

The Failures of America's Foster Care System

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I worked with the largest county children's welfare services in America for more than a quarter century. For several decades as a licensed therapist in Los Angeles County, I provided mandated therapy to both children as well as young adults were aging out of the child welfare system. Over the years I made countless trips to LA County Children's Court representing dozens of children and families as my clients.

My decades of firsthand mental health experience saw the destructive inside machinations of a corrupt, overloaded, thoroughly broken foster care system do more damage than good to children and families with whom I closely worked. Like all institutions in America, the child welfare system is just another corrosive, morally bankrupt, oppressive mechanism by which to control the poorest people in this country, acting as a national conduit pipeline to prison, substance abuse, human trafficking, homelessness, mental illness and early death.

Though each county child protective services department in the United States operates under a separate budget funded by individual county, state and federal mental health source dollars, the child welfare system in this country is so overburdened and systemically flawed, it has been failing our kids miserably for a long time now. We all hear about the horror stories of murdered children in the foster care system who fell through the cracks. High profile cases exposing the tragic fate of young people trapped in a system that fails to protect them are far too common. They are written about extensively in newspapers all the time. But the American public rarely is privy to the inner workings of a system gone bad from the firsthand perspective of an insider who worked within that failed system for decades.

This is my account of the child welfare system as a therapist who worked out in the community with young people on either probation or within foster care as well as in residential group homes. I observed the broken system from the inside out. Universal human rights are routinely violated every minute and hour of every single day, bringing with each passing year even more atrocities of neglect and abuse from the system designed to protect children. Instead it is literally destroying them. The shocking, gaping problems of the largest child welfare department in America that is the LA County Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) that I interfaced with for many years epitomizes what has gone so terribly wrong with the national system operating in every state and county throughout the United States.

To illustrate the blatant flaws inherent in the child welfare system, I shall present the stories of two families that as a therapist I strongly advocated for children as my clients to reunify with their biological families in LA County Children's Court. The first case was an eight year-old boy I shall call Pablo who when two months old was placed by DCFS to live with the boy's aunt due to the his mother being an alleged drug addict unable to properly care for the child. Pablo also had a sister six years older also placed with the biological mother's

sister.

Prior to my being assigned as Pablo's therapist, the fifteen year old sister had grown increasingly rebellious and defiant, clashing with her aunt and after running away from home, DCFS decided to place her in the foster care system. Because of the volatile relationship the sister had with the aunt as her primary caregiver, the DCFS social worker assigned to the case became suspicious of the aunt's capacity as primary caregiver to Pablo. DCFS normally contracts with local mental health agencies in the community to provide mental health services to minors with open cases in the child welfare system. I was working as clinical manager to one of the DCFS mental health providers overseeing community service operations in both biological and foster care family homes as well as group homes in the Pasadena area. I also directly supervised approximately eight to ten therapists including Pablo's therapist. When DCFS grew concerned about the aunt's capacity to provide a healthy home environment for Pablo, based on DCFS' recommendation, the Children's Court judge stipulated that a licensed therapist be assigned Pablo's case. At that point I became directly involved in Pablo's care as both his weekly individual therapist as well as his and his aunt's weekly family therapist.

My assessment of Pablo and his aunt's relationship after providing therapy services in their home for about two months was that Pablo was responding well to treatment and already beginning to make considerable progress with his treatment plan goals that I had collaboratively formulated with both Pablo and his aunt. They had to do with learning to stay on task with such daily activities as picking up toys after play and following his aunt's prompts for redirection. As a child given the mild case diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a way over-diagnosed mental health classification conveniently used to label high energy children who simply have minds of their own and pose as management problems in an educational system designed to stamp out children's spirited creativity in favor of docile compliance. Pablo experienced some difficulty focusing both in the classroom and at home and engaged in hyperkinetic motor movement and behavior that would often get him into trouble in both settings when he failed to comply with adult imposed rules. Under the psychiatric care of one of my agency's staff psychiatrists, Pablo was taking daily medication prescribed for his ADHD.

