

Exploring the Culture of Foster Care

NATIONAL COMMUNITY ART PROJECT

Postcard submissions by people in and from foster care, exploring the things learned, felt, and discovered as part of the foster care experience.

www.FosterCareAlumni.org



I FEEL LIKE I FINALLY

BELONG

A
L
U
M
N
I

C
O
M
M
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N
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T
Y

pea IN A pod

My life crammed into a plastic bag

- faded photographs of other people
- every letter I had ever received
- mismatched holey socks
- dimestore tennies
- highwater jeans
- a tattered bible
- art supplies
- my pride
- hope



The official
luggage of the
foster care system

I hardly own
anything.

Whenever you have

^{own}
your family ...

you'll get to have

bedtime
stories

conversations
at the
dinner table

traditions.



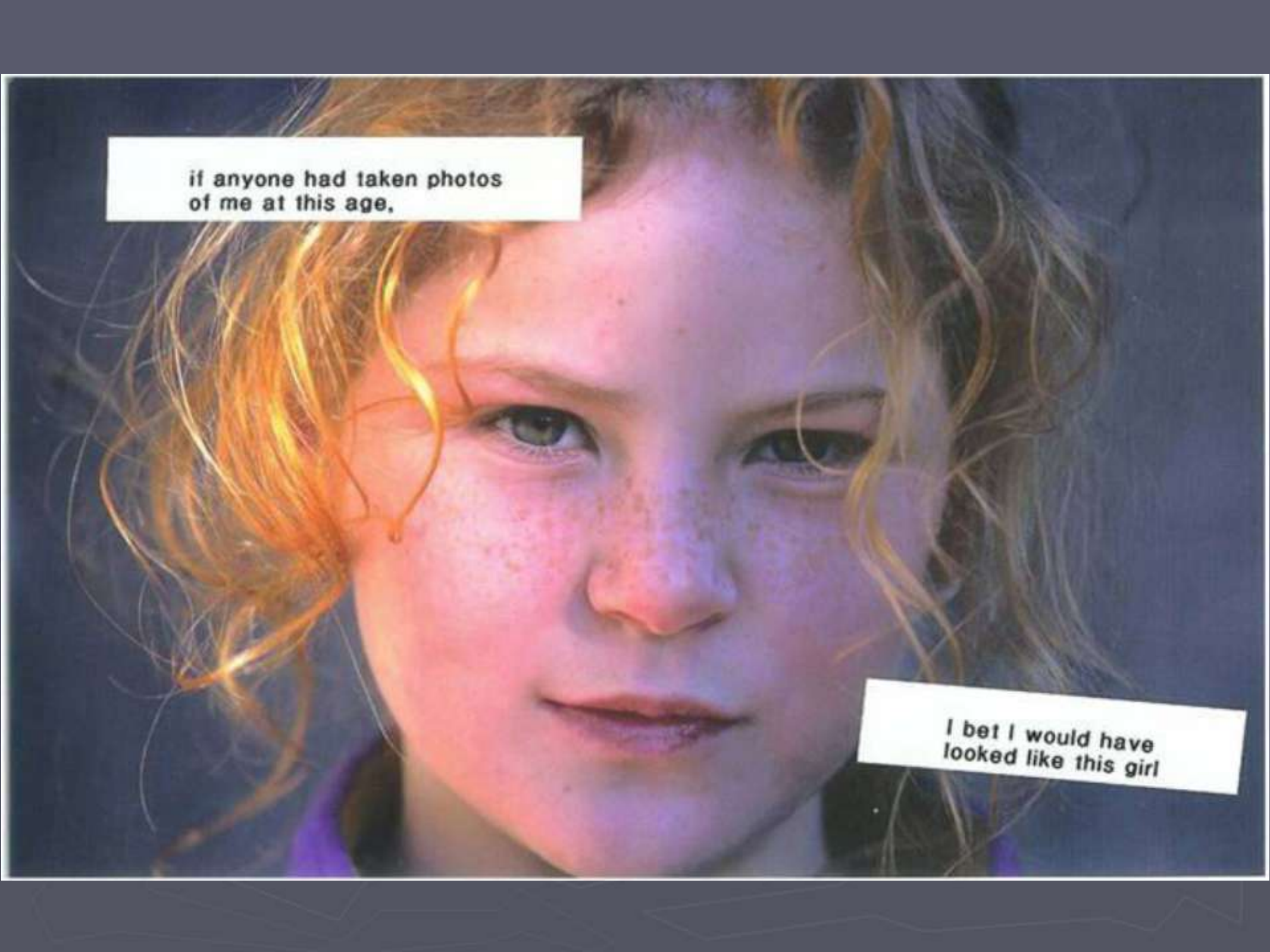


It's been more than
30 years



Sometimes I still
feel so

IMPERMANENT



if anyone had taken photos
of me at this age,

I bet I would have
looked like this girl

You think you
know Me...

