



Labeled

An Introduction

The following introduction is a short speech given at a conference by LEAP Student Intern Marshall, who served as a Youth Advisor on the short film *Labeled*.

Every year, over 1.2 million students drop out of high school in the United States alone. That's a student every 26 seconds or 7,000 a day. Studies show that high school dropouts are roughly six times more likely to become incarcerated than high school graduates.

I read these two facts online and thought I could relate to them both. I dropped out of high school in the 9th grade because my mom was a crystal meth addict and my father passed when I was at the young age of two so I was the man of the house. I pretty much had to take care of my mom and myself. At the time I felt like school didn't have an important role in my life since it wasn't doing anything for me at the time that I needed like putting clothes on my back or paying the bills so I turned to the streets for help.

Soon after I dropped out; I constantly got into trouble, hung out with the wrong crowd and committed crimes which led me to be incarcerated for 3 years in a juvenile prison called Maple Lane.

When I got out my parole officer introduced me to a program that helps youth that have been incarcerated in the JRA system called LEAP. The LEAP program helped me get back on my feet when I got out of JRA and helped me get the internship I'm currently doing with TeamChild and also helped me prepare for job interviews and much more.

TeamChild is a nonprofit civil legal aid organization. TeamChild provides free legal representation and advice to youth, as well as legal education resources and trainings to community partners.

Since I have started this internship with TeamChild we have been working on a movie project for youth that have dropped out or got expelled from school and can't return to school because of their crimes and/or because of their "violent" past. We did a lot of filming and chipped away at the film to chop it down under 10 minutes.

We filmed youth in schools, libraries, basketball courts and buildings. It took a lot of transcribing and time to make the short film team child has produced. My job was to do some transcribing and a few power points.

I learned that a lot of people don't think a lot about these youths' futures. I think a lot of people don't understand or see that these youth need help and kicking them out of school isn't going to make things any easier for these them.

Why not give youth a second chance to make their future brighter? Why take away their education when that's clearly what they need? I think it takes away the whole meaning of LEARN from your mistakes. Here is a short film on some of the youth and their stories on their experience with school...