After I completed and presented to DCFS my written assessment and clinical findings noting early progress in treatment per protocol under my service agency contract with county Children's Services, against my recommendation and based on approval from the DCFS social worker's supervisor, unbeknownst to me, one afternoon the social worker abruptly entered the family home and forcibly removed Pablo from the only family home he had ever known in all his nine years, severely traumatizing and terrorizing the little boy. Neither he nor the aunt nor I ever saw what seemed like an ambushed assault and violation of the worst order coming. In one fell swoop they were not only interfering and undermining the family's progress in treatment, they were also destroying this family. The social worker created such extreme havoc in the home, Pablo was crying hysterically and uncontrollably as the social worker literally ripped him from his aunt's arms and physically coerced him out the door. In all the turmoil, chaos and family drama he had created, the highly unprofessional DCFS social worker forgot to even take any of Pablo's clothes or medication with him prior to placing the highly distraught boy against his will and choice into foster care, a task that was left for me to follow up with the next day.

After receiving the brokenhearted aunt's horrifying account, I took Pablo's clothes and meds over to the nearby foster home where Pablo was now living, consoled a still very

traumatized Pablo and spoke briefly with the foster parents who had worked with DCFS for a number of years. Children's Services had completely gone against the family's therapist's recommendations, but most importantly against the family's best interest to stay together as an intact family, suddenly and violently uprooting this fragile young child with absolutely no justifiable reason at all. Clearly Pablo was severely traumatized by the system's cruel and unusual decision to suddenly break up this family. There was no question that the aunt loved her nephew as her own son and the little nephew most definitely loved and needed his aunt as every child needs his mother.

Seeing the irreparable damage and harm the system willfully inflicted on my clients, I immediately contacted the social worker and his supervisor and arranged an emergency meeting a couple days later. When pressed for an explanation, neither the social worker nor his supervisor could supply a remotely legitimate reason for separating the boy from his only family. The most they could come up with was feebly mumbling something about the boy's teacher remarking that one day Pablo had come to school wearing dirty clothes. No consideration apparently was ever made to think that every chance this little guy got he was on his knees playing in the dirt because that is what healthy, energetic, lively little boys do. For unknown reasons, it was clear that DCFS was on a witch hunt to demonize the aunt in their false accusations to break apart the family. I saw firsthand the criminal misuse of a totalitarian system run amok operating under the sinister guise of protecting children from harm but by its own vindictively blind and destructive actions was doing grave harm to my vulnerable innocent client who never knew what hit him.

I started seeing my client for his individual therapy sessions at his new foster home. But used to seeing me within the safe and familiar confines of the only home he ever knew, I quickly realized he was not comfortable in the foster home setting, so I began bringing him to a nearby park a couple times a week to help the child cope with the trauma the system had senselessly caused. Every time I would show up, the first thing out of this poor little kid's mouth was, "When can I go home to my aunt?" It was heartbreaking. As a professional, I could never express my true feelings about the Nazi-like tactics responsible for his current trauma, anxiety and pain. In a matter of weeks the boy had gone from living his entire life with his aunt and sister, then to just living with his aunt and every other week hour-long visits with his sister, to now not living with any family at all. To his never ending question, I finally told him, "Pablo, I'm doing everything possible to get you home with your aunt."

Because the child system had absolutely no basis for removing Pablo from his family home and knew it, they got caught in a compromising position of having to save face, notoriously unable to ever admit mistakes. In the meantime, they were constantly challenged and confronted by this therapist strongly recommending immediate reunification with the aunt. Just prior to the next scheduled Children's Court hearing, on the holiday weekend the social worker and foster mother met with Pablo at the foster home and actually manipulated the nine year old child into allegedly agreeing that his aunt had used a belt to punish him. Without any visible sign as evidence other than their little boy's "forced confession," at the last minute they were able to bring fabricated evidence to court that would assure the judge to back their decision to keep the child locked in foster care indefinitely.

When I spoke to the aunt, I completely believed her when she told me she never touched Pablo with a belt. And in my next session with Pablo, he himself even denied such an event ever took place. Clearly the social worker and foster parent falsely twisted and put words in the boy's mouth to maliciously trick him into keeping him from living with his aunt. After showing up at Children's Court a number of times in person and writing numerous letters

and reports to both DCFS and the court judge expressing my serious concerns that the move to foster care was clearly not in the child's best interest and was doing irreparable harm to the young boy, the Children's Court judge suddenly ordered me off the case.

After developing a close supportive relationship with the child helping the boy cope with the sudden traumatic loss of his aunt, now the system was removing his therapist as his only advocate in a position to get him back living with his aunt. Because the system viewed me as both a threat and a thorn in its side, an unpleasant reminder of its own wrongdoing, the corrupt and devious system eliminated me from ending the prolonged damage being inflicted on both this boy and his aunt. The system had no qualms about committing the despicable crime of repeatedly afflicting traumatic harm whereby this nine year old's support system would one by one abruptly be eliminated from him. His sense of abandonment at that young age must have been so profound that the damaging effects are likely to leave permanent scars, never knowing he could trust those he felt closest to because they could all of a sudden disappear from his life at any time. This is the kind of diabolical harm I witnessed time and time again by an appallingly ugly system exercising life and death power and control over a half million foster kids in this country.

