

National Youth Foundation *Presents:*

MISUNDERSTOOD MICAH

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the inspiring gentlemen of Alpha Delta Boule' for their tireless work in assuring the success of inner-city children and helping them to understand themselves, where they come from, and where they are capable of going!

OUR MISSION

The National Youth Foundation is dedicated to enriching the lives of children through creative educational programming. Our mission is to promote tolerance and equality, while helping young students develop their literary skills through academic and team building projects.

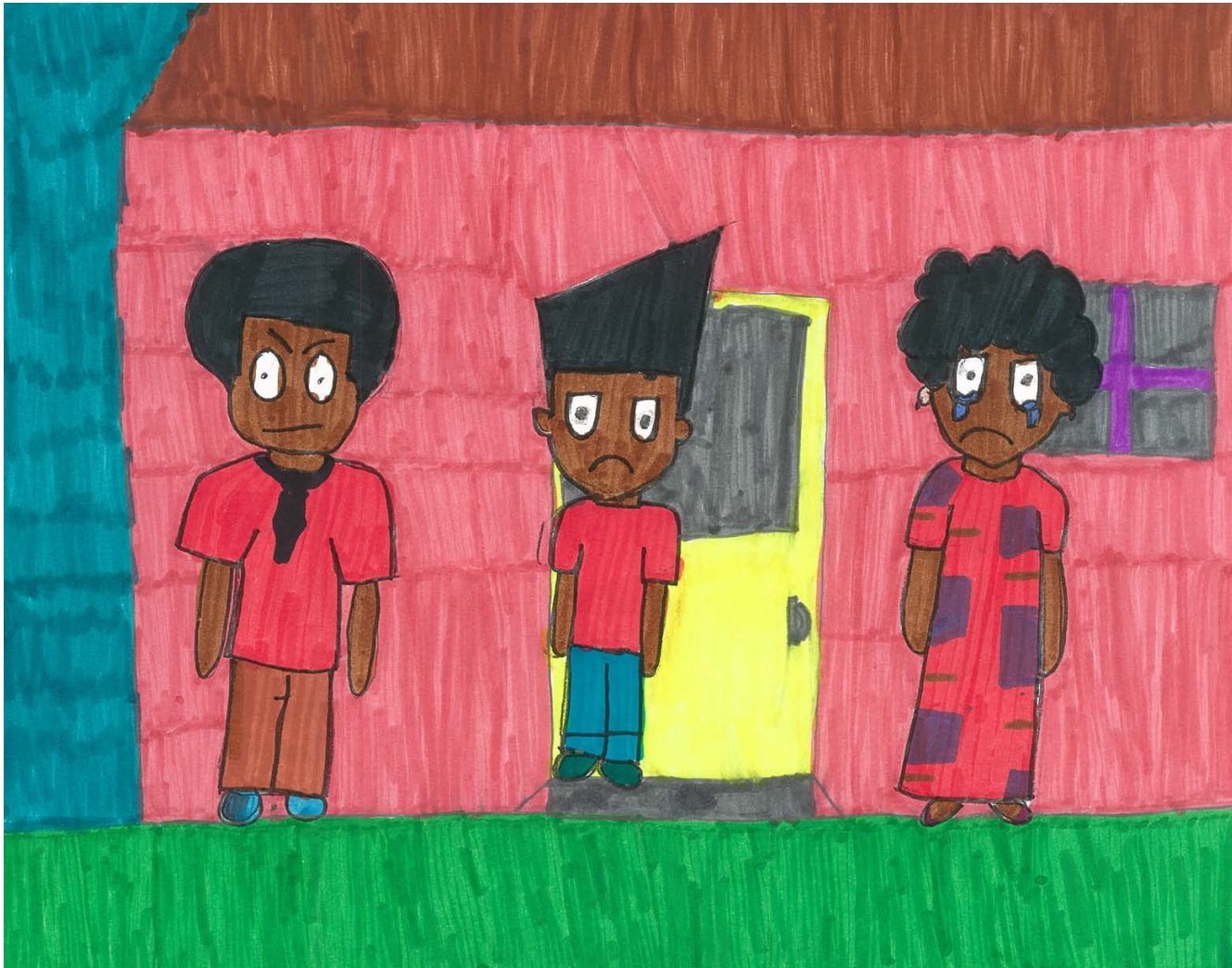
Sophia Hanson, *Executive Director*

NationalYouthFoundation.org

My name is Micah. I am 10 years old. For most of my life I had felt misunderstood. I was a bully. “Was”. I picked on others who were different and who had things and people in their lives that I did not. Let me explain.



