A Voice for the Voiceless: Joseph Head’s Story

Mr. Joseph Head is a 34-year-old native of Dallas, TX, where he was placed in foster care at the age of 2 after being abandoned by his mother on a street corner next to The Dallas Life Foundation Shelter. After aging out of the child welfare system at the age of 18, he obtained his bachelor’s degree in kinesiology from Prairie View A&M University. Mr. Head is currently teaching for a nonprofit organization called Youth Believing in Change in North Dallas/Lake Highlands, TX.

Before entering care, Joseph and his siblings were exposed to domestic violence, drugs, and gangs in the housing projects of west Dallas. Eventually, Joseph’s mother lost her parental rights. Joseph entered the child welfare system and was placed in a group home on the eastside of Washington, DC, and later was adopted by a Jewish family in New York City. The adoption failed in New York City because Joseph’s adopted family thought Joseph was emotionally unfit and unstable to be in their home. Joseph’s adopted family decided to keep Joseph’s sister but not Joseph.

He was eventually moved back to Dallas, where he was placed in foster care in southeast Oak Cliff. This is where he became associated with the gangs in his neighborhood and in his foster home, witnessing the death of family and friends, violence, and a life in the illegal drug culture. After several more placements, foster homes, juvenile youth homes, and getting involved with the juvenile justice system in Texas, Joseph was introduced to Natalie Stolinsworth. Natalie was a court-appointed special advocate (CASA) volunteer in Dallas County, and she entered Joseph’s life after he tragically lost two of his foster mothers. After coming face to face with Joseph’s childhood wounds and scars, and after countless visits to the juvenile youth center, Natalie decided to remain in Joseph’s life despite the difficulty of trying to find a suitable atmosphere for Joseph to freely express his feelings and desires and share his dreams and visions. Natalie helped Joseph to see his significance and worth as a successful young man in society. She helped lift the cloud of self-doubt and self-defeat and helped him to see a promising future that went beyond the projects of west Dallas and the streets of Oak Cliff. She helped him reunite with his biological family. She supported Joseph in education, sports, and other activities that helped him develop social and personal relationship skills. She even inspired him to go to college in 2002. Natalie is still apart of Joseph's life today. Joseph calls Natalie an “angel sent from God.” He has been a speaker, counselor, and
community mentor to youth across the State. He has spoken to law professionals and mentored inner-city youth as well as youth in smaller communities. Whether it’s youth transitioning out of care or children at risk in outlying communities, his personal motto and heart’s desire is “to be a voice for the voiceless, loving arms for the abandoned and neglected, ears to hear the cry of the forgotten, and eyes for those that are blinded from seeing their own self-worth and value after being in the foster care system."

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