Another case came to me when an upset father arrived at my clinic after his son and daughter had been taken away from him and placed in foster care. I was in my office when the secretary called me to the lobby to deal with the distraught parent desperate to get his two kids back. I brought him back to my office and learned the circumstances that had befallen him as a struggling, low income, single parent. Ultimately I told him to contact his children's DCFS social workers and request that they contact my agency for services and sent him home wishing I could do more.

Two or three months later I was contacted by one of his kid's social workers and I became the therapist of his 14-year old son and 6-year old daughter. It turns out that earlier in the year the son I shall call Jim ended up with an abscess tooth infection that was swelling up and his father Bill rushed him to Children's Hospital Emergency Room. Jim was admitted overnight but hospital staff contacted DCFS suspecting that possible physical abuse had caused Jim's facial swelling. Two DCFS investigators interviewed Jim in the hospital and then unannounced the following evening showed up at the family residence with police officers in tow. After finding empty prescription bottles in the bathroom medicine cabinet, on the spot they made the snap decision to remove the six year old girl named Lisa from the only home she ever knew. They woke her up from a deep sleep and once again stole another traumatized, hysterical small child from her understandably agitated biological father.

The DCFS investigators placed Lisa and Jim into a foster care home, again without any solid evidence of either abuse or neglect, minus the customary criteria for children services to remove kids from their biological family home. The trauma for a six year old girl to be awakened and grabbed up by a police officer and carried away into the night from the only parent she had ever known and loved is both life altering and embeds such deep fears that most likely will haunt her the rest of her life. I can bear witness that for several years afterwards the trauma of that fateful night caused her to go into panic attacks cowering in anxiety and fear every time she saw a police officer in blue uniform. That is how deep-seeded the damage done to this defenseless little girl by the malevolent system that failed to protect her.

Though the damaging trauma had already been done, during the ensuing months LA Children's Services ultimately found no evidence of parental abuse and after four months,

Jim was reunified with his father at the same time that I was assigned as therapist. But Lisa remained in foster care. I began seeing Jim weekly for his individual therapy at the local high school where he was a freshman and family therapy at his home with his father. I went to Lisa's foster home weekly for her therapy where I discovered the elderly foster mother smoking cigarettes inside her home, obviously posing physical health danger to my client. There is a very sad and sickening irony when the system sworn to protect children was placing and knowingly keeping a child in harm's way after causing irreparable harm in originally taking her away from the only family who loved her.

Though no evidence of child abuse was ever uncovered by Children's Services, the father Bill had only one-hour supervised visits with his daughter Lisa each week at the DCFS office. Throughout their entire lives both Jim and Lisa had lived under their father's care despite each having different mothers. The boy's mother was schizophrenic and the girl's mother was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Jim as Lisa's older brother had a very caring and protective relationship with his little sister. Both the father and brother's sense of loss with Lisa no longer living with them made them both feel depressed as their family was not complete without her.

Lisa's biological mother currently lived in San Bernardino County and after learning Lisa had been taken away from her father, she opportunistically contacted LA County DCFS to seek custody of Lisa. However, six years earlier when Lisa was only two months old the mother showed up for a visit with the father toting Lisa having visible facial scratches and abrasions. Once the father contacted DCFS, he received full custody. The mother was out of Lisa's life after that. Therefore, the only family life Lisa ever knew was the love from her father and brother.

It turned out Lisa's intellectually challenged six year older half-sister had aggressively hit and scratched two month old Lisa just prior to that fateful visit six years earlier. Lisa's half dozen years older half-sister at that time was also being sexually molested by adult males the mother allowed into their home though the abuse was discovered a couple years later. Though Lisa's mother could not keep either Lisa or her mentally challenged, sexually abused daughter safe, years later because LA County Children's Services had removed Jim and Lisa from their father that year, under DCFS recommendation the Children's Court judge began authorizing every other weekend visits to the mother's home in San Bernardino County where that same sexually abused, still physically abusive older sister also lived, except now that older sister was twice Lisa's age and size at 12-years old.

