

# AGING OUT

Navigating the transition from adolescence to adulthood is challenging for even the most mature and privileged youth. For three young people in New York and Los Angeles, making the transition to independent living is considerably more difficult as they “age out” of the foster care system and suddenly discover, for the first time, that they’re on their own.

**AGING OUT**, a new documentary by Roger Weisberg and Vanessa Roth, chronicles the daunting obstacles that these veterans of foster care encounter as they are forced to fend for themselves. Not only do they lack family support, they leave the foster care system with no stable home, meager financial resources, and little preparation to survive on their own. **AGING OUT** follows these young people as they become parents, battle drug addiction, face homelessness, and even end up in jail. But, despite their struggles, the film also shows these teenagers using the resiliency they developed during their years “in the system” to take control of their lives.

In Los Angeles, David Griffin looks back on an entire life in more than 20 foster care, mental health, and juvenile justice facilities. Abandoned by his mother when he was just six weeks old, David leaves foster care for the streets, goes on a self-destructive drug and crime binge, copes with homelessness and incarceration, gets rejected by his former foster parents, and eventually moves to Alaska with the hope of becoming a fisherman.

Risa Bejarano, abused and sexually molested as a child, managed to become the first member of her family to advance past the tenth grade, despite shuttling between a dozen different Los Angeles foster homes in the past six years. The cameras record Risa as she attends her high school prom and graduates with several scholarships, but they also capture her quiet battle with drug addiction and a devastating emotional breakdown during her freshman year at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Daniella Anderson reported her abusive father to the authorities when she was fifteen, and spent the next five years in ten different group homes in New York City. As she leaves the foster care system, she juggles her college career with the hard reality of living with her boyfriend, raising her newborn child, paying rent, and putting enough food on the table.

**AGING OUT** is more than a dark chronicle of young people who move from foster care into the welfare, mental health, and criminal justice systems. This emotionally complex film is also a deeply affecting portrait of the struggles of three young adults to overcome the scars of their troubled childhoods in order to realize their dreams of independence and fulfillment.

**AGING OUT** is written, produced, and directed by **Roger Weisberg**. His 22 previous national public television documentaries have won over 80 awards including Emmy, Peabody, and duPont-Columbia awards. Several of his films were distributed theatrically before airing on PBS, including *ROAD SCHOLAR* and his two recent Academy Award nominated documentaries, *SOUND AND FURY* and *WHY CAN'T WE BE A FAMILY AGAIN?* **Vanessa Roth**, the Co-Producer/Co-Director of **AGING OUT**, has worked as a documentary producer and director for the past ten years. After receiving her Masters Degree in social work from Columbia University, Vanessa went on to make the duPont-Columbia Award-winning film, *TAKEN IN: THE LIVES OF AMERICAN FOSTER CHILDREN* and the Sundance 2002 premiere, *CLOSE TO HOME*.

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