

Engaging Youth. Building Supports. Strengthening Opportunities.



I am Amnoni, a Boston native with a life journey that echoes resilience and triumph. Thrust into the foster system from the outset, parental substance use marked my early life. Born with drugs in my system, I faced abandonment and, subsequently, a decade of kinship care with my great aunt. The turbulence continued with temporary reunification, only to be separated once again, plunging me back into the foster care system from 12 to 18. Despite aging out into homelessness, I emerged not as a victim but as a force to be reckoned with. I became a graduate with a bachelor's in social work and sociology with a minor in peace and conflict studies and a master's in public administration, a Capitol Hill and White House intern, the best-selling author of [*You Are the Prize: Seeing Yourself Beyond the Imperfections of Your Trauma*](#), and the visionary behind Launch Ahead, an app dedicated to supporting those transitioning out of foster care.

The seismic challenge during my transition was realizing the vital need to prepare for adulthood. Despite a nominal 6-month transition planning period, it was unclear what the essential tasks were. Although my social worker advised me to stay in foster care, I faced a rude awakening. Shortly after turning 18, I was informed my foster mother would no longer be compensated for my care. Returning to find my belongings packed on the porch, I felt powerless, discarded, and unworthy. The impact reverberated, robbing me of stability and engendering deep-seated trust issues that impacted my decision-making. My struggles persisted as an older adult, manifesting as a deficit of essential life skills, such as financial literacy and goal planning.

What would've been helpful is if transition planning happened earlier in life instead of cramming all the information into the 6 months before I aged out.

Planning ahead is essential. I find that systems typically don't do a lot of preventative care but wait until a disaster happens and start from there. Systems need to have processes and procedures in place that support both the family and the young person. Picture a proactive system prioritizing preventative care and featuring a standardized transition care plan and resources for every life skill:

- A structured process that envisions life beyond college and that is coupled with quarterly life skills workshops that cover essentials like establishing a savings account, mental health resources, and trauma processing during the time in care
- A savings plan initiated upon entering foster care that would accumulate interest, empowering young individuals upon aging out

- Early screenings for trauma and mental health conditions, streamlined pathways for healing, and a comprehensive financial education that would provide agency, choice, and a clear route to success

Efficient planning ahead of time is the linchpin to empowerment.

Aging out left me feeling lost, a sentiment that persists into adulthood. At 35, the journey of constant learning and attempting to make up for lost time is arduous. Yet, solace lies in realizing I am not alone. Conversations with fellow transitioners reveal a shared experience of feeling adrift, which underscores the importance of community and support in navigating the challenges of life beyond foster care.



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