Over the next several months six-year old Lisa would disclose in her individual therapy sessions with me how her older sister would be constantly aggressively hitting and picking on her. The mentally impaired older sister did not like suddenly having a cute little sister competing for her mother's attention after having the mother to herself her entire life. As a legally mandated reporter of suspected child abuse, I contacted Children Services abuse hotline and submitted a written child abuse report to DCFS that was then passed onto San Bernardino County Child Protective Services (CPS) to initiate a follow up investigation of suspected child abuse.

Several weeks later I learned that Lisa's mother had caught the older sister and Lisa observing pornography on the internet. Within that same month while the older sister had a friend staying with them on a sleepover it was learned that the older sister who slept in the same room with Lisa woke Lisa up and insisted that she watch the older sister and her friend lay naked on top of each other simulating having sex. The severely sexually damaged 12-

year old was clearly acting out both sexually and aggressively, a classic symptom of early sexual abuse. Overwhelmed, my six year old client was confused and disturbed by her bizarre sister's behavior.

A couple months later in yet another incident the older sister physically forced Lisa to place a wad of Vicks Vapo-Rub up inside her vagina. When Lisa began screaming in pain, the mother quickly doused and washed Lisa's burning private parts. But throughout Lisa's time with her mother, Lisa began to regularly suffer from vaginal infections due to the ongoing abuse. Fixated with touching and sticking foreign objects into the vagina is also classic evidence of sexual abuse. When the father took Lisa to the family physician, the doctor expressed concern that Lisa's reproductive organs were at risk of permanent damage.

Yet despite my constant series of abuse reports and subsequent San Bernardino County CPS' investigations, apparently not enough substantiated evidence was ever found to warrant suspending all contact or changing the every other weekend arrangement at the mother's. It became my client's word versus her mother's and other daughter's. Clearly Lisa was being physically, emotionally and sexually abused by her older sister on a consistent and regular basis yet despite my countless phone calls, writing abuse reports every month, numerous letters and quarterly reports all bringing red alert full attention to Children's Services in both counties as well as the LA Children's Court judge presiding over the case, along with my showing up at Children's Court repeatedly warning all authorities of the incessant overt abuse going on, nothing ever changed. The judge refused to even allow me into her courtroom. I would walk in and she would ask, "Who is this person?" Upon learning I was the child's therapist, more than once the judge ordered me out of her courtroom with me asking her loudly, "Did you get all my abuse reports?"

Not only were all authorities that included DCFS social workers, the child's attorney, the father's attorney and the judge all fully aware of the ongoing abuse occurring every other weekend in San Bernardino County, the judge actually decided to completely wash her hands clean of the case, closing Lisa's LA County file and transferring it to San Bernardino. But far worse, knowing she was being abused, the judge willfully sent Lisa to permanently live with her mother in the same home where the older sister was regularly abusing Lisa. At the final LA Children's Court hearing with the judge having already made up her mind, she finally permitted me inside her courtroom to testify on record presenting the overwhelming evidence. But at that point it was too late, Lisa was being sent to live permanently with her mother and abusive older sister, like it or not.

The LA County judge obviously knew the child would only be further harmed by her decision. To me, that clearly constitutes criminal disregard and malfeasance betraying the very oath she had sworn to protect children from abuse. From day one of Lisa's sad life never was her mother able to adequately protect Lisa from her other daughter's abuse. It is all on record. Jim missed his sister badly and only became more depressed while Lisa's father Bill became extremely upset and agitated over this unacceptable, unjust and inhumane court ruling. Based on petty reactions to the father's anger, all players in the Children's Court system complicit in this crime even included the father's own attorney recommending Lisa be sent away to another county knowing full well Lisa would only be further abused. Even Lisa's own DCFS social worker secretly knew it was wrong, apologizing to me after admitting it was his supervisor who was pushing permanent placement with the mother.

The judge arranged the exact reverse of the prior schedule. Lisa would now live fulltime at her mother's and only be allowed to spend every other weekend with her father and

brother. I would continue seeing her every other weekend for both individual and family therapy. I also continued conducting individual and family therapy with Jim and his father. Such outrageous unfairness, gross injustice and system's complicit abuse were excruciating for Lisa who missed her brother and father so much, she would cry uncontrollably and throw fits every other Sunday when she knew she had to return to her mother's abusive home, dreading she would continue to be victimized. Yet no one was protecting her, despite my over-the-top advocacy and the emotional pleas of both her father and brother. Lisa felt we were failing her in our impotence to change anything. The poor little girl thought her father and brother no longer loved her enough. It was an intolerable situation thanks to the child lack-of-welfare system.

