

OPPRESSION IN THE STREETS:

“What they did to us destroyed our life. They almost broke us.”

*Walter and his wife came to New Britain in July of 2024 with their 4 kids in order to get away from what they called the craziness of New Haven and Waterbury. In August they were all staying together at the Friendship Service Center (FSC) at 241 Arch Street. Fast forward to now, **Walter and his wife are sleeping outside in the dead cold of winter and their kids have been taken away by Department of Children and Families (DCF).** They blame the FSC and its staff, read the following interview to find out why*

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We got kicked out of the Friendship Center in September of 2024.

The chef Tammy was always arguing with my 13 year old daughter, and getting into other arguments with residents at the FSC. One day in September my daughter went inside the FSC to sit down in the lobby and wait till the shelter opened at 4:30pm; she had a cast on her leg from a leg fracture, so she needed to sit down and another counselor said she could. Now this is around 4:10pm and Tammy comes out to tell her to get the F out of her building and that she don't belong there. My daughter, being a kid, curses her out and starts arguing back, so **Tammy calls the police and lies to them saying we were neglecting our child because we wasn't in there with her.**

When the cops arrive Tammy keeps lying to these cops, talking about how we neglect our kids, let them run around and do whatever they want, saying that my wife and I are very threatening people and that we have threatened Tammy. The FSC has constantly called DCF on my wife and I, lying to them saying we neglect our kids, but our initial DCF caseworker was never even concerned. My wife and I have never threatened Tammy with violence ever. Tammy was trying to get my kids taken right then and there for neglect. **Ultimately the FSC kicked us out that day, trying to say that my wife threatened Tammy, the cops wasn't even listening to our side of the story.**

This isn't the first time FSC called the cops on us. There was a lady in the room next to us who has a son that was running around teasing my autistic daughter, so I told him to stop that. I had complained to the counselors and they weren't helping, so I asked the counselor if I'd be wrong to have my son, who is the same age as this bully, go do something about his autistic sister getting bullied. The staff clearly perceived this as a threat, because soon after one day a new kid walked into the shelter right behind me and everyone thought, without asking me, that he was the son I told that counselor about. So they started running at him, calling the cops, but I didn't even know the kid. **They were ready to have me locked up, have him locked up.** FSC's own staff didn't know that he was a new resident.

For that incident it seemed like they had brought in about 30 cops because apparently I'm a "violent individual" and my history "has a lot of violence", but I haven't been in trouble since 2011. They're just using that to justify the way they've been mistreating us.

So going back to September when we get kicked out, 2 days later I get handed a restraining order from people at the shelter. The FSC got a resident in the shelter, most likely that lady who's son was bullying my daughter, **to file a restraining order against me so I couldn't come back down to get any meals, take showers, or any type of help that the FSC offers.**

CONTINUED ON THE BACK ->

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Author's note: many former and currently homeless people we've met have gotten these restraining orders (sometimes referred to as trespass orders) put on them from the FSC, banning them indefinitely from accessing available resources in New Britain, including the warming center and overflow shelters during the winter. How this inhumane practice isn't illegal is beyond us.

We weren't too worried about getting kicked out because we had an apartment lined up for us in Hartford up on Sergeant St, through Monique at the FSC. But then the homeowner was no longer answering the phone, we go to his house and he's not answering, and then later he came back to us and said they [The FSC] put somebody else in the apartment. The landlord was under the impression we didn't need it anymore. Monique was the only one who knew that we were going up there to give him the money on a certain date and everything, she has the Hartford connection. **So not only did the FSC kick us to the curb, they also took away an apartment we had the money to pay for.**

Everything went downhill from there.

Now we were out in the street, sleeping in our car, going from hotel to hotel, with DCF breathing down our necks, especially since we got kicked out. Our major source of income was my wife's night shift job, which she lost back in September. She would have four night shifts in a row sometimes and would be unable to sleep during the day since the Friendship Center doesn't allow people to stay during the day. Eventually she got caught sleeping during a shift and was fired.

We got to a point where we had no more hotel money and that's when DCF threatened to take my kids for sleeping in the car, **so I sold my car for \$400, a 2010 Lincoln, just to put them up at the Red Roof hotel for a week so they wouldn't take my kids, and they took them anyway.**

Some time later, DCF said they got a phone call saying that my kids was living at Grantmoor Motel, which they said was inappropriate for a kid. Now who made that phone call? The only place who could've possibly known where we were was the Friendship Center. Know what I'm saying? They're the only ones. So DCF ran up in the hotel and they took our kids, **if FSC were so worried about where my kids were sleeping, why did you kick us out of your shelter in the first place?** Now they got our kids all the way down in New Haven.

“And it all stemmed from being in that Friendship Center. Before that, we didn't have no problem. No DCF case, no nothing ... I'd rather be down there [in Waterbury and New Haven] around the murderers, the drug dealers at least getting help, than up here where there ain't none of that and there's no help at all.”