When I was 6 years old, my dad left. Mom was very sad and I missed doing things with him, and I just missed him being around.



One day at dismissal from school, I saw my classmate, Michael, running to his dad who was picking him up. His dad hugged him. It made me sad and angry at the same time.



During recess the next day, I saw Michael playing with his friends. I went up to him and pushed him into the wall. He hit his head and was hurt pretty bad. When I did it, I was picturing Michael with his dad.



My teacher was very upset. She asked, "Micah, why did you do that?" I couldn't answer. I didn't want to tell her. I felt so misunderstood.



When I was 7, my grandpa died. When dad left, grandpa would do many things with me. It helped me forget just a little bit about dad leaving.



On “Grandparents Day” at school, I was the only kid without someone there for them. I felt so alone.



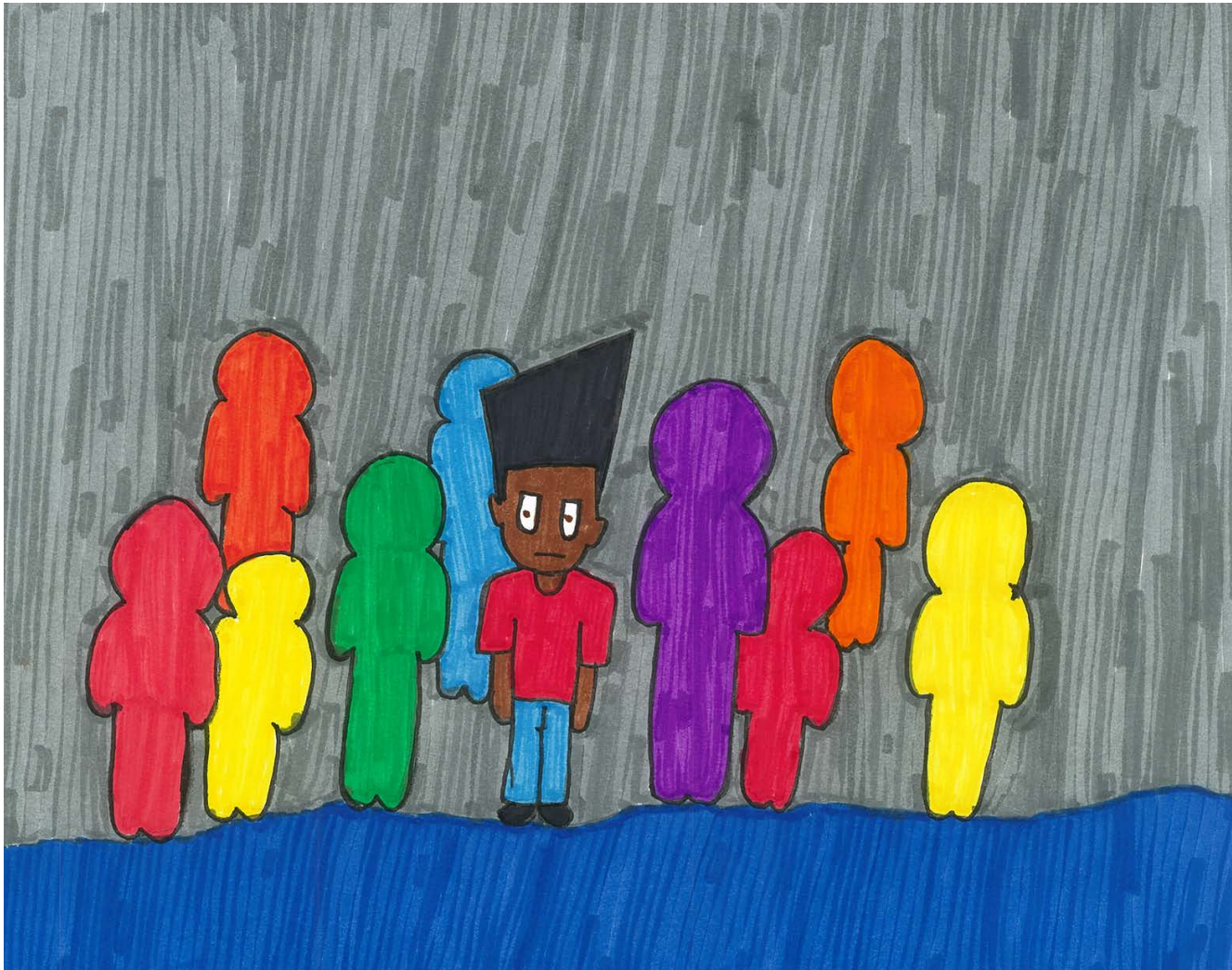
Later that day, I saw Jaymya with her grandpa. I missed both my dad and grandpa. That afternoon while in line for lunch, I said really mean things to Jaymya. I called her and her grandpa ugly. Jaymya started to cry.



