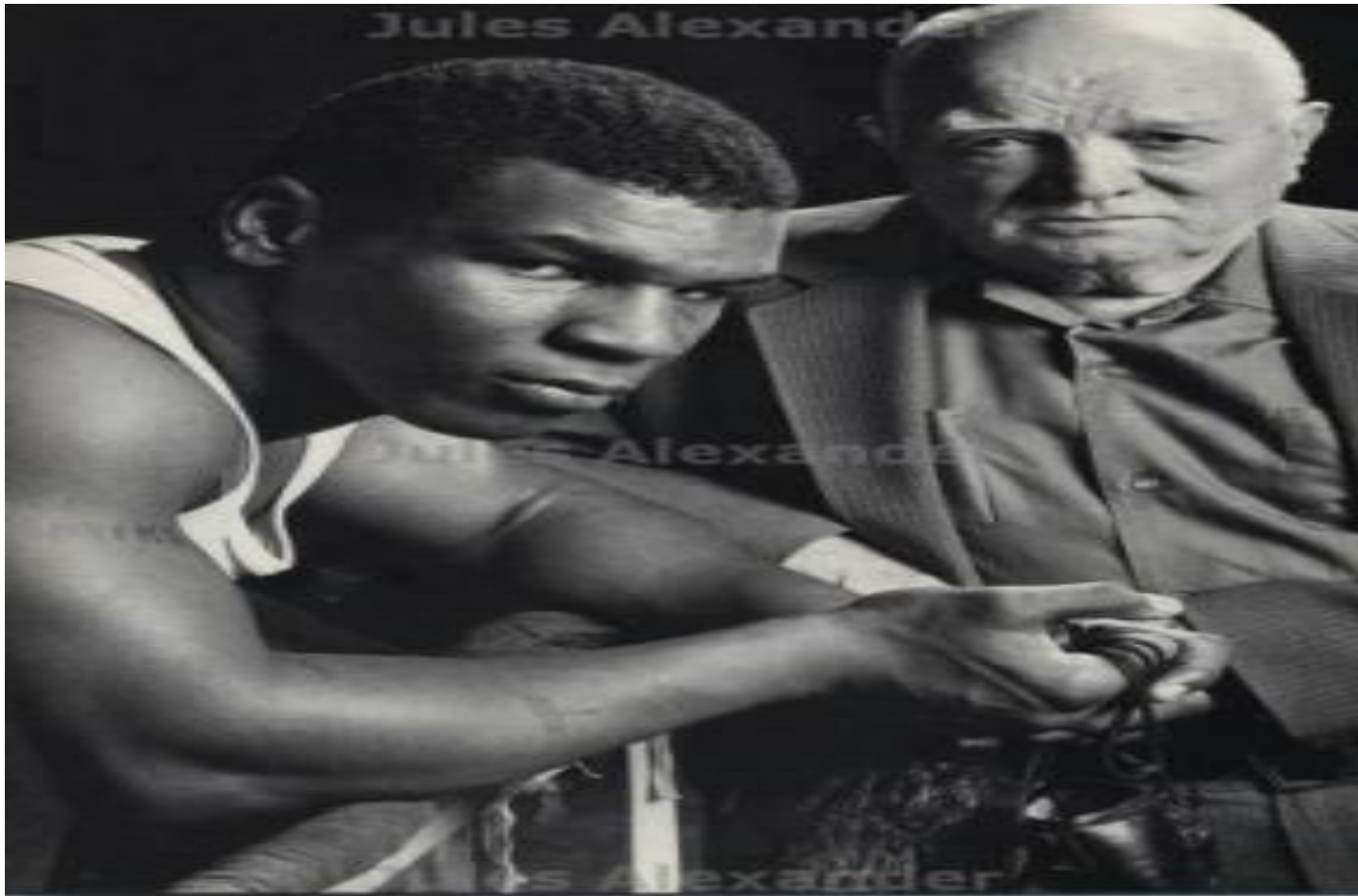
School Connections

Social Connections



Belonging

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Quakers

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*Left: William Penn at
age 22, 1666.*