You don't.

But you could...
if you ask.

Identity Theft is a Crime

Imagine the nightmare of losing your:

**Home, Family, Friends, and Belongings...
and having to start your life over from ZERO!**

Adults - don't worry!

*When it happens to you it's
a crime punishable by law.*

Kids - you're screwed!

*When it happens to you it's
called being a Ward of the State.*



I have their name

Friday June 25th 1993

and Mrs. Johnson,

It is a pleasure of informing you that your daughter Jill has achieved placement on the Lincoln Middle School Honor Roll this term.

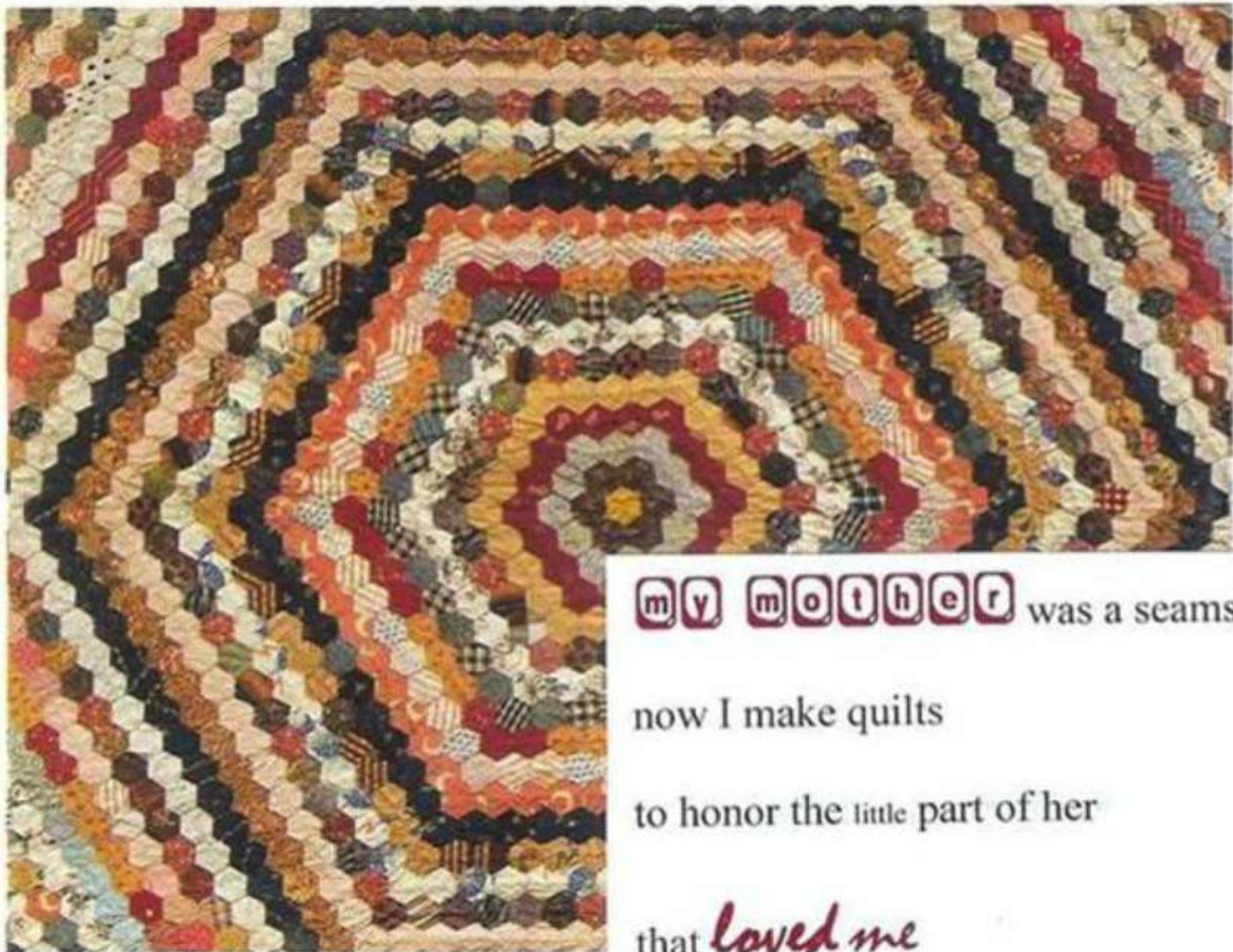
Please take the time to congratulate your daughter on her achievement.

but they're not my parents.



