



Centering Lived Experience in Innovating your Practice

During the pandemic, while the country was expected to shelter in place, transition aged youth did not stop aging out of the various systems that served them. The needs of youth, caregivers, frontline staff and so many individuals were and continue to be overwhelming. Now more than ever it's crucial to highlight system change innovations which were formed as a direct result of people being willing to collaborate and approach problem solving by centering the lived experience. This keynote presentation will highlight these progressive changes and the innovative tools by which they were formed.

One such initiative entered the scene attached to the stimulus efforts in Washington DC. The Chafee Stimulus bill provided emergency support and new flexibility for young people in foster care; home visiting for at-risk pregnant and parenting families; foster care prevention funds; and other critical child welfare services through the end of 2021. A second strategy addressing the needs of youth aging out of care, the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative made Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) assistance available to Public Housing Agencies (PHAs) in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWAs), supporting young adults ages 18-24, a true nod to innovation and systems collaboration. Think of Us also leveraged the voice of lived experience in the now published Away from Home report, a collection of testimonials and recommendations to drive true systems change.



Sixto Cancel, Founder and CEO, Think of Us

Think of Us (TOU) is an Action Tank driving systematic change in child welfare. Through focused projects and sweeping initiatives, TOU drives structural changes in child welfare policy and practice. Sixto was named as Forbes Top 30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneurs and is on the 2021 Forbes Under30 Lister Board. Sixto has been recognized by the White House as a "White House Champion of Change", a "Millennial Maker" by BET, and named as one of the "Top 24 Changemakers in Government under 24" by the Campaign for a Presidential Youth Council and Sparkaction. Sixto has served as a Young Fellow at Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative since 2010 where he has played a key role in the initiative's work of extending foster care permanency for older youth. Sixto is a Clinton Global Initiative University Alum, a FastForward Alum, an Ashoka Fellow, a Board Member of Adventr – an interactive SMART video tech company – and most recently on the Advisory Board for Box, Inc. Sixto and his team at Think of Us is working to ensure that every person has the conditions they need to heal, develop and thrive.

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