

A Man I Can Trust

by Hasani Callwood, 20



When foster care staff asked if I would like a mentor, I said no, because of foolish pride. I thought that I could do everything myself. I was doing well in school, following program, and staying far from trouble. But on the inside, I was dealing with abandonment issues, resentment, hurt, and anger.

I felt more comfortable with books than with people, because I thought that getting into my feelings was unmanly. I was a product of an environment where you can't let your guard down. Reading a book called *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* by Rober Kiyosaki changed my mind. Accepting a mentor was one of the best decisions I have ever made.

When I met Paul for the first time, I told him, "I don't want anything from you but honesty and advice." He told me he understood. At first, our outings were weird. Paul would ask questions to better understand me and my pursuits, and I would reply with simple answers. I was reading his body language, trying to identify his motives. When I felt that he had my best interests at heart, I started to open up. I used selective honesty at first to see if I could trust him with certain information. Every interaction left me thinking and evaluating. We would talk about everything: school, work, dealing with others, and becoming a better person.

One of the best lessons Paul ever gave me was that I have to forgive in order to grow. He helped me realize that I can block my blessings if I don't learn to let go of dead things. I started to work on my family issues. I started reconnecting with my family and even forgave my father.

Paul is the president of the number one advertisement company in America, but when an event takes place or I need support, he shows up. From graduations to evaluating my options, he has been there. He treats me the same way that he treats his kids.

Paul has shown me that not everybody is a snake. He showed me how to pick a suit, to tie a tie, and how to value those around me. He has inspired me to show my peers that someone cares. In the future, I will give back to the less fortunate and help them reach great heights like Paul did with me.

First prize winner, 2015 Awards for Youth in Foster Care.