My best friend's mom
told her to, "Find some
normal friends" when
she found out I was in
foster care.



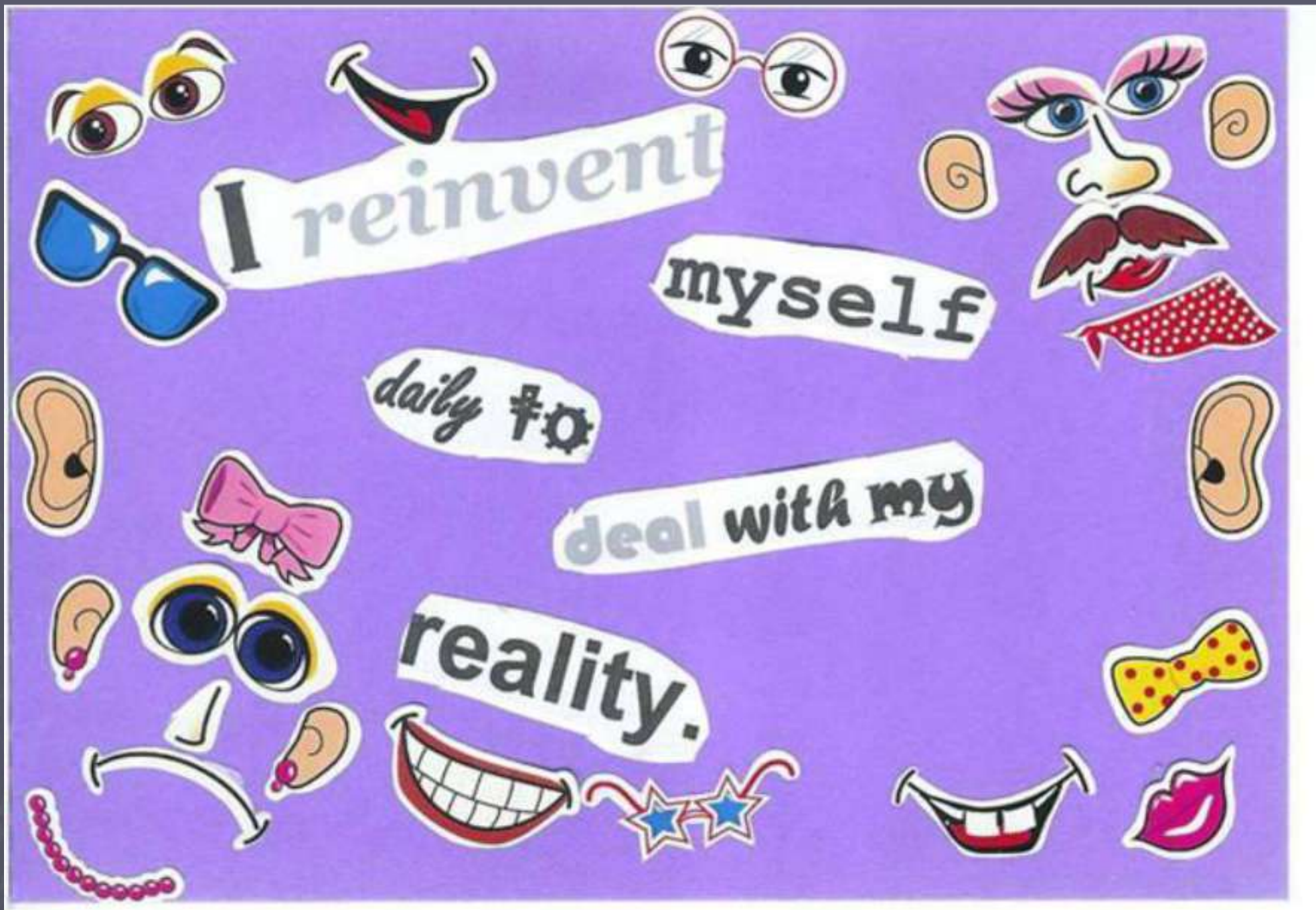


m y m o t h e r was a seamstress

now I make quilts

to honor the little part of her

that *loved me*





SOUTH AFRICA:

The Herd

SOUTH LOS ANGELES:

