

Mockingbird Times



Recipient 2005 Angels in Adoption Award

Building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.

January 2006

Foster Care and Homeless Youth Speak Out Across the Nation

Volume VI, Issue I

Visit us online at www.mockingbirdsociety.org or call 206-323-KIDS (5437)

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HB 2002 — The Foster Care Achievement Act

**MISTY
LOU COOK**



It's a crazy world we live in, one where some people make more money than others, one where if you don't make enough money then you can not even afford to eat a loaf of bread, one where if you're a youth in foster care, you're penalized for getting your GED or High School Diploma. What else is insane in this world? If you're a youth in the foster care system in WA State, you lose all State support on your 18th birthday. Some 18th birthday present!! Can you imagine? "Happy Birthday Bobby, now I hope you've gotten absolutely everything you need together for your adult life, because you don't have our support for food, shelter or clothes anymore, or any healthcare. Good luck and good bye Bobby!!" Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, in the midst of discussing foster care youth dilemmas, told us that "less than 2% of foster care youth get a Bachelor's Degree". Foster care youth are essentially punished for academic achievements. As soon as a youth in the foster care system earns their GED or High School Diploma here in WA State, they are cut off from WA State support and will no longer receive medical insurance or money for food, shelter and other basic needs. Many of us would like to change this ignorant policy that forces way too many youth out of their nest before they have even begun to fly. Instead of kicking them out before they're ready, we should teach these young adults how to fly.

House Bill 2002 (HB 2002) would help foster care youth achieve and soar to the greatest of heights, and support them like any proud parent would. Essentially, HB 2002 acknowledges that any youth who just graduated from High School or earned their GED still needs assistance and guidance un-

til they are able to be self-sufficient and stable. Can you imagine if you heard of a parent that consistently cut off support as soon as one of their kids graduated or turned 18? What would you say to a parent if they kicked out a kid as soon as they turned 18, out onto the streets, and told them that they "aged out" of their parental care? I would say that's exactly what the State of Washington does every year to hundreds of foster care youth. The State of Washington has been an insensitive parent with bad policies for thousands of foster care youth, but there's still time to change these policies and learn from our mistakes.

While I was living on the streets, on and off for about 7 years, every other homeless youth I encountered was either running away from the foster care system or had recently "aged out" of the foster care system and had been booted out onto the cold, hard streets to fend for themselves. Something must be terribly wrong with the foster care system I thought, if all of these large numbers of youth were turning to drop-in centers for meals and cardboard boxes for shelters. These are the forgotten and abused children of a negligent State parent. What are the solutions to the epidemic of foster care youth being abused in placements and ending up homeless from "aging out" of the foster care system?

The first solution is having amazing and effective new foster care models in WA State like the Mockingbird Family Model (MFM), which is currently being replicated throughout King County in five different sites (1). The MFM can prevent a myriad of youth from ever feeling alone and in a place where they feel they have to escape. Results from an evaluation by the University of Washington's Northwest Children's Institute indicated that the MFM kept siblings together, parents felt supported, grades and concentration in school improved and caregivers were "very satisfied with the availability and quality of respite care"(2). The second solution is having safe HOPE beds available for runaway youth. This is essential

to preventing youth from having to sleep on a stranger's couch or under a bridge. Having a safe bed for abused foster care youth to stay at until they find a safe and healthy home is very basic and it works. Finally, in order to prevent youth who "age out" of the foster care from being homeless, we have to support them. Most youth who are 18 and have just graduated from High School still heavily rely on parental support before and during college, and foster care youth are no different in this way.

Statistics represent a small percentage of incidences reported. According to King County's website, half of the youth in homeless shelters throughout King County are ages 12-15 (3). Youth ages 16-17 make up more than a quarter of some of the estimated 2,000 youth on the streets of King County alone (4). It is sickening to me that there are more than 1,000 kids on the streets of Seattle that are merely 12, 13, 14 and 15 years old. The fact that there are over 500 youth who are 16 and 17 and homeless in King County is disgusting. We need to protect these vulnerable youth. The reasons that youth have resorted to running away to the streets vary widely, but statistics from King County's website indicates that, "physical abuse ranges from 40-60%"(5) and that the amount of youth running away from inadequate foster care homes "ranged from 21 percent to 53 percent."(6) I can tell you from personal experience that more than half of the youth on the street are youth from the foster care system, aged out or not. I've seen these youth fall through the cracks of the pavement first-hand for over half a decade and it needs to stop.