Finally with more child abuse reports after Lisa told me her sister pushed her down the stairs at her home, Lisa's social worker from San Bernardino County Children's Protective Services finally began paying attention to me and ultimately recommended Lisa return under her father's care. Driving two hours each way on numerous occasions out to San Bernardino County Children's Court, I continued advocating for Lisa to be protected from her older sister's nonstop abuse and her mother's proven, longstanding incapacity to protect Lisa. After two years of fighting the system as their family therapist, all my efforts to seek justice for Lisa and her family finally paid off as the Children's Court judge in San Bernardino at long last ultimately ordered Lisa's reunification with her father and brother.

But the severe damage had already been done to Lisa. The system had criminally failed her and in my clinical opinion, Lisa was traumatized for life. Such protracted mental and emotional anguish most likely impaired her mental stability for life. She was not the same little girl I met when I first became her therapist. Her capacity to focus was completely shattered. Her capacity to trust was totally destroyed. As I see it, the mother's neglect and inability to protect Lisa, her father's, brother's and my inability to protect her from the system's horrific criminal abuse as well as her sister's abuse that lasted nearly two straight years, has permanently crippled this little girl for life. These cases presented here are just two examples of how the child welfare system in America destroys families and individuals. With god-like powers the criminal system makes such far reaching life and death decisions with millions of families that hurt the lives of so many innocent, defenseless children. Children's services and the foster care system whose sole purposes are to protect children from abuse do just the opposite. They betray our children every single day, inflicting irreparable harm on generation after generation of America's youth.

The Orwellian Big Brother police state is currently a living nightmare oppressively ruining people's lives by running roughshod over citizens' and families' rights in America. Local county children services agencies work hand in hand with law enforcement to usurp their authority by daily invading our homes and arbitrarily plucking our children from our biological families when no abuse or neglect is even present. The fact that abuse goes on regardless of socioeconomic level is belied by the fact that children in the child welfare system virtually all come from poor, impoverished families. Similar to the inequality of the prison population and broken justice system, the broken child welfare system also appears to prey exclusively on those living in poverty. This apartheid tyranny and betrayal is criminal injustice of the highest magnitude. In thousands of cases the only abuse is once again the punitive, megalomaniacal, thoroughly destructive arm of big government destroying private citizens' lives and the sanctity of the family unit as a scared institution. This pervasive damage is currently being done to the American family.

The majority of children living in the foster care system truly are victims of some form of

child abuse, often at the hands of biological adult family members that are most often the children's parents. I have worked with countless youth and adolescents who were sexually, mentally and emotionally damaged by chronic abuse and neglect from adult family members and adult family friends. The demand for adequate care and treatment for these emotionally impaired children overwhelmingly exceeds available services. In situations where serious neglect and abuse are occurring, in the interests of protecting the child from further abuse, obviously it becomes necessary on both ethical and legal grounds to remove the child from the home immediately as a last resort (although the traumatic effects of removal of children may be lessened if the abuser(s) was instead removed). But prior to tearing so many families apart, clear-cut evidence of abuse needs to be present. Far too often in my extensive experience, it is not.

Efforts to keep the family intact by providing monitored support, therapy and training is far more effective and humane than constantly yanking children from their family homes. It is common even after prolonged severe abuse for kids to want to return home to their biological families and their abusers over remaining with foster care families. Then of course there is an extremely high incidence of abuse coming at the hands of abusive foster parents. More times than I can recall I learned of another abusive situation caused by a foster parent. Barely half of all foster parents hold a high school diploma. Many are low income households that need and use the foster care money as their main source of income. Fiduciary abuse of misspending dollars that should be utilized for the care and maintenance of foster children is all too common.

In the turnover shuffle from one foster home or group home to the next, many sent to ten or more in the course of their placement in the system, children quickly see through the transparent motivations of foster parents who value their monthly paycheck more than the kids they are entrusted to care for. A very revealing fact is that a sizeable [22%](#) of kids in foster care repeatedly run away or end up aging out of the system staying with friends rather than remain in the foster care setting. In one study during the year prior, [one third](#) of teenage runaways were in foster care. Nearly 40% of youth that arrive in runaway shelters nationally were in foster care during the preceding year. 11% arriving in shelters were homeless. Another alarming finding estimates that up to [45%](#) of those leaving the foster care system end up homeless within their first year. These astounding numbers clearly show that the current system is failing these young people.