The Hood

NEITHER Geographics—NOR Demographics

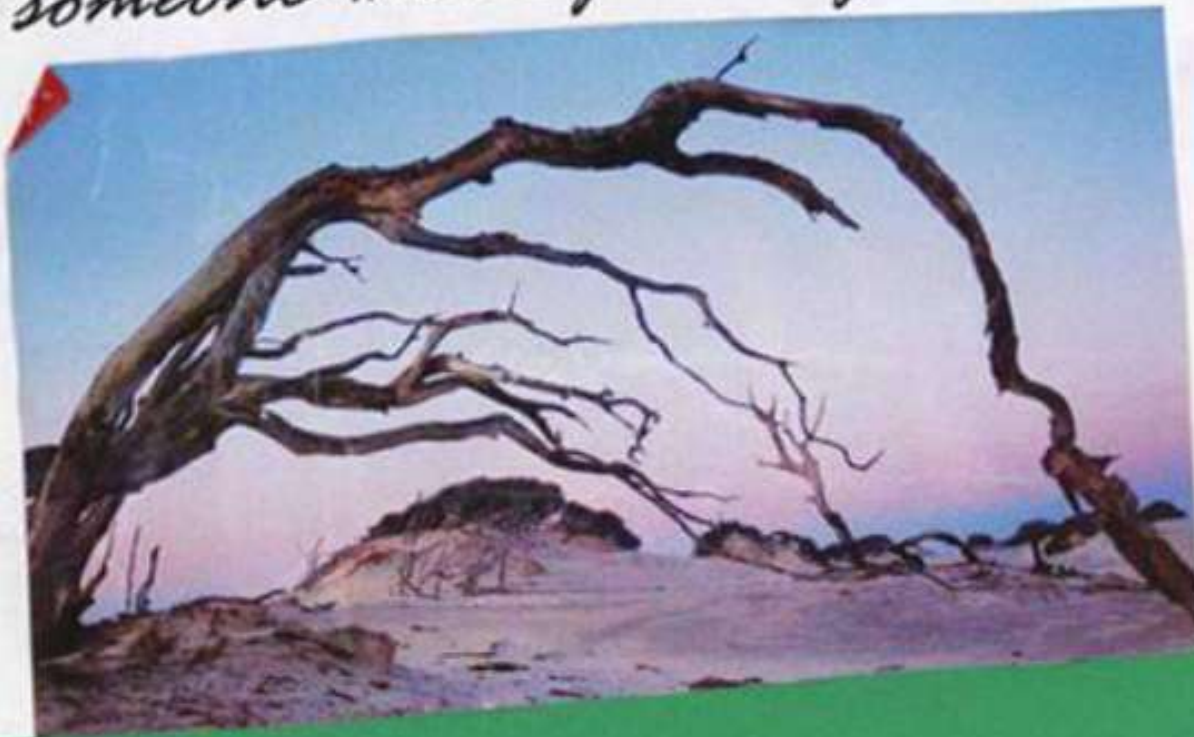
TO BE LOVED

TO BELONG

TO BE CARED FOR

CHANGE WHAT WE NEED

I know I don't trust people, but why
should I? Life taught me that the more I
trust someone the deeper they'll hurt me.





Silencing



Alone



Afraid

Silenced

LIVE WITH LOVE anyway



GET BETTER.

NOT BITTER.

a mother's love



is

only

known

LUCKY

to

the

ONES



UNCONFIDENTIAL

CASE HISTORY

Assessment of the Child:

My childhood is documented in a file filled with painful details. My foster parents and social workers defined me in their reports:

"Inappropriate." "Defiant." "Defensive."

"Manipulative." "Demanding." "Belligerent."

Transition to Adulthood:

After leaving foster care, it took a while to finally believe in myself and understand who I am. *Passionate. Honest. Caring. Intelligent. Articulate. Resolute.*

foster (fô'stər, fös'tər) vt. **-tered, -tering, -ters.** [ME fostren < OE fōstrian, to nourish < fōstor, food.] **1.** To bring up : NURTURE. **2.** To promote the development or growth of : ENCOURAGE. **3.** To nurse : cherish. —adj. Receiving, sharing, or affording parental care and nurture although not related through legal or blood ties. **ter child** >

I found them neither to be places
which "fostered", nor did
they resemble a "home"

home
A place within which a family or social unit is considered to be a refuge or place of origin. **5.** The native habitat, as of a plant or animal. **7.** The place where something is discovered, originated, or first appeared. **SOURCE** < Several states claim to be the birthplace of the home. **b.** Headquarters



My sister was my family,



once everyone else was gone.

The DRAMA
a

STOP

STOPs

With Me





HIDE



SEE ME



WHEN YOU HAVE A (FAMILY) AMPUTATION,
YOU HAVE TO RELEARN A LOT OF THINGS.

When you were 38 and I was a **child**
and I needed to be cared for and loved.

You let me down.
You walked away.

Now I'm 38 and you're getting **older**
and soon you'll need to be cared for and loved.

Will I let you down?
Will I walk away?

(You never thought about that, did you?)

is she still
here?