House Bill 2002 would benefit everybody in WA, from Spokane to Seattle to anywhere else in WA State. HB 2002 helps people from every cultural, financial, class, gender or educational background. It has strong appeal to all political spectrums, because these kids will become tax payers instead of financial re-

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What's Your New Year's Resolution?

**JAMICA
HENDERSON**



At the end of every year many people in our society think of a New Year's resolution we want to achieve. How many of you have ever made a New Year's resolution and stuck to it? Well I can be the first to admit that I have made many resolutions and forgot about them. When I was younger I did not quite understand the purpose. A New Year's resolution is something you want to work on personally. It's a goal that you set for your self. Not to please other people but to please yourself and knowing it can be done.

Do you know the history of New Years? New Years started 4000 years ago. It was first observed in ancient Babylon. Back then they did not have calendar so they celebrated New Year's on March 23. This was a time of rebirth

and a time to plant new crops. The Egyptians celebrate new years at the end of September. They celebrate at this time because it was the time the Nile River flooded and it was a good time to grow crops. The Romans also celebrated their new years in March but the new emperor wanted to add some changes to the calendar and decided to celebrate New Year's Day on January 1. New Years 400 years later is still celebrated on different days of the year. Have you ever had a hard time keeping up with your new year's resolution? Resolutions are not going to be easy especially if it's something you have a hard time trying to do. Example: I have a problem with road rage. It really irritates me when I am in a rush and a slow driver is in front of me. Or when I'm driving and an impatient driver cuts me off. So what can I do to prevent road rage is: Not let it get to me because eventually I will get where I need to go.

Let's say you have a list of New Year's resolutions and you want to know how to get them all done. Well here is some advice: 1. Take your time. If you choose a resolution that you know is going to take a while to work on, take

as much time as you need to complete your goal. Remember, your resolution is about you. 2. Word you resolution carefully. Make sure what you put down is what you really want to do. Be detailed, so you can know for yourself if that's what you want to do. 3. Once you have done the first two steps, now you can come up with a plan; remember you want it to be a plan that you can achieve. 4. When you come up with a plan that's good for you, write it down and stick it where you know you will look at it everyday. 5. Ask for help. Some resolutions take more than what you think. If you know that in order for you to keep this resolution, you need someone to remind you, it's okay. Do what you need to complete you goal or goals. 6. Remember you're not perfect. If you forget it's okay. You have all year to finish. Don't give up, keep on going, you will be happy that you did.

<http://www.fridgedoor.info>

<http://adoptionworld.org>

Letter from the Editor

JIM THEOFELIS



Happy New Year! The Mockingbird Society welcomes 2006 as the Year of Opportunity. The opportunity to strengthen the services and supports available to the children, youth and families involved in the foster care system. The Mockingbird Family Model (MFM) is set for replication and we are excited about working with our community partners to bring this promising practice to scale. I'm convinced that the MFM is a practical, cost-effective model that promotes increased stability for kids and families, allows siblings to remain together and offers quality and timely support to caregivers including respite care. Increasing stability in kid's lives is paramount to improving their well being and permanency.

Our Youth LEAD programs (*Mockingbird Times*, Youth Speaker's Panel and ASK-Y) will also continue to grow and be forum for youth from foster care and/or homelessness to express their views while developing their leadership, employment and literacy skills. Despite the myth that "troubled youth don't care" the young people from Youth LEAD continually

demonstrate their passion and investment in creating a better world for themselves and others. The Mockingbird Society offers them the opportunity to participate in something meaningful which hopefully reminds them of their special meaning to all of us. Unlike many youth employment programs Youth LEAD does not operate on an internship model where time in the program is limited to a certain number of weeks. Youth LEAD operates on a business model which clearly states our goals, deadlines and the skills necessary to develop a product that is relevant and fundable. Last year the Mockingbird Society paid out nearly \$16,000 to over forty youth; twenty-two of which were hired as employees of the Mockingbird Society. We embrace the opportunity to teach youth how to fish rather than simply giving them the proverbial fish that keeps them stuck in the "client" role. At Mockingbird youth are employee's, writers, public speakers, interviewers and a host of other positive role's.

