



“A Girl Who Found Hope”

Virtue: Faith

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Thirteen years ago, I was a young girl with little hope for the future. I was removed from my mother and placed into the foster care system. Often, I moved from place to place with only the clothes on my back. I felt lost, but I instilled my trust in God that one day, things will get better.

Here is my story.

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I had lived with my single mother in a one-bedroom apartment. Although I knew from an early age that we were poor, I was grateful. I can remember every year going to the Labor Day Carnival in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and watching the beautiful floats pass. Everything seemed fine. It wasn't until my mother became ill that my life would change.

At the age of six, I was removed from my mother and placed into the foster-care system. Being in the foster-care system was the worst thing I have experienced in my entire life. As I had grown an emotional bond with the people I was living with, I had to move. For years, I moved from house to house. I did not have a permanent place. Every night, I would dream of going back to my mother.

Unfortunately, that didn't happen due to my mother's health condition getting worse. Sometimes, I would cry nonstop. Other times, I would act as if everything was fine. However, through these dark times, I would have faith that my life will get better.

I had faith that I would eventually find a loving, permanent home. On Christmas Eve 2005, an ACS social worker came to my foster parent's house and told me that I would be moved somewhere else. All I had thought to myself was *Again? Why me?* But, the unexpected happened. I was placed into custody of my grandparents. Once I saw them, I had jumped into their arms and knew that my life would turn around.

After six years, I became adopted. Although I am happy to have a home, finally, the experience of being in foster-care still traumatizes me to this day. For instance, I was behind in school due to frequent movement. In the article, *Understanding the Plight of Foster Youth and Improving Their Educational Opportunities*, Zetlin and Weinberg states, "children in foster care face many educational obstacles because of frequent moves. Thus, this already vulnerable population becomes more vulnerable educationally". At first, I didn't have confidence that I was able to excel academically.

As a result, I was placed into the individualized education program from the second grade until the end of high school. At times, I had felt embarrassed. But, I had eventually realized that it was only for the best. I became more confident in my schoolwork. I was able to perform academically. Furthermore, I became motivated to work diligently towards my dreams because I had faith that I would succeed.

"Faith is, as Saint Paul says in the Letter to the Hebrews, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). Without the virtue of faith, I wouldn't be where I am today. Did I imagine when I was young that I would graduate from high school and now about to graduate from college? No. I was once a young girl with little hope for the future.

Now, I am a young woman that has faith in becoming successful in the future. After high school, I had attended Queensborough Community College and graduated with an Associate of Science degree in Criminal Justice. Although it is only an associate degree, it is still an accomplishment. According to the article, *Children in Foster Care: A Vulnerable Population at Risk*, "Only 50% of foster children graduated from high school or earned a general educational development (GED) credential" (Bruskas, 2008).

After graduating from Queensborough Community College, I have decided to continue my education to earn a bachelor's degree at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. It was the virtue, faith that persuaded me to work hard and keep achieving. In the future, I want to advocate on behalf of other foster-care children.

According to Reilly (2003), "a significant portion of youth exiting the foster care system face serious difficulty transitioning to life on their own". Difficulties include limited education, failure to obtain and/or maintain regular employment, homelessness, and involvement with the criminal justice system. Furthermore, according to the Juvenile Law Center, "90% of youth with 5+ foster placements will enter the justice system" (Juvenile Law Center, 2018). As a former foster care youth, it is heartbreaking to view the number of children aged out of the criminal justice system and become criminal offenders. I was one of the lucky ones that became adopted, which is why I want to become a lawyer.

"Faith is an active trust in God, a belief in what he says is true that results in action" (CompellingTruth.org, 2019). To live in modern society, one must have confidence that they will eventually achieve their goals. Throughout, there will be people that will try to knock you because they are envious. I had several. Although it sometimes hurt, it is crucial to continue to strive for greatest. "Suffering is difficult, but with God's abundant grace, we can persevere" (The Curious Catholic, 2019).

Thirteen years ago, I was a young girl with little hope for the future. For many years, I was in the foster-care system. Fortunately, I was eventually placed in custody with my grandparents. After six years, I became adopted. Now, I am a young woman that is determined to work towards my dreams of one day advocating on behalf of other foster-care children. Without virtue, faith, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I wouldn't be the person that has an aspiration

of wanting to law school after graduating from John Jay and later, advocate for the many voiceless children in the system. As American author Helen Keller once said, "*Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement; nothing can be done without hope.*"

Reference

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