

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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White House Honors Foster Care Youth “Champions of Change”

WASHINGTON, DC - On Tuesday, May 19th, the White House will honor twelve former foster youth as “Champions of Change” who are making a difference in their communities. In addition to honoring these young people for their courage, resilience, and contributions, the event will also highlight their commitment to furthering their education. The event will showcase the stories and work of these inspirational leaders as a part of National Foster Care Month. The program will feature remarks by U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity Roy L. Austin Jr.

The [Champions of Change](http://www.whitehouse.gov/champions) program was created as an opportunity for the White House to feature individuals doing extraordinary things to empower and inspire members of their communities. The event will be live streamed on the White House website. To watch this event live, visit www.whitehouse.gov/live; on May 19th at 9:00AM ET. To learn more about the White House Champions of Change program, visit www.whitehouse.gov/champions; Follow the conversation at #WHChamps.



David Ambroz, Los Angeles, California

David Ambroz is the Executive Director of Corporate Citizenship & Social Responsibility for Disney | ABC Television Group. In that role, Ambroz convened more than 100 partners to create FosterMore – a multi-media effort to communicate with the American public during Foster Care Awareness Month. Private sector companies, foundations, non-profits and Disney | ABC joined forces to create a campaign that shines a light on the potential of the 400,000 plus youth and countless families in the foster care system. As an alumnus of foster care, Ambroz has demonstrated a lifelong passion for child welfare reform; from his work to establish the National Foster Youth Advisory Council (1997), the GLBT Foster Care Join Initiative (1998), and more recently his service on the California Child Welfare Council, and his service on the ABA Commission on Youth At Risk – he continues to engage. David Ambroz is a graduate of Vassar College and the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law.

Maria Burgos, Providence, Rhode Island

Maria Burgos is a college senior graduating later this month with a degree in Health and Human Biology. While in college, Burgos has participated in various mentoring and advocacy groups such as Emergency Medical Services, was an intern at the National Human Genome Research Institute at the National Institutes of Health, visited Haiti and Columbia on public service trips, and participated in Congressional Foster Youth Shadow Day 2014. Burgos entered the Los Angeles foster care system when she was eleven months old and subsequently spent 15 years in care. After dedicating a year of service to AmeriCorps beginning in the fall, she plans to pursue medical school and use that platform to drive change in the policy and practice of the total care of foster youth. Maria Burgos is senior at Brown University.

Sixto Cancel, Richmond, Virginia

Sixto Cancel is a college student and a Young Adult Consultant with the Children's Bureau, working in the Center for State Capacity. As a commitment maker for the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGIU), Cancel founded Think of Us, a non-profit dedicated to innovating with data, technology and multi-media to serve vulnerable populations. His dedication to helping young people succeed in life started in high school with Stellar Works, his initiative to provide SAT and remedial education programming for students in foster care. He has also served as a member of the National Foster Care and Alumni Policy Council, as an advisory member to the American Institutes for Research LGBTQQAA Advisory Board, and currently serves as a board member of the North American Council on Adoptable Children. Cancel is a fourth year student at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Daryle Conquering Bear Crow, Denver, Colorado

Daryle Conquering Bear Crow (Oglala Lakota), is the Healthy Living Program Assistant at the Denver Indian Family Resource Center and is in his senior year of college, on his way to receiving his Bachelors in Human Development and Sports. A proud member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, he speaks nationwide about native youth who experience the child welfare system and advocates for the enforcement of the Indian Child Welfare Act. Conquering Bear Crow has served on advisory boards for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the National Resource Center for Tribes, and Casey Family Programs. He collaborates and has interned with the National Indian Child Welfare Association and currently sits on the North American Council on Adoptable Children board of directors. Daryle Conquering Bear Crow is a senior at Oregon State University.

Nicole Dobbins, Silver Spring, Maryland

Nicole Dobbins is Executive Director of Voice for Adoption in Washington D.C., a national advocacy organization whose mission is to represent the interests of children in foster care who are awaiting adoption and the families who adopt domestically. Previously, she worked with FosterClub where she managed the organization's internship program and was responsible for engaging foster care alumni leaders to train 2,500 foster youth annually across the country. As an alumnus of Oregon's foster care system, she leverages her first-hand experience to advocate on behalf of young people currently living in out-of-home care. She is also an active alumna member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. where she serves in her local community and chairs an initiative focused on foster care and adoption awareness. Nicole Dobbins is a graduate of Oregon State University.