I am hopeful that you will continue to support us in our work with children, youth and families and to join us in the opportunities that come from *building a world class foster care system while serving our neighborhood youth.*

Jim Theofelis

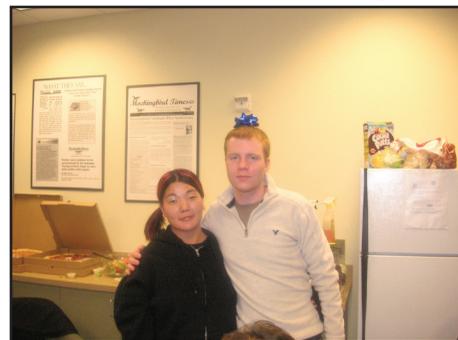
jim@mockingbirdsociety.org



Sisters Larishica and Terasa have holiday meal



Dennis pondering new hat



Courtney and former staff William



Staff and photographer Zorn sharing holiday cheer

ABOUT US: The Mockingbird Society is a private non-profit organization dedicated to building a world class foster care system and improving the other systems that serve children and adolescents involved in homelessness and foster care. The *Mockingbird Times* is a monthly newspaper written and produced by youth who have experience in foster care and/or homelessness. All youth employees of Mockingbird Society are paid between \$7.50 and \$8.50 an hour. Additionally, youth from across the country submit articles, art work, poetry and are compensated up to \$25 per published piece. The *Mockingbird Times* has a monthly circulation of 40,000 copies being distributed across Washington State and the U.S.A, through a private distribution list and as an insert in *Real Change*, a Seattle-based community newspaper. Youth involvement is the key to the philosophy, values, and success of The Mockingbird Society and, as such, youth are involved in all aspects of organizational development and decision-making. Donations to The Mockingbird Society may be tax-deductible and are greatly appreciated. No part of the *Mockingbird Times* may be reproduced without the written permission of The Mockingbird Society. All contents copyright 2005 The Mockingbird Society.

A Mockingbird Inside Your Mailbox

Make a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable youth and support the Mockingbird Society!

Donations may be tax deductible and all donors receive the *Mockingbird Times*. Enclosed, please find my check made payable to Mockingbird Society in the amount of: \$ _____

Suggested Donations:

\$ 1,000+.....Protector \$500-999.....Caretaker \$250-500.....Organizations \$50+.....Supporter \$25.....Foster Parent

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ PHONE _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL _____

Please do not include my name on published donor lists.

Please bill me for the amount indicated.

My employer will match my gift; enclosed is my matching gift form.

I am interested in receiving information on the advantages of planned giving.

Please fill out and mail this form with a check or money order payable to: The Mockingbird Society, 2100 24th Ave South Suite 240, Seattle WA 98144

Letter to the Editor

Jim:

I sat down to breakfast this morning and read the Dec. 2005 *Mockingbird Times*. I just wanted to tell you how impressed I am with the thoughtfulness and quality of writing in your publication. I was especially captivated by the lead article written by Jacob Harrison. It was compelling reading and allowed me to experience Washington DC from a very different perspective than my 60 year old point of view. That young man can write!

So can the rest of your crew. I could hardly finish Alicia Morris's article, it was so disturbing to know what she is experiencing every day and night, but I am glad I did because it looks like she is going to have a chance to end her homelessness.

The *Mockingbird Times* should be available in every high school and college in the Seattle area. It is a gem.

All the best,
Curt

Mockingbird Society: The Story Behind the Name

The 1962 American classic *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee is the inspiration for our name, Mockingbird Society. Atticus, the widowed father of Jem and Scout, joins Miss Maudie in teaching his kids that it's a sin to kill a mockingbird because "...Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for

us." What if we created an organization, a community, indeed a world in which our most vulnerable children and youth were protected and valued with the same commitment that Atticus had for mockingbirds? Join the Mockingbird Society today and help us give young people a safe place to nest and sing.

Thank You's

Roberta Blayney; Virginia Blayney; Kathryn Brooks; Washington Women's Foundation; Camp SeaStar and Roz Owen; Lucinda Richmond; Robert and Deborah Fleming; Ms. Faith Ireland; Dr. Alan Rothblatt and Sima Kahn; Linda Mihalov; Deborah Fiscus; Dawanda Pesicka; Janet Dwight and Patrick Gemperline; Elizabeth Strickland and Daniel Klepinger; James and Lauriann Garland; Howard Muntz and Barbra Goff; David Rawlings and Kathryn McGonigle; The Black Family; Kimberly Faucher; Diane, Kelsey and Darcie Gray; David and Shirley Allen; Douglas and Ann Ferguson; Kelly Jo and Christopher Macarthur; Charles Janeway

Mockingbird Society's 3rd Annual Auction and Fundraiser: We Believe We Can Fly

ORDER TICKETS NOW!

