

## **THE ODYSSEY OF ADOPTION...UP AGAINST THE FOSTER CARE RACKET** **by Richard Manual**

Four years ago, after undergoing a flashback to childhood, which was generally miserable, I decided to make an effort to make the life of a child better by volunteering to be a mentor. If I hadn't met a mentor when I was 9-1/2 years old, I would not have lived to 10. As a matter of fact, if I hadn't met the 13 year old exactly when I did, I would not have lived another five minutes, but he saved me and became a mentor, big brother, best friend, and father. He was the smartest, kindest, strongest, and totally perfect human being I have ever met in my life and he completely changed mine for the better. We ultimately became separated three years after first meeting when his family moved to Argentina and then he went into the Marines and was killed. But I decided it was time for me to pay my dues and try to do for a child what he did for me. I was in for a reality check.

I volunteered to be a mentor for a local "non-profit" agency that contracted to provide services for children in foster care, from mentoring to supervised visitations between children and their parents. I had to undergo a thorough background check by the state police and training by the agency, which was a subcontractor doing this work for a larger agency that I ultimately discovered had unfettered control over all foster kids in a 3 county area and supervision over adoptions under contract with what was called CPS at the time. They are an affiliate of the local Catholic diocese (but I didn't know that at the time). I was first sent on a 50 mile trip to meet a 15 year old to take out for a day to give him time away from the latest foster home he was in. Like most kids in foster care here in Pima County, he had spent a lot of time just moving from foster home to foster home. Among things that were indicated in his records was his inability to get along with women, a result of abuse and poor image issues with his mom. With that issue in mind, CPS and their private "non-profit" partner had him living in a house with a woman and her two daughters and I found out he was on heavy medication because he rebelled against this situation. During our outing he had difficulty staying awake and keeping his thoughts clear, and he had me take him to a shop that specialized in equipment for "cage fighters", which his foster mother had introduced him to. I advised him that I would not be taking him back there because I considered it to be human cock fighting. I decided not to mentor him again unless he was removed from his meds or had the dosage lowered so I could keep him awake and carry on a conversation. They decided to find me a new child to mentor, rather than deal with his issues.

Next they provided me with records on a 12 year old with a very abusive background that was very much like mine. I agreed to take on this challenge and they told me to call and introduce myself to the primary agency with control of the kids so I could schedule a meeting with the child. The primary agency advised me to call back the following week. I did and was stalled again. Then I called back and they said he had been moved and I should wait a few more days. He had been in custody at least five years and dozens of foster homes by then and had been begging for a mentor for a year. The next time I called I was told he had been taken to a hospital and I could not see him. At that point I offered to see him there and they refused. I then told them that I knew he was hospitalized because of a suicide attempt and it would be

helpful to meet me. They were shocked and told me I was totally outside my jurisdiction. I had only guessed about the suicide attempt (which was based on his records), but I had confirmation and I reported all this to my agency, who told me I was not allowed to know these things and that they would not allow me to mentor him. That's when I tendered my resignation and told them that I thought this was a racket and not operated in the best interests of the children. I also told them I would be sending a complaint to CPS about what was going on with both children. I did that and got no response.

I then went off to mope and began investigating the relationships between numerous "non-profit" agencies (that I know are very profitable), so I could find some way that I might be able to accomplish something positive in this screwed up system that I was beginning to suspect was incestuous and corrupt, with social workers and people calling themselves "therapists" moving from agency to agency, with CPS having about a 50% turnover rate each year. While I was doing my snooping, I also volunteered for another mentoring agency that refused to deal with CPS children or their partner private agencies. The director of this agency mentioned he had a 12 year old that was "difficult" to fit and had rejected two prior mentors, but lived a short distance from me. I was taken to meet him at his grandmother's house, where he resides with her, his step-grandfather, an uncle, and his two younger brothers. We stared each other down and agreed to go on a "first date". I picked him up the next week, I told him about myself, gained his confidence, and we discovered we were a perfect match. Everyone was amazed and we became the best match in the agency and he always looked forward to our weekly outings and so did I. However, I was compelled to report a situation that affected this child and his brothers' health and safety and the director of the agency, instead of trying to work on the situation, told grandma about my report and she took all the brothers out of the mentoring program because she had been outed as a hoarder. Before that happened, however, the child I was working with looked me right in the eye one day and said, "Rick, I would give my left nut to have a father like you. You need a son." I told him that was (LOL) the nicest thing anyone had said to me that year, and I decided to take his advise. I gave up mentoring and decided to become a father.