*Below: Quaker meeting,
Philadelphia, 1888.*

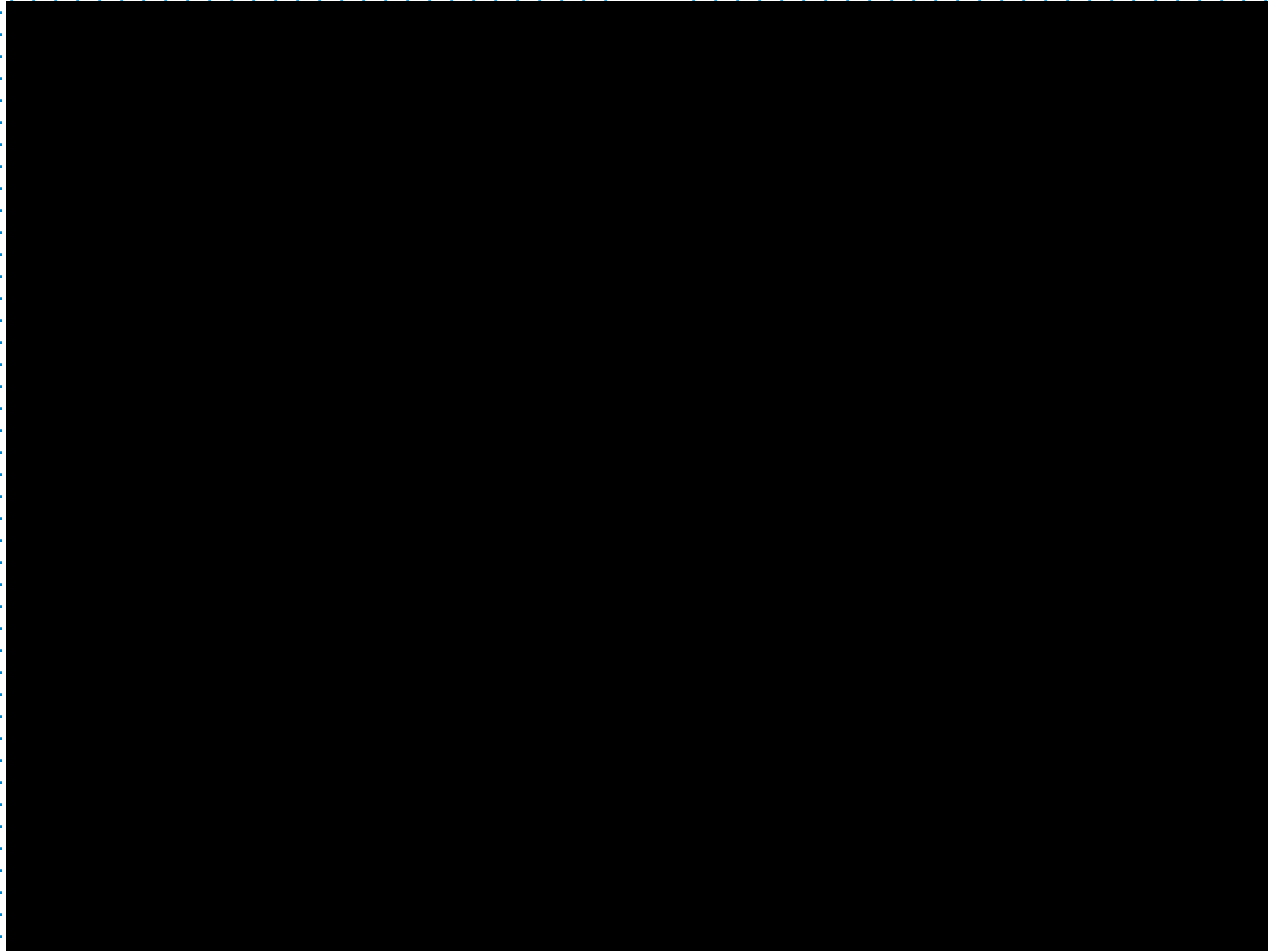


*Photos courtesy Library
of Congress website.*

Connecting to Belong



Connecting To Belong



CONTINUITY AND TRAUMA HEALING

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Predictability



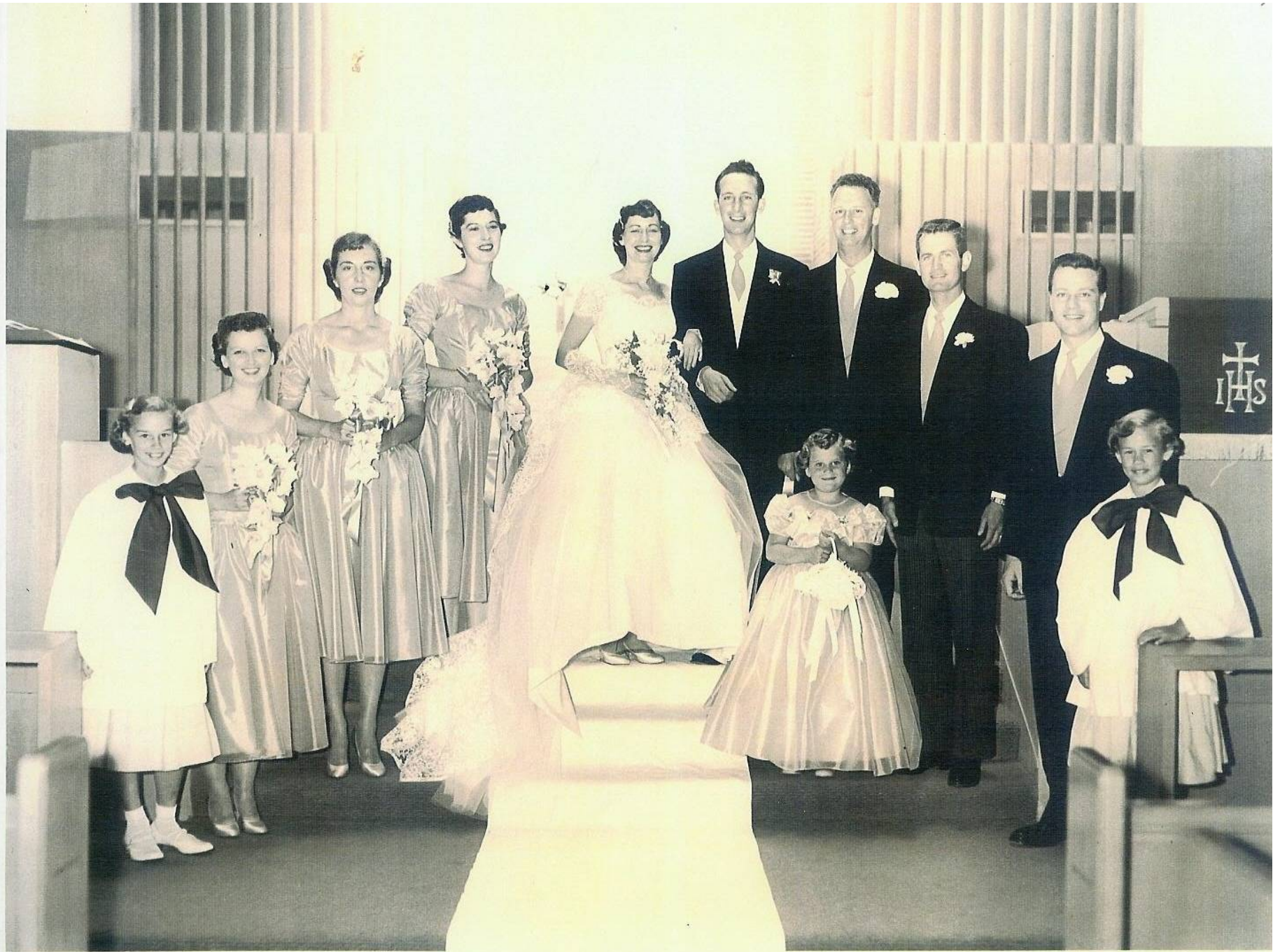
Permanence



Personal History



Spirituality





DIGNITY

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Courtesy

Respect

Safety

Food Shelter

Heath care





OPPORTUNITY

Pathways to
goals

Personal
Vision

Talent
Search

Opportunity
To Dream

SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM FOSTER CARE TO COLLEGE



Program Elements

- Full Undergraduate Scholarship
- Personal Support
- Academic Support
- Mentoring
- Community Involvement