Thursday, March 30, 2006
6-9 pm
Wine, hor d'oeuvres and dessert
Silent and live auction
Premiere of the Mockingbird Society documentary, *A Place to Sing*

At the Broadway Performance Hall
1625 Broadway
Seattle, WA 98122

Tickets are \$35 and may be purchased in advance or at the door.

We are looking for articles, poetry, artwork and photography from our young readers who have experience in the foster care system and/or homelessness. If you want to be published in the *Times*, contact us at 206-323-5437 or via email at newspaper@mockingbirdsociety.org. For more info and to check us out, go to www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

MEET OUR STAFF

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Contributing Writers
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Volunteers
Patricia Gray, Anna Trombley

FAFSA 101



COURTNEY
KONIETZKO

If you are a new college student, it takes awhile to learn the ropes and the mountains of paperwork can seem daunting. Take a deep breath and remember it gets easier, once you fill out your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) you are on your way. Remember, now is the month to do it! Fill your FAFSA out in January every year in order to get the most money you can in order to go to college for the Fall '06-Summer '07 year. There is also money available for Spring and Summer of '06 on a case by case basis; so do not hesitate to apply even if you didn't make the deadline. If you do not fill out your FAFSA in January, the money award you get to pay for classes and books will be significantly less and you might have to look at alternate sources of funding. It took me awhile to learn the ropes coming from a background of being self-supporting since I was 15. Being homeless, in foster care, or having previous experience with either can also serve you well by helping you qualify for certain scholarships.

Everybody else is just as nervous as you are on your first day of school. Remember that usually after the first few weeks you settle in and the nervousness starts to ease. Some of the best things you can do to deal with this nervousness of meeting new people is to sit in different places in the classroom, try to smile and talk to different people, know that nobody knows that you are a foster kid or a homeless kid, form a study group with other people in your class, and get involved with a club, event, or group on campus.

Remember that your first two years of college are about exploring who you are and what you want to do. You don't have to declare your major immediately, but it is a good idea to meet with a college advisor and talk about what you want to do. If you don't know what you want to do advisors will help you figure it out; advisors will help you plan classes that meet the requirements of whatever school you hope to go to afterwards or whatever program you wish to get certified in. On most campuses, there are also counselors to help you deal with stress and anxiety around working with groups or/and speaking in front of the class, and any other issues that you are concerned with. Access these resources!

There is a section on the FAFSA that asks for difficult things about mom and dad; like how much money does mom and dad make in a year, their birthdates, social security numbers, and all this information that may not be accessible to somebody

who has been or is homeless or in foster care. There is a way around it though. If you are homeless or formerly homeless and have not had any financial support and will not receive any financial support from your parents, you can claim independent status, which means you do not need to report any of this information on your parents. You will need two letters from a caseworker, teacher, or someone similar who knows your situation well and can vouch for the fact that you have been on your own and have been fully self-supporting. If you are in foster-care, you automatically qualify as an independent and can also avoid filling out this section of the FAFSA by getting a letter from your worker.

TIPS FOR FILLING OUT YOUR FAFSA

- 1.) Do not leave anything blank; write NA if it does not apply to you
- 2.) Use the 1040 federal tax return, not the W-2 form, for reporting income and taxes paid. You can obtain one of these at your local library.
- 3.) Before you sit down to fill out your FAFSA make sure you are prepared with the proper documents: driver's license/ID, social security card, income tax returns, current bank statements, and records of any other untaxed income like welfare or social security.
- 4.) It is free to fill out the FAFSA; you can pick one up at any college or fill it online at www.fafsa.ed.gov

5.) Ask for help if you need it.