I was now entering the twilight zone. I responded to an ad in the paper to attend a seminar designed to recruit foster and adopt parents. It was held at a juvenile court facility and sponsored by several non-profit agencies in the foster and adopt business. They all had tables set up around the room and we listened to a speaker tell us about the critical need for our services while pictures of children flashed from a projector on the walls. And there he was: the child I was supposed to mentor a year and a half before, but not allowed to. He had now been in custody about 6 years. Federal regulations I was to later learn set a maximum of 18 months. During the break I approached the primary agency, told them I wanted to adopt that child, and they told me to start by signing up with one of the agencies they subcontract with to get my training and background investigation. I did. As I began my training I also monitored a website used to advertise kids up for adoption and his picture remained on the website. As I neared the graduation date from my training I contacted the primary agency and told them I wanted to go ahead and sign up for their "home study" required for adoption and was looking forward to meeting the 12 year old. They then told me he had gone out for trial adoption months before.

Actually, this was before the seminar, where they were showing his picture. I pointed out that his picture was still on their website that very morning. They suggested I become a foster parent instead of adoptive parent. I told them that if that child were a refrigerator I'd go to the attorney general and charge them with false advertising and fraud, which caused them to advise me that I would not get my required home study and not get certified. I then filed a complaint with CPS and they seemed fearful of doing anything with this primary agency, but said they would give me a list of other licensed agencies that could do my home study and certification. A new shock awaited me.

After getting a list of agencies from CPS, I began calling agencies and was repeatedly told they did not do this type of work, but deferred to the primary agency that had rejected me. Nobody dared to buck them because they all did subcontract work and needed their money. I reported this to CPS and they agreed to find me an agency. After several weeks, they did find an agency and their investigator/social worker came to meet me. She was up front with me and told me she knew about my "problems" and was told to expect to find an unreasonable and difficult person. She also listened as I told her of my path up to this point and then told me I could expect the most in depth home study in Arizona history, but she would be fair with me if I was honest with her. The process involved a walk through inspection of my home and several multi-hour interviews with me and people I gave as character references. By the conclusion, this investigator/social worker told me she found me to be totally honest, not your cookie cutter person, a person with a good sense of humor and empathy for children, an excellent role model, and (in conclusion), I passed with flying colors and she had grown to like me. I found her totally fair, honest, and helpful. The only person I had met in the system so far that was. So, now I was ready to become a daddy. Not so fast.

The next year became a blur. My social worker made repeated attempts to get the primary agency (which had control of the kids) to meet with us, to no avail. They would schedule appointments and cancel or not show up or pretend they did not have an appointment. During the course of this, the child I wanted to adopt was brought back and sent out two more times, never giving me a chance to even meet him. CPS refused to intervene and force this private agency to meet with us. While this was happening, I was taking calls from people claiming to work for this private agency or CPS (which had changed names to DCS due to a scandal and mass firings), who were telling me that the operators of this private primary agency had declared war on me because I was bringing to the attention of others the fact that they obstruct adoptions because they make much more money running their foster care and therapy farm, where kids are used as "cash cows". They had never run into anyone as persistent as me before this time. If they knew anything about me they would know that I finish what I start and I'm not afraid of anyone, especially someone who is greed motivated. I continued to write letters of complaint to DCS, the Governor, and members of the Legislature, to no avail.

I decided to try my luck in New Mexico, calling their Las Cruces office and being invited over to meet with them, having my paperwork forwarded and scheduling a phone meeting with my social worker that did my certification. It was a wonderful meeting that lasted nearly 3 hours. They were very nice, liked me, and said they would begin a search for a child based on criteria I

gave them. I wanted at least a 12 year old, feisty, humorous, and kid most foster parents found difficult to get along with or understand. Within a week we had found the perfect little pistol. I was told to prepare to schedule a visit to meet him and his social worker. A week later I received a call telling me that his "therapist" decided to void to prospective meeting and possible adoption. The "therapist" is a private "non-profit" contractor with the power to cancel anything the state social workers may agree to. The "therapist", that never met me, said the child had been molested by his grandfather and she didn't want him going with a divorced, single male. There was no record anywhere in his extensive records about a molestation, nor did the social workers know about it. Nor had the grandfather ever been arrested and the grandfather lived with the grandmother. Bogus. The social workers seemed disturbed by this and directed me to the Albuquerque office to attend an even involving certified adoptive parents and children available for adoptions. They passed on my paper work and told them to find me a difficult child. Seeing a pattern yet?

