

December 19th, 2002

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Dear Mr. Becker,

I first met [REDACTED] in 1993, when I was thirteen. I was in foster care, living with my grandparents in the projects. I was sneaking out of the house a lot, getting into trouble and my life was not going in the right direction. One day I heard about a basketball tournament that [REDACTED] was organizing. I went to talk to him about getting involved. After that, I began participating in the MOSAIC program. Whenever [REDACTED] saw me hanging out with someone I shouldn't, he would ask me to come help him out. I got more and more involved, which eventually developed into my career in non-profit work.

When I would come in and there was nothing going on for our age group, [REDACTED] would pick up a basketball and start playing with us. Afterwards, he would say, "Okay, you guys played enough, let's do some workshops." He would lead workshops such as job preparation, safe sex, and peer mediation. After a while, because [REDACTED] had so many other responsibilities, he had some of the older kids start running the workshops. I was one of them. Still, [REDACTED] stayed involved. He wore about 25 hats. He was the driver, made sure no one was coming into the building who could hurt us, made sure we had supplies, acted as the handyman. I always thought they should be paying him a million dollars for what he did.

In 1998 at Christmastime, my grandfather tried to kill me. I ran away from him, with blood on my arms, to the MOSAIC center. [REDACTED] let me be alone, gave me some food, gave me a T shirt. It was Christmas, so everybody was going home early, but [REDACTED] stayed with me until someone could come pick me up. I will always remember that at that tragic moment in my life, I had his support. After that I was sent to a group home in Queens, but would still come to the Bronx to participate in MOSAIC. [REDACTED] would drive me to and from the train so that I could continue to come. Food was always a big issue in my life, and many times he blessed me with food. If he had a lunch, he gave me half.

So many of the things I am thankful for in my life started with him. No matter how much [REDACTED] gave me, he would tell me, "Don't pay me back. Pay someone else back." I am now a the coordinator for the Community Youth Employment Program as well as a Program Assistant at the Fund for the City of New York. I am 22 years old, the youngest staff here. I have worked with 2500 young people through the CYEP. [REDACTED] wants to see more young people turn out like me. This is his calling.

I would say in front of ten judges that [REDACTED] cannot leave. He is MOSAIC. Everyone who is there he has had a part in. He needs to be rewarded for what he has done, not disciplined. If there is anything more I can do or say, please contact me at [REDACTED]. Thank you.

Sincerely,