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE TO FOSTER YOUTH AND HOMELESS YOUTH
(Go to these websites to read more about whether you qualify or not)

Governor's scholarship
www.waedfoundation.org/g/

Gates' Millennium scholarship fund
www.gmsp.org/

Seattle Education Access
www.seattleeducationaccess.org/

National Foster Parent Association Scholarship
www.nfpainc.org/scholrsp.html

OFA/ Casey Family Scholars
www.orphan.org

Zenith Foundation (scholarships for youth ages 13-19 to attend sail training and maritime education programs)
1-206-855-9443

Queer Foundation Essay Contest
http://home.comcast.net/~threepennynovel/queerfoundation/essay_contest.html

January Calendar of Events

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

The Dream Deferred - Martin Luther King the III, the second oldest child of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King speak. January 23rd Monday, 7-9pm at the Lynnwood Convention Center, 3919 196th St. Admission is \$10. Seniors \$5. register via <http://www.edcc.edu/boxoffice>, For more info contact Michele Graves at (425) 640-1313.

Trans Night - a support/discussion/social group for Trans and questioning youth who are ages 14-22 that takes place at Lambert House which is located at 1818 15th Ave. in Seattle. Lambert house is a nationally recognized activities and resource center for GLBTQ youth. For more info call (206) 322-2515 x16.

Free Author Reading - Author Christopher Paul Curtis gives a

presentation from his book, Bud, Not Buddy (the story of a 10-year-old orphan who runs away from an abusive foster home in order to find his father) on Friday January 13th at 7pm at the downtown library. For more info go to www.spl.org

Get Your Hair Colored or Cut for Free! - Seven Hair Salon needs models for cuts and color every week M-F. Salon located in Bellevue. For more info call (206) 903-1299.

Free Web Design Class - Tuesday January 10 6-9 p.m. at the Lake Forest Park Towne Centre. Space is limited so call to reserve your spot. (206) 533-6700.

Show off your Photography Talents! - CLSL Productions is hosting a photo exhibition for anyone who wants to

take part. There will be chances for outstanding photos to win prizes. For more info go to www.myspace.com/clslproductions

Screening of The High Cost of Low Price - movie about Wal-Mart's practices. Thursday January 19th 6:30pm reception, 7pm screening at Planned Parenthood of Washington located on Madison at 20th Ave. For more info call (206) 632-8547.

Fremont Freedom Flicks - every Sunday at 7:30 p.m. (doors open at 7) at Visionary Studios located at 4128 Fremont Ave N. Admission by donation, suggested donation \$5. but no one turned away due to the inability to pay. For more info go to <http://www.weaponsofmassdistractionproject.org>

HB 2002 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

sponsibilities of other tax payers. Invest in your own children and you will be taken care of in the future, because these children will grow up and run this nation one day, and they will lead it with the knowledge that we bestow on them. If we think about the future costs of not helping these youth, we'll need to incorporate the costs for the increase of cops needed for patrolling the streets, the cost of the tax payers paying for hospital bills due to no health insurance or education for sustainable jobs and so many other unpredictable expenses. Tax payers will lose money, businesses will lose money, cities and counties will lose money and we'll need more teen feeds, drop-ins, shelters and staff to run these services. Ask yourself how much money that costs, then ask yourself how much the happiness and safety of a foster care child means to you, and I know that you will agree that we need HB 2002 to protect these children and young adults.

Due to the negligence of this State, in regards to it's foster care young people and children, the counties and cities "jobs" are and have been to pick up "aged out" and runaway foster care youth from off the streets. Preventative measures like the HB 2002 are a sure-fire solution that works towards ending homelessness. Trust me. I know the kids on the streets, or at least I knew of them and their struggles before they died. I am speaking on behalf of the youth in the foster care system when I say that we need HB 2002 so that young people can lead healthy, happy and productive lives.

(1,2) <http://www.mockingbirdsociety.org/pdf/jul05.pdf>
(3,4) <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/humanservices/fys/HomelessYouth/HomelessYDemographicData.htm>
(5,6) <http://www.ci.seattle.wa.us/humanservices/fys/HomelessYouth/HomelessYMyths.htm#Underlying>

Walk-a-Mile a Success

JAMICA HENDERSON

On December 14th this year's Walk-a-Mile program had it's closing ceremony at the University of Washington. In this great program, a legislator gets matched up with a young person who is, or has been in, foster care. The idea of the program is for them to "walk a mile" in each other shoes. This gives them a chance to meet one on one. While the legislator is doing this activity, they have to live off the same income as the student has to live off of. The legislator must also spend one day with their student to see how they live their daily life and the student must do the same with the legislator.

