

final thoughts... from Paula

From Widow To Winner is interested in partnering with other agencies that are passionate and proactive in making a difference in the lives of our most vulnerable. In 2012, and each year afterwards, more than 23,000 children in Foster Care age out of the system. They have no family to support them, no education, no skills, no medical care, no housing. They are being set up for failure; resorting to drugs, gangs, being exploited through sex trafficking, prison or death...the alarm has sounded and we must **RESPOND!**

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.
Proverbs 17:22
Laugh Out Loud Today!

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Transitions are normal. But transitions can be taxing, frustrating, time consuming and sometimes very unwelcomed in our lives. They sometimes come with questions like **why and how and when**, but it's the destination that always makes the transition worthwhile.

I have personally experienced many major transitions in my life. At 37 years old, I had to transition from being a wife to a wonderful husband, raising four children together, to a widow without her husband, being a single mother raising four children alone. I was forced to reenter the job market, transitioning from being a cheerful and grateful stay-at-home Mom. Years after kids began to grow and move away, I made the decision to return to graduate school in another state, from the west coast to the east coast. This transition required me to leave, family, friends, church and everything comfortable and familiar and make the sacrifice for the purpose spoken to me by God. Once I completed my graduate degree, I realized I was quickly approaching my 60th birthday.

However, I did not realize that I was entering into the world of subtly being forced into retirement. I had never considered retirement and this would be a difficult transition that would require much wisdom and peace from God.

Another transition that would catch me off guard, but would bring unique and adventuresome opportunities in my life was going from taking care of my children to taking care of my elderly Mother.

Well, as I trusted my Heavenly Father during all of the transitions, He gave me wisdom, strategy and hope for the future ahead.

Now, as my future unfolds with God's mandate for me to defend the cause of the orphans, plead the case of the widow, the transitions continue to roll around and I am encouraged because the destinations have all been extremely worthwhile.

From Widow To Winner Projects is going through a transition and I look forward to the ultimate destination planned by God. Now the only question I have during every transition is “What Lord, will the end be?”

coming soon >>>

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Of From Widow To Winner

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Widow/Orphan Resource Center

A Quarterly Insight into the Current Issues of Orphans and Widows

From Widow To Winner Projects International

Joyfully advocating on behalf of the Orphans and Widows

“Learn to do right! Seek justice. Encourage the oppressed, Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow”. Isaiah 1:17(NIV)

A Day Like Any Other Day

My name is Tracy. I am a 42 year old mother of two, a licensed vocational nurse, an organizational psychologist, a daughter, a sister, a friend and a widow.

Saturday January 20, 2007 started much like any other day. I was starting a new math class and my children were preparing for basketball games at one of the city parks. I am not sure how much either of them liked basketball at that time, but being 11 and 8 years old, having your father as your coach was pretty special.

I made it home from school before the kids and my husband came home. When they arrived they both came in with smiles even though they had both lost in their divisions. My husband was disappointed, not in any of the kids but just a little in himself as a coach. He decided he would get together with his younger brother for a couple of hours. I cautioned him to not be out too late. It was a good time for me to catch up with one of my sisters and niece who came down for a visit that afternoon as well.

Just after 7pm as my sister prepared to leave I received a loud knock at the front door. I asked cautiously who it was. My husband's brother identified himself. I quickly opened the door, he looked at me and said Elijah (my husband) had just gotten shot in the head. My assumption was that he must have been a victim of a carjacking and been grazed by a bullet..

My sister stayed with the kids and I headed to the hospital after grabbing my marriage certificate.



Tracy and Elijah, Sr. walk down the aisle

When I arrived at the hospital I realized how serious the situation actually was. I was greeted by a beautiful blonde, a female police officer. The reason I remember how pretty she was is she delivered such ugly news in such an ugly way. My demeanor was calm and quiet as I introduced myself to the medical personnel and inquired about my husband. The female officer stated “This is a homicide scene, he is not dead, but he will probably die. Where he was shot is the first homicide scene and this is the second.” My husband of nearly 10 years was a healthy 6'2", 35 year old male when I talked to him last at 4:30pm that afternoon and by 7:30pm he was a homicide victim.

The assailant is still unknown and it has been determined that he was standing in the wrong place at the wrong time.

From Widow To Winner Projects International

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Please make your generous donations today by visiting our website:

www.fromwidowtowinner.com or mailing donations to:

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Contact: 757-667-0056 Email: singhymnstohim@yahoo.com

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A Widow's Story - Tracy Lee

I was finally able to see Elijah (my husband) at about 3:30 or 4 in the morning. At this point I had worked as a licensed vocational nurse for about 7 years and in healthcare 10 years prior. Much of that time was spent with terminally ill patients and I had never seen as many tubes, IV's and monitors as I did when I walked into that room. I introduced myself to a skittish young nurse up on a stool hanging a new bag of something. She nervously said hello.



That was the start of people not knowing how to address the potential widow. I held his left hand and said "Elijah look at you" his blood pressure began to drop rapidly. I had never seen anything like that. I immediately said to the nurse his blood pressure is dropping, she asked me to leave the ICU. Shortly after, I heard the code blue being called.

I remember picking up the phone outside the unit doors asking to be let in. The answering nurse stated "the doctor is with him now" this was the first time I raised my voice. I sternly said "I heard the code blue, I am his wife open the door". The door opened and I met the trauma surgeon who assisted the neurosurgeon with the craniotomy hours earlier.

He told me that he had gone into cardiac arrest they were able to resuscitate him, but he had so much brain swelling it was too early to tell if he would make it. Elijah continued to go into cardiac arrest several times over the 24-48 hour period.