The lunch lady gave me a mean look. She asked, “Micah, why did you say that?” Again, I couldn’t answer. I just felt confused and misunderstood.



When I was 8, I transferred schools because we moved. I was the only black kid in the class. I felt like I didn't fit in.



Another new student joined my class. She also looked different than the rest of the class. She belonged to a religion where she wore a scarf around her head.



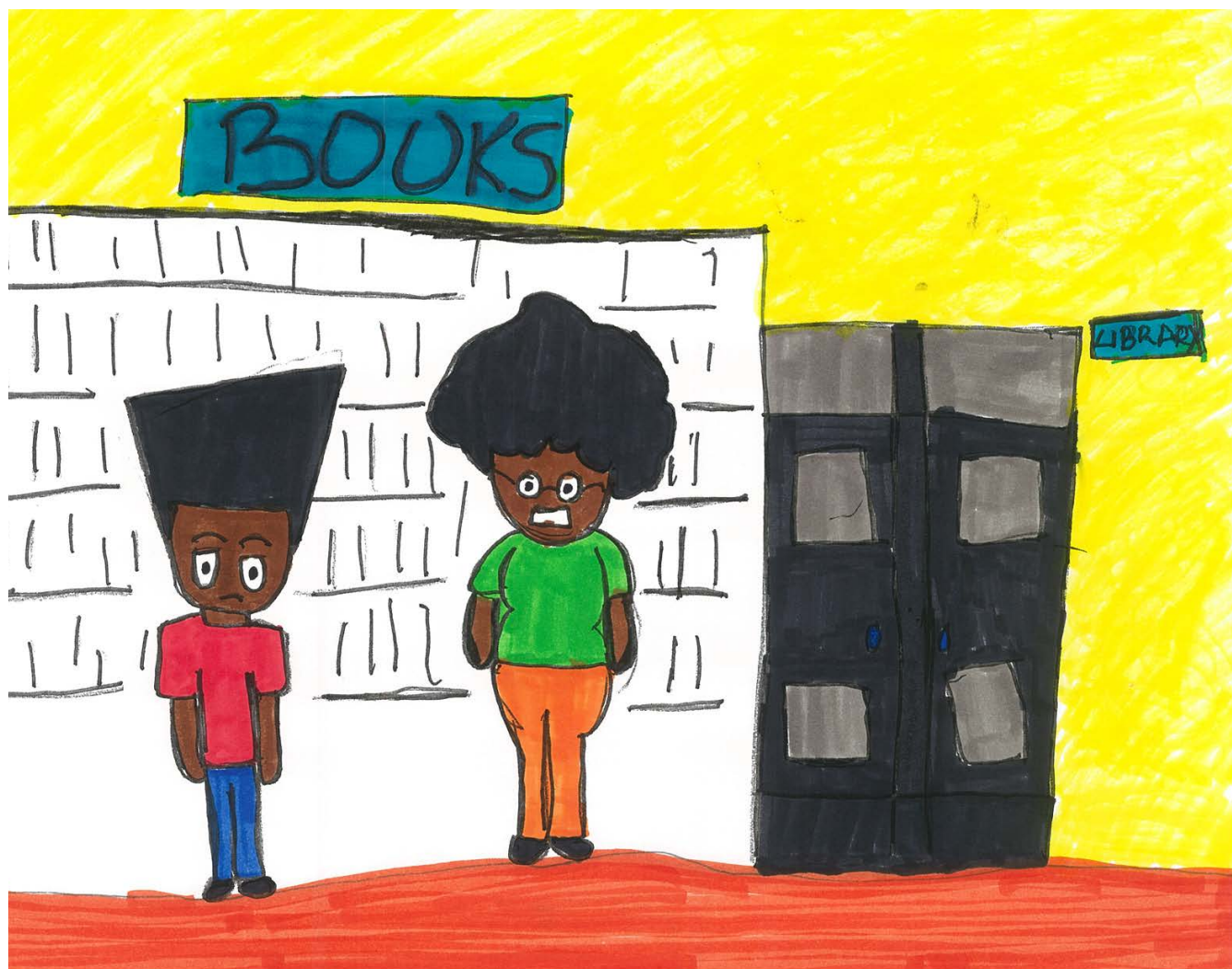
I wasn't fitting in and no one really talked to me. But the new student, BraShae, was well liked. Everyone wanted to be her friend. This made me angry. I already felt alone and different.