At the closing cremeony, the legislators and participants were asked to explain the time they had together and what they liked about the program. All the pairs

that spoke had great stories to tell. The legislators we excited to see how hard the young people worked throughout their life and still were accomplishing goals in their lives. The former foster youth who participated were excited the legislators took the time to do the program. They also spoke about seeing how hard it was to be a legislator. Both parties were happy to be involved in the program for the month and most still want to keep in touch with one another.

In all, this was a great program. If you don't know what it's like to be a foster kid or legislator then you should join Walk-a-Mile next year. If you're interested and would like more information, you can call Sierra Rowe at 206 683-6979 or visit their website at www.walkamile.org



Carneisha Grace and Rep. Eric Pettigrew (37th Dist.) at Walk-a-Mile closing ceremony.



Creative Corner

Exorcism

COURTNEY KONIETZKO

Feeling raw and feeling sick
 Pores oozing out oil, the demons threaten to get in
 Purple clouds and black shadows with grey tinges
 Dance and fade at the edges of my eyes and expel from my body
 Body shakes and stomach churns
 No solution makes me burn
 There is an answer and things I need to do
 But I am broken and hurting and making excuses
 Full of apathy, full of pain
 Covering myself in makeup
 Buying clothing and CDs and goods in vain
 Stuffing myself with food to cover the gaping hole
 Caving in, craving in
 That's the way it goes when you don't listen to yourself
 Plane Jane wears baggy pants and over-sized shirts
 Hiding everything that hurts
 The package that conceals the feelings
 I feel you and I feel them
 Walking down the street
 I absorb the conversation and the emotion behind people's eyes
 I stare blank out the windows at nothing
 Avoiding the glances and loud unspoken thoughts of men
 I take care of the basics and forget about the rest
 Always talking about things that take up to years to do
 That's the end of that
 This is the beginning of this
 A personal Hell created by two
 Drug mentality ever more
 What has changed?
 At one time he took away the hurt
 He took away the pain
 He was the savior as I was too
 Now he sits there running on empty
 I'm afraid to label him
 Afraid to run away from him
 Afraid to save myself from him
 But once I do that I will be free.

December 21, 2005

No Spanish in Schools?

JACOB HARRISON



What is the world coming to? In my articles, you're bound to find issues dealing with racism, homelessness and various problems. In this particular one, I type with fury and anger. Don't be scared. This is a different kind of anger. This is "WHY CAN'T WE ALL JUST BE TREATED LIKE PEOPLE WHICH WE ARE?" anger. This anger that I am feeling is directed at a Kansas City alternative school. It's come to my attention that a 16 year-old Hispanic student was suspended for speaking his native language in school.

When I first read about this, I couldn't believe it! As I further investigated the story, I started to see more and more harsh reality, and it hurts. Zach Rubio was walking down the hall during break. His friend came up to him and asked him for a dollar in Spanish. He responded in Spanish and this is what set off the entire incident with teachers. They told them not to do it again. Then in his class after lunch, Zach was speaking it again. This time he got sent to the principal, Jennifer Watts, who suspended him for two days. She said that they had to ask him too many times not to speak Spanish at school. She cited a school "English only" policy put in place to assist ESL students in their learning of this countries supposed "national" language. His family was furious. Wouldn't you be? This kid, his family and lets not forget his culture had just been, in my eyes, assaulted.

I go to Ingraham High school, one of the most, if not the most, diverse school in the Seattle school district. When I walk

down the hall, I hear English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, French, Japanese, Ethiopian and many other languages in different conversations. I feel so happy because we can all be together in one school and nothing can separate us. That's how it's supposed to be. School is where youth my age spend a lot of time. I've never heard of anything this ridiculous in my life. I know for a fact that if something this stunning went down at my school or anywhere in Seattle for that matter, somebody would have to answer for it. What do those teachers think? They're just going to teach us Spanish and expect that we're not going to put those new acquired skills to use? We say and do what we know and a lot of what we know comes from our education.

Today in the U.S, Spanish and other languages are taught in almost if not, every public school. In fact, here in Seattle and surely a lot of other districts, at least two years of a foreign language is required to graduate! The sad part about this whole thing is, Zack didn't need to take Spanish class because it's in his blood! How dare those people insult his blood?! How dare every adult in that community for this matter?! How dare the teachers, parents and superintendent for acting like everything was fine and filling all of the students minds with their ridiculous and oppressive reasons that they have for Spanish speaking not to be allowed in school?! This is far from over and this may also be the just the beginning of a long fight!

