

Change the Narrative Fellowship Program

Nicole's Story

It was on October 23, 2008, that a single life-changing event uprooted my security in ways I could never imagine. It was at this time that my daughter prosecuted her father for sexually molesting her. Not only was this event emotionally pivotal in my life but also financially.

I was living below the poverty line without even knowing it. Unfortunately, even though I had two jobs and child support from now my ex-husband these were trying times. I would find out fast how low this line was when my children's father was prosecuted and I lost all child support.

He was removed from any further financial obligations to his children by the state and left me carrying the weight of the world on my shoulders. All his property, assets, and retirement plans instead of being liquidated by the State to care for his children were given to him. I truly believed that after years of paying into the system and helping to prosecute the person that now sat behind bars for unspeakable crimes I would receive some guidance and support. I spent hours trying to navigate a system that was supposed to have been in place to help individuals such as myself. Through this system, I was ineligible for the assistance that I had paid into for years. I was lost. No referrals, no case management, and no therapy. Food stamps were denied as was healthcare. I was caught in the same place that so many hard-working Americans are stuck in.

It is because of this lack of knowledge, support, and my desperate desire for the stability of my children that I reverted to finding a man. It was more attainable to obtain a man making a living wage than actually getting a job making enough to support my family. Sad but true. My expectations and self-esteem were incredibly low. However, my need and desperation to survive were high. Because of this error in judgment, I suffered through consequent years of mental, emotional, and physical abuse. It was not until non-profit agencies saw the shell of the person that was left that I was able to begin to exit my situation. It is when I realized I was not alone and that others like me have navigated the same seas and survived that my true purpose in life was defined.

I needed to be that lighthouse for someone else's journey and together as a fleet, we can change the tide and get turned in the correct direction. I still struggle today. I currently am a full-time student and a Social Service Case Manager for the Salvation Army and I still struggle. I have decided that Case Management would have made a huge difference in the outcome of my story. I am doing my part socially. I ask that as funders and legislatures you advance initiatives to provide case management and resources that are narrative experts. We need to address the causes of the raging waters and not just the symptoms of it.

Learn more about the Change the Narrative Fellowship program [here](#).