

Director's Statement

Roger Weisberg

As I prepare to send our second child off to college, I'm struck by how much support he will receive as he "ages out" of our home. He knows he can count on our continued financial and emotional support, and most importantly, he knows he's always welcome home. In contrast, most young people who age out of the foster care system at about the same age have no stable home or parents to whom they can turn. The very system that removed these abused and neglected children from their homes discharges young people, usually at age 18, to fend for themselves with little or no support whatsoever.

It is not surprising that 2 to 4 years after being discharged from foster care, 25% of these veterans of foster care had been homeless, 40% were on public assistance, and 50% were unemployed. 25% of the boys had been incarcerated and 60% of the girls had given birth to a child. Despite these grim statistics, I met some remarkable young people while filming *AGING OUT* who developed enough resiliency during their troubled childhoods to beat the odds. It was genuinely inspiring to watch these extraordinary young people overcome the tremendous adversity in their lives.

I know that my kids will invariably face some tough times as they navigate the thorny transition from adolescence to independent living. *AGING OUT* helped me grasp how much tougher this transition is for young people who've been abused and neglected, shuttled between numerous foster care placements, and suddenly find themselves on their own. In making *AGING OUT*, I wanted take viewers inside the embattled world of teenagers in foster care to reveal the tremendous obstacles they face as they try to become self-sufficient adults.

I still don't fully understand how some young people can find the inner strength to cope with early childhood trauma, while others can't. But, *AGING OUT* made me realize something I should have known from the start. In order to make a successful transition to independence, teens aging out of foster care need many of the same things my own kids need – some continued financial support until they can stand on their own two feet, a safe place they can call home, and most of all, adults who truly care about them.