MY LAST SOCIAL
WORKER WAS

always running late

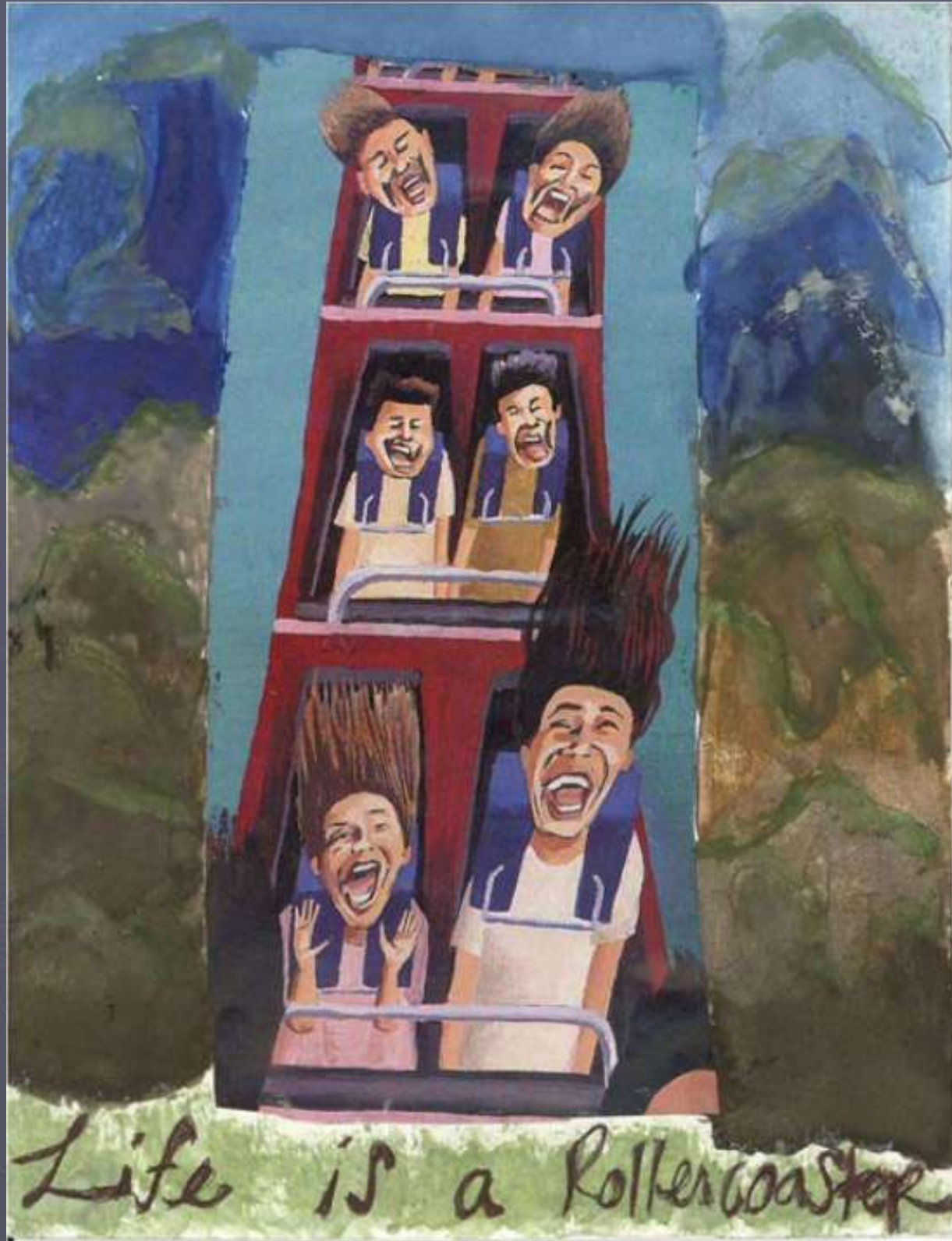
INEFFICIENT



REALLY QUITE STRANGE

BUT HE LOVED ME AND

THAT MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE



Don't insult
me
with
your

promise

L I A R

Don't talk to me until you know what it's like
to go **30 WHOLE DAYS** with...



