

Ace

See me now see me then - not the same. I once thought my life was a game and everyone but I was to blame for the pain. I made the decision to leave but it was you that cause that action from me. It was them that spoke for me until I learned how to fight for my rights and become what you said I wouldn't. Now you can call me Ace at 21 in a much better place.

At 15 my life became a case. Do you want to go home? No. Good cause she doesn't want you there.

The door closes and I began to think - How could she not want me when she's the one that had me?

I did not understand why I had cuffs on when all I did was run away from the pain she was causing me. It was like the pain had captured me and pulled me into a world of misery. I felt like family court took away my family.

I was told I had a goal to return home with my biological mother, but whose goal was that. Not mines. "I didn't want to go home." I didn't want to be near the pain that I felt so deeply.

It wasn't until I was seventeen and a half when I realized I had rights and say so on what goes on in my life. I didn't know what a law guardian was or what court house held my case. The first time I spoke up to someone my goal changed to independent living. However during the six months of that time I was forced to move and lost contact with my lawyer and my plans fail off track. I knew then I needed some help but I was too afraid to ask for it.

I received a phone call from my mother. She was mad with the fact that she had to appear in court again. That's how I found out when and where to attend court.

It seemed each time I went to court there was a person there that knew more about me than I knew about myself. I felt like my life was a folder that opens up every six months for changes that didn't happen easily. The only two faces that seemed familiar were the court officer and the judge.

By the time I was 18, I had this one lawyer who gave me his cell phone number. He told me that if the Agency didn't do what they were told, that he would see that it would happen.

I didn't know how important court was until a tragic accident happened. To me the agency wasn't moving fast enough and my life was in danger.

I called my lawyer and he brought the case into court before my next scheduled hearing.

The agency was trying to make it seem like I wasn't complying and they were doing their job. I had asked to be heard and so I was.

Even though I did get the court to work in my favor, I always thought I was up against ACS, the Agency and sadly to say the judge. When I was in court the judge never looked at me or asked me anything. It was like what they said went and that was that.

Youth should understand that Judges are the key to getting what they want or need. And the Judges should understand we are more than just cases. We could possibly be the next them. I feel that without this understanding the system will continue to fail today's foster youth. Our lives didn't evolve in 3 minutes nor should our cases. We need to have a clear understanding to what is best for us and why it is best if we don't already know. I truly believe that the lawyers and judges should have that responsibility and case workers and social workers should be sure that that plan is followed out in a timely matter. We are not just a case. This is our lives.