While in the library, I saw BraShae with a group of her new friends. When she went to leave, she walked by me, and I shoved her and said, “That scarf looks dumb!”



The librarian heard me. She asked, "Micah, why did you say that?" Again, I had no answer. I just felt misunderstood.



When I was 9, mom lost her job. Things really changed then! Mom had no money, and we lost our apartment. We had to move downtown to the homeless shelter.



One day I saw a kid my age volunteering at the shelter. His nametag said "Josiah." He seemed so happy to be volunteering at the shelter, but I hated that place! Josiah got to leave and go home; I had to STAY there.



At dinnertime one evening, I saw Josiah helping to pass out bread around the tables. He was wearing the newest gym shoes. My shoes were too small, and one was torn on the side. I got up to get some bread and, when I walked past Josiah, I punched him on the arm.



Mr. Hill, who supervised the shelter, must have seen me punch Josiah. He asked me, “Micah, why did you do that?” As always, I couldn’t answer. I didn’t want to answer. I was ashamed for living in the shelter. I was jealous and wanted what others had. I felt so misunderstood.



The next day, I saw Mr. Hill talking to my mom. I thought for sure he was telling her how I punched Josiah. Mom called me over. Mr. Hill said, “Micah, I need another player on the community basketball team. Practice starts tomorrow. Can I count on you?” I wanted to say, “No!”, but I knew mom would make me do it.



The next day, I walked into the first practice. The first kid I saw was Michael walking in with his dad. Michael said, “See you later, Uncle Jeff!” That wasn’t Michael’s dad at all!



Then I saw Jaymya getting dropped off by her grandpa. She said to him, “Thanks for dropping me off, Mr. Johnson!” That wasn’t her grandpa after all! It was her neighbor!



Next BraShae walked in. She was wearing that scarf on her head. I overheard BraShae's mother telling Mr. Hill that the rest of her family was living in a refugee camp in another country.



Finally, I saw Josiah come in. A lady was dropping him off. I heard her introducing herself to Mr. Hill as Josiah's foster mom.



It was on that first day of practice that I realized that maybe I was the one who was misunderstanding others. Michael, Jaymya, BraShae and Josiah may have shared the same loneliness, sadness and confusion I had always felt. Maybe they felt misunderstood, too.



At practice, I said kind things to my teammates to encourage them. We gave high fives. It made me feel good to see that I could make them smile. I felt like I belonged and knew that I now had four good friends.



I am now 10, and I am telling you my story with this message: if you feel misunderstood, try understanding others and give them a chance. Everything is not what it seems, and you never know what someone else is going through. Tell someone what YOU are going through. Understanding others and showing compassion may just be the key to helping you understand yourself!



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