NO PERSONAL MAIL



NO PERSONAL EMAIL



NO PERSONAL PHONE CALLS



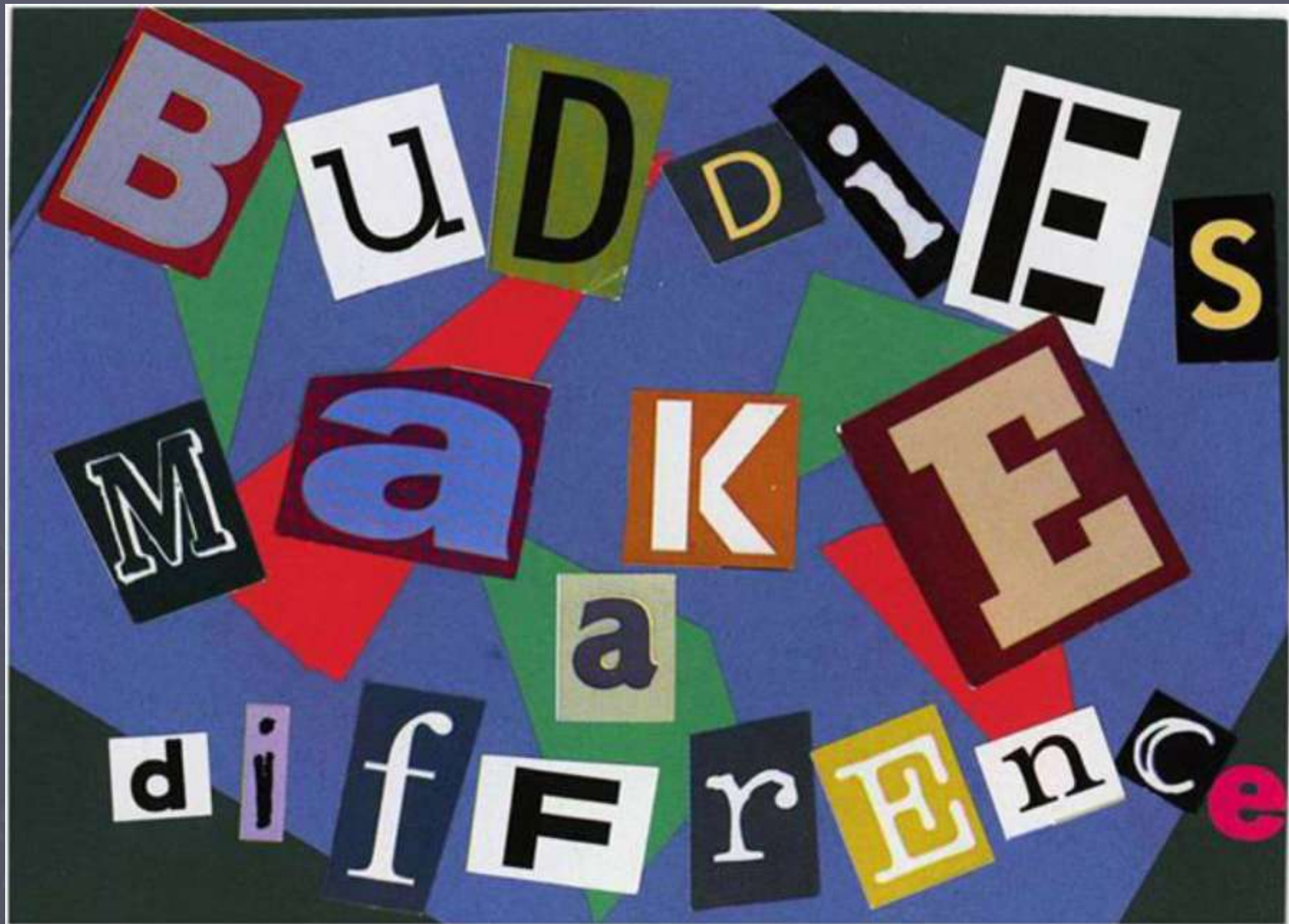
NO PERSONAL INTERACTION



I thought it then AND I think it now...



NO PERSON'LL EVER LOVE ME



The artwork features a red border. At the top, a black band contains three circular shapes: a green one on the left, a tan one in the center, and a purple one on the right. At the bottom, another black band contains a pink circle on the left and a red circle on the right. A white rectangular area in the center contains two lines of handwritten text. The first line is "I DON'T MISS MY FAMILY." and the second line is "I MISS THE FAMILY I NEVER HAD." The second line is flanked by two stylized, jagged shapes in purple and yellow.

I DON'T MISS MY FAMILY.