Young adolescent girls from abusive, impoverished backgrounds placed in the foster care system prone to drug abuse and being runaways are especially easy targets for adults pimps and human traffickers to exploit them as prostitutes and sex slaves. Children in the system come to see themselves as mere cash commodities to their surrounding adults, which when internalized manifests as self-worth debased into a mere monetary value. That makes children in the system especially vulnerable and prone to being exploited by adult human traffickers, pimps and predators.

60% of female minors rescued in the United States from human [sex trafficking](#) operations in 2013 were already former victims of the broken foster care system. In LA County in 2012 56% of the girls participating in a support program for commercially sexually exploited females were previously in the child welfare system. In New York City in 2007 of the 2250 victims of human trafficking, 75% were involved in the child system. In Florida an estimated 70% of trafficking victims were from the system. These numbers prove how the foster care system is but a direct pipeline to human trafficking. Only 50% of foster care children

graduate nationally from high school and only 2% go on to college.

Clearly the outcomes for system aged out young adults are atrocious. Remarkably high percentage of them become statistics suffering from substance abuse, homelessness, prostitution, human trafficking and crime. [Karl Dennis](#), executive director of the Illinois based Kaleidoscope, states:

“80 percent of the adults in in all the California correctional facilities are graduates of the state juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health and/or the special education systems.”

Recognizing the enormity of poor outcomes befalling young adults who are aging out of the child welfare system, several years ago California smartly extended continuing support services funding up through age 23. The crucial importance of providing ongoing assistance into young adulthood with additional educational, vocational/job, therapeutic and housing resources has been a huge step in the right direction though still more needs to be done. Just as there are good, well meaning, compassionate children’s court judges, county social workers, child and family therapists and children’s attorneys, there are also plenty of good caring foster parents. But because the system is so overloaded and overstretched beyond humane capacity, too many of these all-important players in the child welfare system act as dysfunctional cogs in a highly dysfunctional, uncaring bureaucratic system.

The number of children removed from families of origin in the last fifteen years has doubled while the number of foster parents has steadily decreased. When a county social worker has 100 or more kids on his or her caseload, and is mandated to make monthly visits to dozens of placements all over the county and then complete monthly reports on each child, it becomes virtually impossible to offer quality monitoring care and accurately managed services. Hence, so many young people fall through the ever widening cracks into the black hole abyss of mismanaged negligence and endangerment. The current system is reactive and crisis driven, frantically patching up all the gaping, dam-breaking holes and cracks while too many others always open up in their wake. In its current structure and operation, the flood of high profile deaths and permanent injuries to America’s most vulnerable population is beyond the faulty, broken system’s means to manage, protect and correct the current abominable conditions. A sorely needed overhaul of the system becomes imperative.

Of the five billion dollars federally allocated to annually fund child foster care in this country, 90% of that money spent on the child welfare system is reactive, after-the-fact interventions instead of proactive, preventative measures that would minimize the incidence of child abuse from ever taking place. Investing in programs that provide support to prospective parents and families can go a long ways to strengthening parenting skills and building a social support network of community resources vital to child abuse prevention. Monies allocated for addressing the root cause of child abuse prior to the actual abuse serve as a far more prudent and wise long term investment. More families would be able to stay together while the current exorbitant costs of outsourcing biological parents with hired hands too often in it to collect monthly paychecks from an overtaxed system clearly has not worked.

Whether unintended consequences of a thoroughly broken and shattered system or by pre-calculated, sinister design, the present foster care system merely serves as a human trafficking and prison pipeline to death and destruction. Foster care was originally intended to be a temporary placement until children could be adopted. Emphasis needs to be placed

on reunifying with healthy and willing biological family members as well as finding suitable adoptive parents. But most of all prevention programs need to be instituted in every community throughout the nation. The present failed system is an enormous burden, grand theft automatically to both countless children's lives stolen and destroyed as well as an American taxpayer rip-off. As a nation, we can and should do better. We owe it to our children, and that includes all our children.

Joachim Hagopian is a West Point graduate and former US Army officer. He has written a manuscript based on his unique military experience entitled ["Don't Let The Bastards Getcha Down."](#) It examines and focuses on US international relations, leadership and national security issues. After the military, Joachim earned a masters degree in Clinical Psychology and worked as a licensed therapist in the mental health field for more than a quarter century. He has worked extensively with child abuse victims within the child welfare system. He now concentrates on his writing.

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