He was in a coma and on January 22, 2007 he was pronounced brain dead. I stayed at the hospital sleeping in his room at night and going home to shower at 6am when it was time for the change of shift in the ICU

One of my sisters was staying with them at night and after school. I made the difficult decision to consent to organ donation after two trauma surgeons and one neurosurgeon had determined that he was indeed brain dead and his heart so badly damaged from the multiple heart attacks suffered. His heart was no longer beating on its own and he was on a ventilator for breathing. At each attempt to turn off the ventilator there was no breathing noted.

A family resource worker from One Legacy Organ donation helped me break the news to our then, 11 year old son and 8 year old daughter. She asked, "did they understand?" My son quickly hopped up from the chair he was sitting in next to his father and raised his hand and said "I don't understand!" My son is now 20 and I still don't think he understands.



The final morning, I arrived at the hospital and picked up the phone outside the ICU, it was then that I stopped and just cried and cried. I just kept saying I can't do this. There was a family member of my late husband there and she said "you don't have to". She didn't understand that I was not talking about the death, it was the life that I knew was going to be harder than the death. How was I going to raise two kids alone?. I felt like I failed my children somehow.



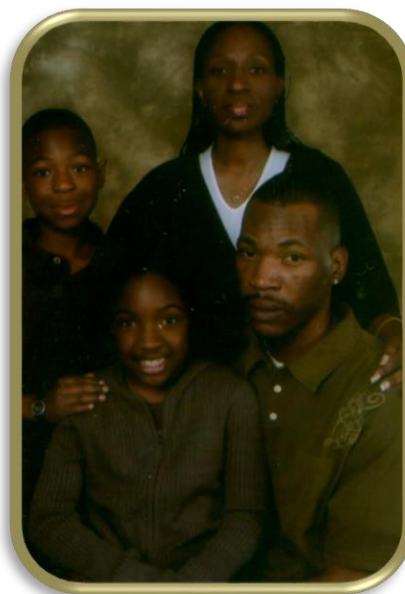
I was exhausted by a steady stream of visitors that I had to personally escort in and out of the ICU the day before. I had lost ten pounds in four days and had only slept a couple of hours each day.

The medical team sent the page out to the 4 men that had been on the transplant list for years. I was advised that all the matches were made.

The team moved my husband over in his hospital bed so that I could lay down with him for the final few hours. It was the most restful sleep that I had in days. A nurse named Tracy who had just been delightful came in and woke me up and she said "Do you hear all of that?" "That's all for him". It was the helicopter flying in to land with the teams of surgeons for the organ procurement

I climbed down from my side of the bed, the same side I slept on at home, kissed him on the forehead

and said *goodbye.*



Mr. Elijah Lee, Sr and wife, Mrs. Tracy Lee
And children, Diamond and Elijah, Jr.

I remember feeling so empty as I took the long walk down the hallway and thanked the medical team as I left the ICU. It was the longest drive home. I always describe the experience as my best/worst experience because this is the first time that I could feel that God was real. I had a sense of peace and to be honest I didn't lose my mind.

My children and I planned the funeral. All the arrangements were completed and my beloved husband was laid to rest.

The kids and I were active with the annual Rose Parade float in decorating in honor of organ donors and recipients. We participated in memorials and were honored by being asked to create Elijah's likeness in a flora graph for the 2012 Rose Parade Float, which my son and I attended.



I think about all of those firsts. The first trip out to dinner or lunch with the kids and how ashamed I felt that I was a single mother. The first grocery store trip, I felt I had a huge "W" on my forehead and people would be able to tell I was a widow. It was one of the most difficult times in our lives. People have good intentions and a common statement is time heals. It doesn't but God does. He promises that He will never leave, He will give beauty for ashes, He makes all things new. Although God is such a good God; life in the natural still goes on. I had to go back to work and register kids for high school alone, celebrate middle school and high school graduations as a single parent.

Being a widow is an experience that only another widow can truly understand. My desire from my experience is to be a blessing to other widows.

Written by: Tracy Lee for
From WidowTo Winner Projects Internationl

The Case for the Emancipated Youth

The following information is taken from "Honoring Emancipated Youth", **Barriers Facing Foster Care Youth: National and Local Statistics about Emancipating Foster Youth-** www.heysf.org

Foster Care / Length of stay:

✍ On any given day more than 500,000 youth are in some form of foster care across the United States. Nearly 80,000 live in California.

✍ Nationally, each year an estimated 20,000 of these youth emancipate or "age out" of the foster care system, and are discharged from the system, whether or not they are prepared to transition to adulthood. About 25% of these youth live in California

(In 2005, 4,249 youth emancipated from California's foster care system).

✍ Close to 50% of these youth are between the ages of 11-18 and due to their age, are likely to have a long or permanent placement in foster care.

Housing Status:

✍ Within 18 months of emancipation 40-50% of foster youth become homeless.

✍ Nationally, 27% of the homeless population spent time in foster care.

✍ A history of foster care correlates with becoming homeless at an earlier age and remaining homeless for a longer period of time.

✍ 65% of youth leaving foster care need immediate housing upon release.

Education Status:

✍ 83% of foster children are held back by the third grade.

✍ 75% of children and youth in foster care are behind grade level.

✍ 46% of former foster youth complete high school (compared to 84% of the general population).

✍ Based on high birth trauma and many life challenges, 50% of foster youth experience developmental delays, which is 4-5 times more than the rate found among children in the general population.

Health:

✍ Former foster youth are found to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at 2 times the level of U.S. war veterans.

✍ 33% of all foster care alumni have no form of health insurance.

✍ Youth transitioning from foster care have disproportionately high rates of physical, developmental, and mental health problems.