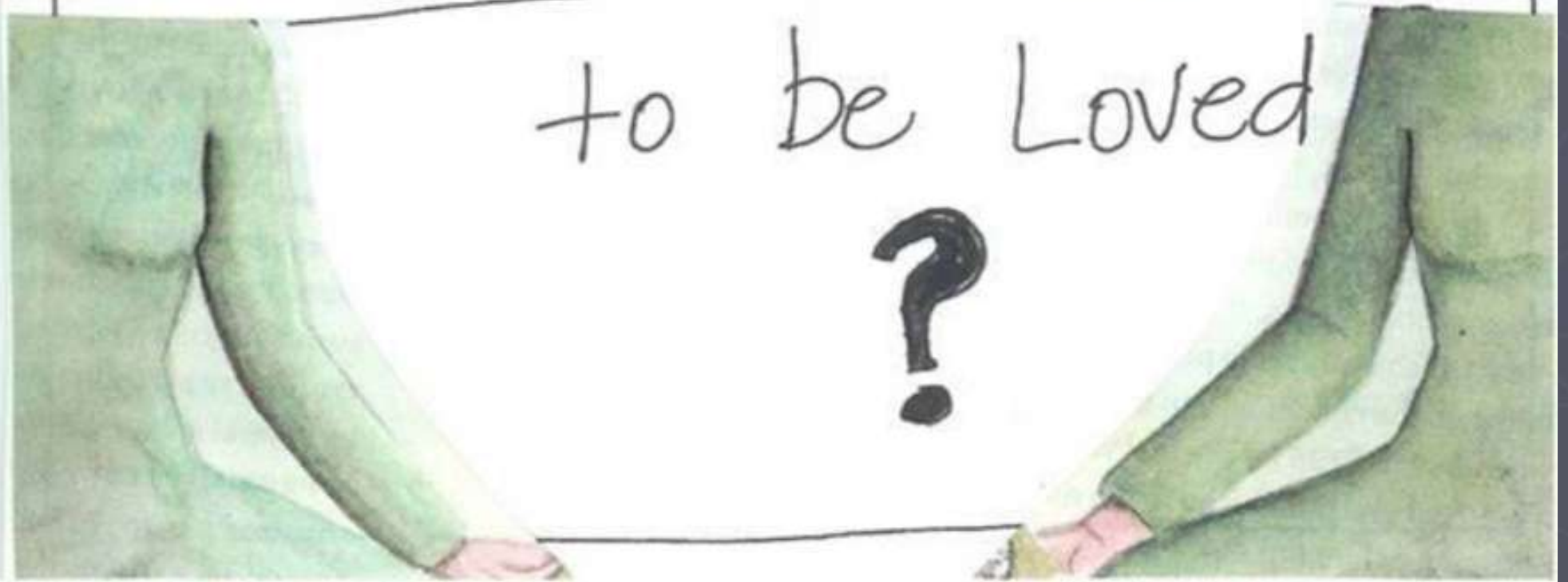
I MISS THE FAMILY
I NEVER HAD.

Will I ever be

Enough

to be Loved

?



They Say home is where
the heart is... but Where does
your heart live if you Never
had a home???





I
am a PERSON
not a CASE.

A photograph of a band consisting of adults and children. From left to right: a young boy in a dark shirt, a man in a black jacket playing a snare drum, a man in a light blue shirt and a straw hat playing a tuba, a young boy in a dark jacket, a woman in a black jacket playing a trumpet, a woman in a black jacket playing a trumpet, and a man in a black jacket and a black hat playing a trumpet. They are all holding sheet music. The background is a light blue wall.

EVEN FOSTER KIDS WANT/NEED

music lessons...prom dresses...summer camp...

football equipment...yearbooks...art classes...

cookouts...teddy bears...karate lessons...curfews...