Chelsea Faver, Greenwood, Indiana

Chelsea Faver currently serves as a Second Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps while also pursuing her Juris Doctor. As an alumnus of foster care, Faver developed a passion for advocating for future generations of foster youth by working as an intern for Indian's Department of Child Services and ultimately as President of Indiana's Youth Advisory Board. Faver now serves as a national consultant and advocate in several capacities, including as a founding member of the National Foster Youth and Alumni Policy Council where she has collaborated with other council members to develop child welfare related recommendations for federal agencies. Chelsea Faver is a graduate of Indiana University and a student at Indiana University's McKinney School of Law.

Mary Lee, Memphis, Tennessee

Mary Lee, Esq., serves as National YVLifeSet Coordinator for Youth Villages, a national children's services nonprofit headquartered in Memphis, Tennessee. YVLifeSet helps provide vulnerable young adults, some of whom are aging out of foster care, with the skills necessary to achieve their fullest potential. At Youth Villages, Lee helped to establish the YV Scholars program, which offers young adults in YVLifeSet additional support to meet their educational goals. One of Lee's greatest achievements was helping ensure foster youth adopted from state custody would not have to choose between being adopted by a family and pursuing higher education, as she did. Her story inspired the Fostering Adoption to Further Student Achievement Act (nicknamed the Mary Lee Act). Mary Lee is a graduate of Austin Peay State University and The Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis.

Sokhom Mao, Oakland, California

Sokhom Mao serves as a Juvenile Justice Commissioner for Alameda County and a Public Education Specialist for the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) at the University of California, Berkeley. For the past 13 years, Commissioner Mao has led policy campaigns in higher education and foster care reform across California and the nation. As a result his efforts, California passed its first foster care landmark bill, Assembly Bill 12, giving foster youth opportunities and access to higher education, employment opportunities, and stable housing until age 21. Commissioner Mao was appointed to the National Council on Crime and Delinquency's Alameda County LGBTQ Task Force. While in college, Mao majored in Criminal Justice and was a founding member of the Guardian Scholars Program supporting current and former foster youth in higher education. Mao is a graduate of San Francisco State University.

Lupe Ortiz-Tovar, Tulsa, Oklahoma

Lupe Ortiz-Tovar manages consultant coordination, engagement, and communication efforts with JBS International Inc. A large part of her work is to engage with young adult consultants ages 18-24 who were formerly in foster care. She has been a member of the Foster Care Alumni of America's (FCAA) national board since 2007, is co-founder of their Arizona chapter, and assisted with the establishment of several Midwest chapters. As a 2005 All-Star and former staff member of FosterClub, she continues to support the next generation of young adults in and from foster care. Lupe Ortiz-Tovar is a member of Theta Nu Xi Multicultural Sorority Inc. and a graduate of Arizona State University.

Briana Osbourne, Sacramento, California

Briana Osbourne spent four years in foster care in Sacramento, California. Currently, Osbourne works as a Youth Peer Mentor at Visions Unlimited, Inc. and previously served with City Year Sacramento, where she spent over 1,700 hours mentoring and tutoring middle school students as an AmeriCorps member. Osbourne also serves as a California Youth Ambassador for FosterClub, the national network for young people in foster care. The Ambassadors are a group of 12 foster care alumni working alongside county leaders, Education Equals Partnership and California College Pathways to improve educational outcomes for young people in care. Briana Osbourne is a graduate of Howard University.

Eriq Swiftwater, Oglala, South Dakota

Eriq Swiftwater is 19 years old and a member of the Oglala Sioux Tribe on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. As a freshman in college, Swiftwater studies Business Education and plays on his university's football team. A graduate of Oelrichs High School in Oelrichs, South Dakota, he served as class president, set records in football, basketball, and track, and graduated as class salutatorian, receiving three academic scholarships, and one athletic scholarship to play football Black Hills State University. At the age of twelve, Swiftwater and his five siblings were placed in foster care, and separated into two different homes. He is currently involved with the South Dakota Gear Up program as Youth Guest Speaker, sharing his story and mentoring students in high schools across the reservation. Eriq Swiftwater is a freshman at Black Hills State University.

George White, Gardena, California

George White serves as the Program Assistant at the National Foster Youth Institute as well as a Founding Member of Fostering Change, a program of Peace4Kids, in Los Angeles, California. At the age of 16, as a participant at Peace4Kids, White created "Project Homebound," an initiative to raise awareness about the tragic homelessness among young people transitioning out of the foster care system. Through this initiative, he launched a campaign that helped lead to the passage of Assembly Bill 12 in California. George White is a graduate of Southern New Hampshire University.