Program Services

- Assessment of College Readiness (College Student Inventory)
- Customized Orientation and Welcome Week
- Paid-for Campus housing over semester breaks
- Emergency funds
- Assistance Securing Work Study Job on campus
- Academic Supports (e.g., assessments, tutors)
- Midterm Grade Reports
- Specialized Classes exclusive to Seita Scholars
 - First year seminar, Learning Styles
- Campus Coach Support

Campus Coach Model

- Campus Coaches: masters-level, clinically trained, working knowledge of foster care system
- 24-hour on-call
- “Go-to” person on campus
- Provide services based on student-centered philosophy
- Support with 7 life domain areas, navigating systems and connecting to campus departments

Student *Advisory* Group



Typical Student Aid Package

\$5,550 Pell Grant

\$1,000 SEOG

\$9,000 Seita Scholarship

\$5,000 Education Training Voucher

\$2,000 Work-Study

\$22,550

(NO LOANS!)

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



FAME
Fostering Academics, Mentoring Excellence

FAME consists of 6 services:

Foster Care Youth Scholarship Program:

Foster Care Camp

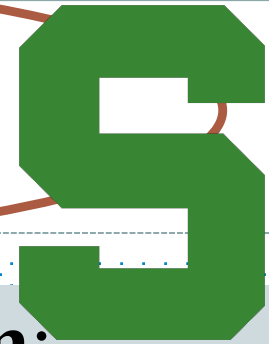
Mentoring Program

Care Packages for MSU Students

Campus Partners

Website

Michigan State University



Foster Care Youth Scholarship Program:

This endowed scholarship provides funds for books, special expenses, other educational materials, and emergency help with tuition.

Michigan State University



. Foster Care Camp:

- Provide youth transitioning from foster care an opportunity to spend time on a college campus and get a feel for “college life”
- Educate transitioning youth on how to prepare for college
- Give transitioning youth an opportunity to discuss any questions and/or concerns about college life with currently enrolled college students
- To distribute an Educational Resource Guide to transitioning youth
-

Michigan State University



Foster Care Youth Scholarship Program:

This endowed scholarship provides funds for books, special expenses, other educational materials, and emergency help with tuition.

Michigan State University



Mentoring Program

Foster care alumni who are students at Michigan State request and are assigned mentors for the academic year. These mentors are faculty, graduate students, MSU alumni and community leaders. After an orientation, the mentor and student make a plan for staying in contact with each other. This program is primarily supported by volunteers, private donations, and the MSU School of Social Work.

Michigan State University



Care Packages for MSU Students:

As their classmates receive care packages from their families during exam periods, foster care alumni at MSU receive care packages from the MSU Foster Care Program to encourage them during exam periods. This special program is supported by private donations (notably the Eastern Wayne County Alumni Club and the College of Social Sciences Alumni Board, and many individuals) and the MSU School of Social Work

Michigan State University



Website:

A website with resources for foster care youth and alumni provides guidance and resources to support higher education for students. This website is maintained by the MSU School of Social Work.

[http://socialwork.msu.edu/outreach/
foster_youth_alumni_svcs.php](http://socialwork.msu.edu/outreach/foster_youth_alumni_svcs.php)

Michigan State University



Campus Partners:

Foster care youth who are students at MSU benefit from the dedication and coordination of a range of professionals at MSU, including persons in the Admissions Office, Financial Aid, and Student Services, as well as the School of Social Work.

Questions?

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