



ABOLISH

ISSUE 2 • FEBRUARY 2023 • "WE ARE BLACK HISTORY"

STOLEN CHILDREN

Stolen Child: Devon King Cooley

Location: Weld County, Colorado

Year: 2022

Family Member:

Cynthia Diane Cooley (Paternal Grandmother)

Father: Melvin Devon Cooley

Interview Date: February 2023

Devon King Cooley was born on March 12, 2020, in Colorado. He has been missing from his family since the day he was taken from the hospital and placed in foster care.

A few months after a DNA test confirmed Ms. Cynthia Cooley was Devon's grandmother, she asked to have her grandson placed with her. She told her family that she was moving to Georgia to raise her youngest grandchild with her large extended family. A few months later, she was in Georgia with her sister, preparing her grandson's room. Excited after every virtual visit she had with him, she introduced her grandbaby to his great aunts and uncles, and cousins and spoke about his siblings.

The IPCP (Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children/home background check) was approved on February 16, 2022. During that time, the Weld County Department of Human Services supported placement with Grandma and paid for her to visit her grandson twice in Colorado while he was in foster care. As the department was planning for Devon to transition out of foster care, the foster parents of Devon "intervened," they hired an attorney to then "fight" to keep Devon in their care in order to adopt him.



In Colorado, foster parents are able to "intervene"—become a court-involved party in a dependency and neglect case—after a child is placed in their home for 90 days. In Texas, foster parents are unable to intervene until after a child is placed with them after 12 months. Colorado House Bill 23-1024 is asking for the same 12-month provision.



STOLEN CHILDREN CONT. On September 19, 2022, the Weld County judge made the decision to have Devon be adopted by his foster parents and not be placed with his biological family. Devon's GAL (Guardian ad. Litum, who is to act in the child's "best interest") reported he believed the foster family was best for Devon, though he has never met or spoken to Grandma Cooley. In heartache and disbelief, Grandma Cooley kept asking, "How is this kidnapping of my grandson legal? How can they take him away from me? How can my grandson's foster parents do this? Why would anyone do this?"

We asked Grandma Cooley what she would like to tell her grandchild when he reads this one day. She said during one of her in-person visits with Devon, she placed his heart over her heart while she held him on her chest and gently rocked him in her arms. She wanted him to hear their heartbeats in sync. She wants him to know that her heart beats for him.

She said she has an agreement with God that he will not take her off this earth before she is reunited with Devon. And that while she was in foster care in the 1970's she ran away from her group home several times to find her family... and she found them. And her grandson will find her too because their hearts beat the same.

Devon King Cooley's name will legally change to Jordan Jasper after his adoption is finalized in 2023. Devon King Cooley is our first child on the Registry. The Coalition Registry is a list (and stories) of stolen children from the Family Policing System (foster care/child welfare) whose kinship (family members) fought and lost (the foster parents). Devon was a #ConflictAdoption, meaning his foster family destroyed his birth family in order to "complete theirs."

**50 % OF ALL FAILED AND RETURNED ADOPTIONS
ARE BLACK BOYS FROM FOSTER CARE.**

(USA Today, 2022)

Devon will have questions as to who his family is and why as a young black boy, he was placed with a white family in rural Colorado. He will question if his family loved and wanted him. He will want to know if his family fought for him. He will come to the Coalition for the truth and we will tell him YES! Yes, you were loved and your family fought for you! And yes, they always wanted you! But the child welfare system is racist. Your judge was racist. Your GAL was racist. And yes, your adoptive parents were racist. Because of their money and privilege, they "won" you. And WE lost YOU. We will apologize to him for the pain the system caused him. We will apologize for destroying his identity as a black boy. We will apologize for creating generational trauma. And we will tell him the work we are doing to make sure others do not go through the same pain. Because the "system" did not just fail Devon King Cooley—we all did.

The Coalition records family members talking to their stolen loved one in case the family is no longer alive when the child searches for them. Their recording will live beyond us. The letter written to them will live beyond us. And the pictures taken will live beyond us. The Coalition is here to share the truth narrative and we have proof. These children are wanted, they are loved and they are missed so very much! And we will tell the truths of our people until there are NO MORE TRUTHS TO TELL.

Please reach out to the Coalition if you had your parental rights terminated in the state of Colorado, and your child was adopted by a non-kin (non-family). Please reach out to the Coalition if you as a family member (grandparent, sibling, aunt, etc.) lost a young family member to the foster care system. We are creating a place of records and to build community support for our lost loved ones through #ConfictAdoptions.



REPEAL CAPTA

Join NAASW and Haymarket for a panel discussion that will explain the harms of CAPTA and discuss what can be done about it.
March 2, 6:30- 8 p.m. EST
[Get tickets.](#)

SHOUT OUTS

The MJCF: Coalition would like to shout out Professor Allen Dettlaff for utilizing his educational influence in calling attention to the racial disparities, injustices, and harms within the Family Policing System. On December 4th, 2022, Dr. Dettlaff was featured on a CBS news special that focused on a Colorado mother who unjustly entered the Child Welfare System. On December 13th, 2022, he was removed from his position as Dean of the Houston School of Social Work for his criticism of the racist system. Professor Dettlaff shared with the community the personal cost of exposing the legal child trafficking industry—the foster care system.

ABOLISH THE FAMILY POLICING SYSTEM

An all-day symposium is scheduled for April 13 on how we can transform our family regulation system. The Child Welfare System has been found to be racist, dysfunctional, and harmful to children and families, especially to families of color. Many people have called for its abolition.

The conference is intended to focus on solutions. The morning will have panels of people with lived experience while the afternoon will be devoted to scholars and practitioners who are studying or trying various policies and initiatives intended on redesigning the system. [Click here for the full agenda.](#)

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

After personally surviving a child welfare court case, Sonia Neblett decided to focus her career in the helping profession. She is a mental health peer coach and a parent advocate in Colorado.

She combines her system involvement experience with fierce advocacy skills to support parents while working alongside defense attorneys to help reunite families. Sonia has helped many clients obtain stable housing to help them gain custody of their children, giving her the name "the housing whisperer." Sonia volunteers at the Coalition to support young parents that experienced domestic violence during their dependency and neglect case.



SONIA NEBLETT



TARA DOXTATER

Tara Doxtater is a Parent Advocate working alongside parent defense attorneys and social workers with the Office of Respondent Parent Council in Colorado. She had a dependency and neglect case in 2017, and entered a substance abuse treatment program and has been sober since. She is the mother of two beautiful children and a nationally certified peer recovery support specialist.

"The Coalition is important to me because it is uplifting and empowers the community. The Coalition advocates for change within the system as well as bringing awareness to generational trauma - That is why I joined the Coalition."

SAVE THE DATE

3RD ANNUAL PROTEST AGAINST
RACISM IN CHILD WELFARE JUNE
2023

INTERESTED IN HOLDING A
PROTEST IN YOUR STATE? EMAIL
INFO@MJCFCOALITION.COM



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