

✓ Justin Cook

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My name is Justin Cook and I am 13 years old. I spent the first 12 years of my life free from abuse and neglect and I can honestly say I had a great childhood and had everything I could ever want including my 7 brothers and sisters... my friends...my school. Sports and most importantly my parents and God

On March 22, 2013 my life changed instantly when a Texas social worker entered my home and removed me and my brothers and sisters from the only people who have ever cared for and loved us.... And Instead of placing me and my siblings with family members my social worker lied in court and told the judge we had no family to take us. I was instantly placed in a behavior risk foster home separated from all my brothers and sisters even though I have never had any issues with my behavior and have always maintained great grades and good conduct.....my parents have never done drugs.....drank alcohol or raised a hand to me or any of my siblings.

I'm not here today to seek any help in my case as my parents fought hard and proved their innocentsBut today I do stand before you not as a number.....but as a child who is a victim of a failed system.....a system that was built to protect children from abuse and neglect and whose goal is to seek the best interest of a child.....Today I stand before you as a victim of repeated sexual and physical abuse in States care.....And a victim of Texas social workers who repeatedly lied, and refused to help protect me after my many outcries of help....and I also stand before you today as a victim of an agency who is hiding my abuse to protect the numbers they are required to report of children who are hurt and abused in their custody and care.

As you can tell I'm not a number...I'm a real...live.... 13 year old child who was left in a foster home where I was held down.....beaten and sexually assaulted on a day to day basis while my foster parents.... my social worker ...and my casa worker did nothing to protect me.....For 271 days I was repeatedly beaten yelled at...called names... sexually touched...shot with a b b gun ..exposed to drugs and alcohol for the 1st time in my life.....and repeatedly threatened and told if I told my parents or anyone else I would never see my mom and dad or my brothers and sisters again.

I can't begin to tell you how it feels to be ripped from a home where I spent 12 years of never being hit or yelled atand placed into a home with strangers where I was scared, and alone...where I felt unloved and unwantedand allowed to be hurtand where my many outcries for help to my social worker went overlooked and Uninvestigated.....its a pain and a fear that no child should ever feel and is in no way in the best

Interest of any child.....you maybe wondering if I ever told another adult and the answer isyes.....i can still see my mom's face as tears rolled down her face as she pleaded with me not to run....as she promised she would get me help.....but sadlyseveral days later out of the blue i was punished and sent to bed with no food all because my mom reported my outcry to my social worker and she reported to my Foster parents that I told.....my abuse did not end that day as my foster parents Continued to allow my 18 yr old foster brother to continue to beat me and sexually touch me.....

Today my abuse still goes unreported as my social worker refuses to help, my foster parents continue to be foster parents, and my abuser walks free.....no one has been held accountable.....but I thank God every day that my parents fought for the truth fought for justice.... fought for me and I was returned back to them along with all my siblings.....

My goal today as i stand before you is again... not for myselfbut for all children in states care.....No amount of therapy can ever erase the physical and sexual abuse that I myself faced ,and I can never get back the year I lost with my loving family..... but I pray that today somehow..... some way..... my testimony.....and my abuse while in states carecan help stop and prevent any other child from being hurt,...neglected,.....abusedand let down by an agency that ultimately has the power to destroy innocent families....

I pray that the system finds away to hold each Texas social workers accountable for their lies, their failure to stop or report abuse in states care.....and their failure to report and investigate a child's repeated outcry for help.

I pray that rules are changed to allow children who are removed from their parents to be able to go to family members ...who know.. and truly love them.... instead of going to foster homes with complete strangers who allow abuse to occur.

I pray that the system refuses to allow social workers the ability to remove a child from their home without 100 percent proof of abuse, as I was ripped from my home never once a victim of my parents

I pray that you find a way to give us children a voice,,,,,, a voice to be heard and listened to..... as we are the ones ultimately hurt and forever scarred by the actions of social workers, the abuse in foster homes and the emotional abuse that is caused by being removed from our families, our friends, our community and our lives.

Thank you