I'm very interested in hearing your opinions about this. Your ideas, suggestions, input and feelings are important to me!! In order for me to become a stronger writer, I need to hear the voices of the people. Please don't hesitate to e-mail me at (trackstarharrison@yahoo.com) This article must end here for the anger may burn a hole in this paper!!!

Let's Stop Punishing Foster Youth for Earning Their High School Diploma or GED

Currently: Washington foster youth who turn age 18 and have their H.S. diploma or GED become ineligible to remain in care-they lose their housing, health and emotional support from caregivers.

HB 2002: Youth who earn a high school diploma or GED and attend college/voc-tec can remain in foster care!

DO YOUR PART TO CHANGE THE WORLD! - To contact your state representative about the Foster Youth Achievement Act, call 1-800-562-6000.

ASK-Y meeting January 9th, 3:30-5 @ 2100 Building
 Advocacy Day Training February 2nd 2-5:30 @ 2100 Building

Youth Advocacy Day in Olympia, Wa February 3rd 9:30 am- 3 pm
 For more details, please contact Lauren Frederick @ 206-323-5437.

The Life and Death of Stanley "Tookie" Williams

LARISHICA ASHER



Stan "Tookie" Williams was put to death December 13, 2005 at 12:36 am., after being on San Quentin's death row for 16 years for murdering a family and an individual two weeks apart from each other. His death came after much debate and pleas from his supporters to save his life after he made a big transformation in prison that included writing books to help keep kids away from gangs. His fight ended after a last request for clemency from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger was denied.

In 1971, Stan and a friend of his founded the Los Angeles Crips gang. In 1981 he was convicted of murdering four people during two robberies and sentenced to death row at San Quentin State Prison. Stan deeply regretted his gang involvement

and had always maintained his innocence of these crimes. Before Tookie died, there were many people who had a lot to say about not killing him. People like rap artist such as Snoop Dogg (a Long Beach California Crip) and music artist Pharell (who is not affiliated with gangs but had some really thoughtful things to say about Tookie before he was set to death). Snoop Dogg was against Tookie's death because he is a crip and he saw how Tookie was turning his life around. Pharell was against it because of the simple fact he was a black man that turned his life around during his time in prison. Snoop Dogg also made a video called "Real Soon" which was dedicated to Tookie. He and the group D.P.G.C. came together to try and get the word out about Tookie. In the video, Snoop has a shirt that says save Tookie.org. (which was an organization he started to try and get support to save his life)

Many other celebrities were against Tookie's death such as Danny Glover, Nick Hart, Marylon Boyd, Darrel Myers, Barbara Becnel, Martin Strayer, Nick Chin, and

Phil Gasper who nominated Tookie four times for the Nobel Peace Prize. Phil Gasper says "Tookie should have clemency because he is a remarkable character who turned his life around without help from the authorities. He should also have clemency because no one should die if they can reduce gang violence."

As Tookie was growing up, he was a very troubled child. He had so much anger inside him that he didn't know what to do with, so he and some other friends of his started the Crips street gang. The Crips ended up being one of the largest gangs in the history of this country and made their way to almost every state. Tookie was tried and convicted of four cold blooded murders that he says he didn't commit. Stanley has always claimed that he was innocent, but he was still sentenced to death row. Many people felt that Tookie had an unfair trial.

In the last 16 years of Tookie's life in prison on death row, he wrote eight children books about staying out of gangs and one book about his life in prison. While

writing his books he was nominated four times for the Nobel Peace Prize and a movie was made about his life starring Jamie Foxx.

I feel that Tookie should have gotten clemency because he had an unfair trial and if he would have went back to court around 2000, I believe he would have only gotten 25 to life and would have gotten out on parole. In his 1981 trial the prosecutor removed three African Americans from the jury. I also feel that it was not fair for him to die and not have a fair chance to fight for his life and that his life wasn't spared because he was a black man in prison that succeeded in changing his life and became a successful book writer and children loved to read his books. I think Arnold Schwarzenegger (the governor of California) did not like the fact that he could have all that influence in prison and felt that he should die. Now that Tookie is dead, I hope that his soul rests in peace and the Crips and other fellow people around the world will miss you and we love you Stan Tookie Williams.