

# Debunking Some Foster Care Myths

by Jen Painter

## Former Foster Teen's Perspective

Without fail, any time I've ever opened a speech I've given with words that even slightly informs the audience I was in foster care, I get the same reaction: "You couldn't have been in foster care. You are smart and beautiful and successful."

For some reason, this reaction comes from adults, perhaps because they have been accustomed to the stereotype that all of us who are or were in foster care are in it because we are bad kids.

When I speak to youth currently in foster care, they never find it difficult to believe that I was once one of them. Perhaps they see me as living proof that they too can overcome the obstacles that have been thrown at them and continue to function in society without permanently having the words **foster care** branded on their forehead, warning everyone they come in contact with.

In fact, most of the people I interact with on a regular basis don't even know I was in foster care. They see me as one of them, which is necessary in order to be considered "normal" in society. I mean, let's face it. Being a teenager is hard enough. Add to that the drawbacks of growing up in foster care without

support or family, and life becomes even more difficult.

For those of us who do make it, the fight never ends. We enter our adult lives with the expectation of surviving and fulfilling our dreams, and then are slapped with the realization that we are allowed few chances, because most of society thinks we are on the verge of being convicts anyway. But my point is, that is not the case.

Give us a chance. Don't look down on us, and support us in our efforts. We don't breathe fire, and we don't have green hair. Wouldn't that be shocking to see?! You may still get some shock value from us, but not for the same reasons. It may come when society sees that we really do have good intentions, we can be successful, and we can succeed.

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