A CHILDHOOD

I know you have been

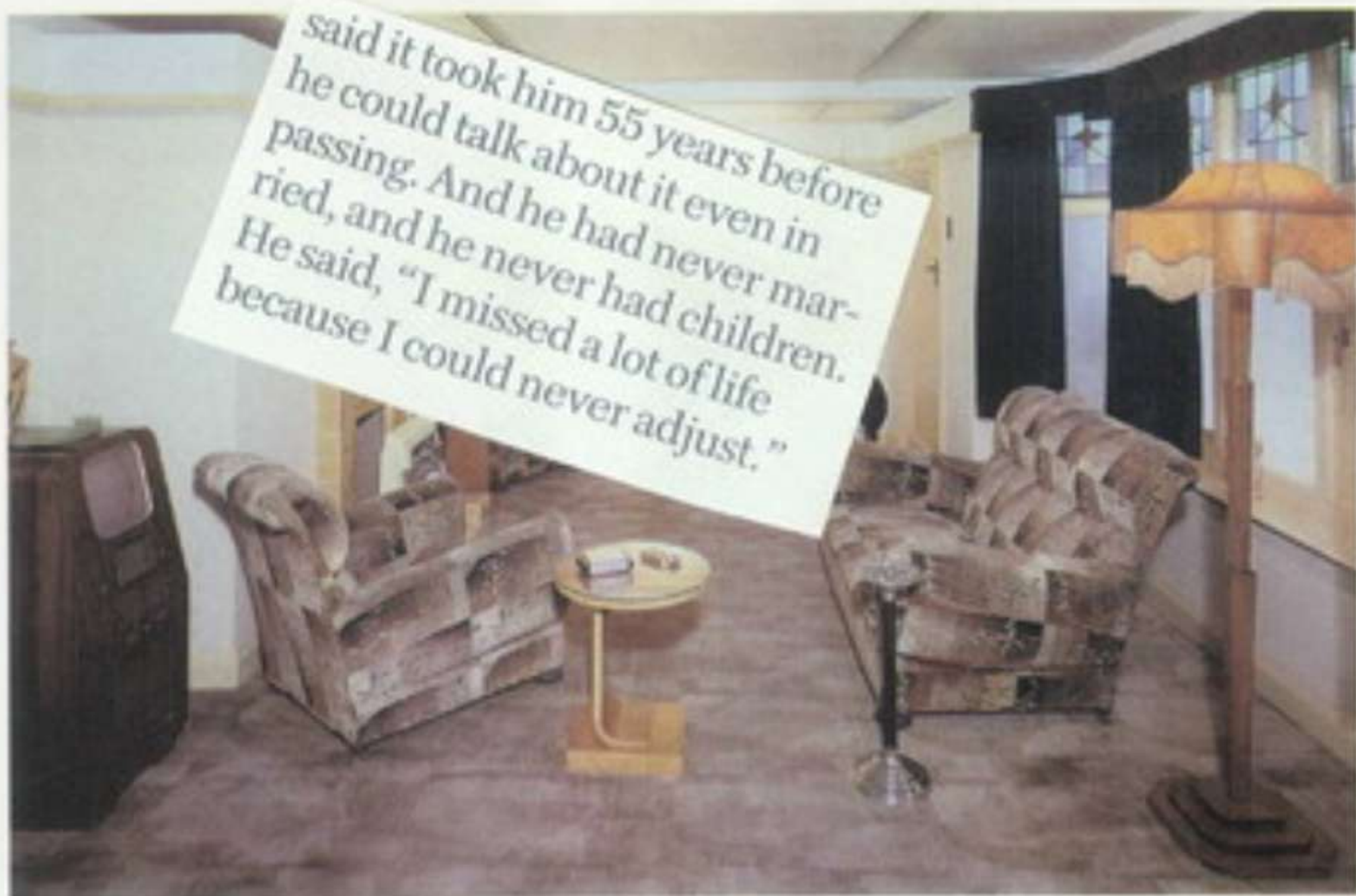
**RIPPED
OFF**



But
Remember



said it took him 55 years before
he could talk about it even in
passing. And he had never mar-
ried, and he never had children.
He said, "I missed a lot of life
because I could never adjust."



IT HURT
WHEN YOU
MADE ME A WOMAN
WHEN I WAS JUST
A LITTLE GIRL.

SAVE YOUR DRAMA FOR YOUR MOMMA

this office is a no drama zone

I saw this sign at a local foster care agency and it hurt my feelings SO badly. I don't mean to be overly sensitive and I'm sure that worker was trying to be funny, but it broke my heart to think of all those motherless kids like me who know they have no place where their drama is allowed.

A sepia-toned portrait of a Native American man, likely a Sioux, wearing a dark jacket, a beaded necklace, and a headband. He is looking slightly to the right. The image is set against a dark blue background with faint, stylized white line art of a compass rose on the left and a mountain range on the right.

my identity
got lost

IT IS NOT
IN MY FILE

→ EVERY~
child



DESERVES



TO KNOW
THEY ARE



DIVINE



I NEVER KNEW I WOULD
GROW UP

NOW WHAT?

can I have the life I
always dreamed of ?



I wish that could, but...

I

Can't

fix

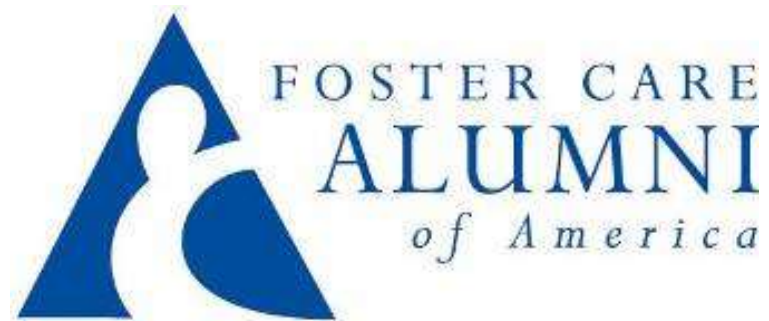
This.

I am sorry

moving again...

Fit as much as you
can into this





Connecting Today... Transforming Tomorrow

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