



LEADYOUNG

Changemaker Story Challenge



Joshua Williams

Igniting a movement of young changemakers to support people experiencing homelessness and poverty

Today's world is fast. It's connected. It's unpredictable and uncertain. But also full of possibilities. Joshua's story is more than the story of one young person leading young. It is the story of creating a culture and a pathway to help thousands of young people know they have the power to change their world.

Joshua Williams, now 17, was four and a half years old when the reality of homelessness hit him on the way home from church one Sunday. "It was the first time I realized not everyone had what I had," Joshua says of the moment that set him on the path to becoming changemaker. Joshua didn't understand the complexity of the issue, but knew he wanted to help. This was the starting point of Joshua's Heart Foundation, a rapidly growing network of young people's groups that gives caring, hope and help to those suffering from poverty, hunger, and loneliness.

Launched in the Miami-Dade region of Florida in the United States, the Foundation started small, with Joshua cajoling his mother and aunts into helping him prepare and distribute food to homeless people in his community. Today, one of Joshua's avenues of support involves young people creating "Hope Boxes" shoe boxes with food, toiletries and an inspirational note to share with community members experiencing homelessness. "One of our youth volunteers, Elena," explains Joshua, "went to a man and said, 'Hi, how are you? What's your name?'" And he immediately broke down and started to cry – he said that no one has asked him his name in over 20 years. And it's something that got to me, got to her especially, and got to the man, so I think all of us learned something from that and transformed."

Joshua never stopped. Since 2005, Joshua's Heart Foundation has distributed over 2.2 million pounds of food and assisted more than 420,000 individuals; the Foundation is now in a number of U.S. states and in countries such as Haiti and India. Joshua has raised over \$700,000, all of which go to those experiencing homelessness and poverty across the world. But perhaps the most lasting impact has been with the team Joshua built indeed, a team of many teams of thousands of young people taking his model to their communities.

Joshua's Heart Foundation gives them an avenue for experiencing changemaking at a young age and serves as a gateway for starting their own initiatives for the good of all. Together, they are discovering the skills for thriving in a rapidly changing world and realizing, as Joshua describes, that "you're never too young to make a change in your community.. as long as you believe in yourself. It doesn't matter who you are, where you're from, your background, your race," Joshua says, "as long as you want to make a change, you should."





Watch Joshua's story here.

bit.ly/2ThLDrB



Photo Credit: Foundation for a Better Life

For Discussion

1. Joshua recalls the first time he realized that there were people who didn't have what he had. Have you experienced this? What did you do?
2. When Joshua realized he wanted to help people experiencing homelessness, he first got his family to help him and then his friends and other young people to be part of his team. Why do you think building a team is important for changemaking? What are things that help a team work well? What are things that could get in the way of teamwork?

3. If you were to join Joshua's team, what are some ideas you might have to help people experiencing homelessness in your community or city?
4. Today, Joshua's Heart Foundation helps thousands of young people find and follow their own passions beyond addressing homelessness. Is there a problem you are interested in trying to solve? Have you ever helped a friend or a family member follow their passion to do something?

Challenge of the week

- What are the organizations in or near your town or city that provide services and other resources to people experiencing homelessness?
- What is one action you can take to support one of those organizations this week?



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