So, a month later I drive seven hours to Albuquerque and present myself at a community college where they train chefs. Big crowd of nice people and nice children. Our assignment as adults is to work with kids making chocolate cakes, with four kids per table. Adults to change tables every hour so we can meet more kids. Second hour I move to a table and meet a kid I can tell isn't your off the rack kid. A little devilish look in his eyes and a smile to match it. First thing out of his pie hole, "Let's get something straight. I DO NOT want to get adopted. I've been returned three times". My response, "Good, I wouldn't be interested in a kid who hadn't been brought back at least three times". From there we started cracking each other up, playing with the frosting, and he sneaked out to meet with his social worker. I excused myself for the restroom and went to see his social worker and she laughed. She told me he had already come to talk with her and I said, "Before you tell me what he said, do you think there's a chance he will let me try to adopt him"? She replied he shocked everyone by telling her, "I want that guy. Period". I spent the next three months driving back and forth and spending days with this great kid and we had great fun with each other. I got all his warts out on the table and told me none of them bothered me and his "therapist", who I was also meeting with, told me I knew more about him than she had learned in two years and that he was the happiest she had ever seen him. Behind the scenes, my social worker was working with his on getting the paperwork together so he could come to Arizona for a six month trial. He and I talked on the phone three times a week for an hour each time. Behind the scenes, his foster mother was doing everything she could to put the brakes on things. A couple days before the papers were to be signed we were called and told the "therapist" had halted the adoption. No reason given. Nobody would tell us a thing. I was heartbroken. I don't know how he felt, but I assume he was heart broken for being cancelled for the 4th time. He's now 14 and they've had him 8 years. He is a "cash cow" to the therapist and foster mother. Same as the child in Las Cruces. I hired an attorney, but apparently they can do this and they would fight me tooth and nail until I run out of money. I had to walk away.

So, while I was off in New Mexico being conned by another corrupt system where the tail wags the dog, and private "non-profit" alleged "therapists" determine whether a child stays or goes, my social worker was also trying to get the primary private agency in Tucson to meet with us

because we found out the boy I originally wanted to adopt was brought back by the agency AGAIN. They again said they would meet with us, but only to discuss my possibly meeting the now 14 year old child and establish a relationship by mentoring him and then possibly adopting him. We met with the staff finally, had a pleasant discussion with all the people earning their living off of him (I think eight people), and it was agreed they would set up a meeting with him and let us meet. That never happened. They started dodging our calls again and then, a few months later, they again said he had been taken out for adoption by an aunt. While all this waiting was going on, I continued to write letters and investigate further, finding out that this agency, with control over all the DCS kids in 3 counties, is affiliated with dioceses of Tucson, which has a history of pedophile activities. Yup, that's right, this agency is in charge of all these kids. While there is no evidence there is anything going on within this alleged "non-profit" agency damaging to kids, it certainly doesn't look like a contract I would have approved. Arizona DCS officials are seeking more "faith based" partners for foster care. More church and state mixing for Arizona.

I have complained to the state Attorney General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Attorney, the District Attorney, the state Legislature, the Governor, the news media, and on the internet and the only response was a form letter from no person at the U.S. Attorney General's office telling me they see no federal cause of action, despite all these people being paid with federal money and in violation of numerous federal laws pertaining to adoptions and foster care. My snitches, however, tell me that adoptions are probably going to be taken out of the hands of this primary agency that has been obstructing adoptions and put in the hands of DCS with no financial incentive to hold the kids, and foster care may be split up amongst several of the "non-profits" that have been dependent on the primary one for revenue. Sounds great, but I am also told that the woman who ran the primary agency may be hired to run the DCS adoption office in Tucson. That's right, they are invited this woman to crawl in bed with DCS agents. These people running DCS are real brainiacs.

Finally, because I have been running circles around these people, getting some letters to the editor printed and giving good information to the Legislature, the state Senate has passed a bill and sent it to the House urging DCS to bring in an outside agency to come in and help reduce the number of kids in custody (20,000), investigate 13,000 un-investigated pending cases, start intervening ahead of time to reduce the number of kids being snatched by DCS agents to give to the foster care farmers, and I have given the Legislature other suggestions, including bringing in forensic auditors to go through that agency like poop through a goose, turn over every rock, look at every contract, and see how much unnecessary "therapy" we are paying for and how many kids are being drugged without cause. I have also been told (suddenly) by my social worker, that she has two prospective adoptees she wants DCS to let us move forward on.

The moral of this story is: If you want to do a good deed and adopt a child the state claims are difficult to find parents for, prepare yourself for battle. You need to stand your ground and kick the hell out of them. Foster care is very, very profitable as a steady revenue flow. The people in this money driven corrupt system only understand brute force and you better be prepared to give it to them.

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