



NEWS

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**Former Homeless Youth and Now Poet Marjai Becomes the Voice for the Voiceless
*HALO Short Documentary Features HALO Alum Marjai's Healing Journey Through Poetry
with Exclusive Surprise Oprah Winfrey Interview***

(Kansas City, MO) — HALO, a nonprofit that serves homeless and at-risk children around the world, launched its short documentary featuring 20-year-old HALO Alum Marjai sharing how poetry saved her life, followed by an exclusive surprise interview with Oprah Winfrey.

"HALO provides housing, healing and education to thousands of homeless and at-risk children around the world," said HALO Founder and CEO Rebecca Welsh. "Marjai's powerful story is one of many we can share of HALO kids who had one chance to make a change, one person to turn to or one volunteer who stepped up. Just like that, their life's trajectory positively changed forever."

Marjai joined HALO when she was 10 years old while staying in a homeless shelter and participating in HALO therapeutic art programs.

"HALO caught me at just the right time. It was definitely the first step for me in being more open to love and the first safe space for me to really just be me," said HALO Alum Marjai. "I'm so grateful that I got to experience HALO at a young age."

Within the documentary, Marjai emotionally shares how HALO Clinical Manager Aubony Chalfant was that one person who believed in her that led to her story of resilience.

"Marjai has every reason in the world to be angry," said HALO Clinical Manager Aubony Chalfant. "She has taken all of the terrible things that have happened to her and turned them into this art form of poetry that she is not afraid to share. She is so courageous. She's my hero."

Youth homelessness is growing across the nation. At HALO, the number of kids who have reached out increased by 63% this year, attributed to the global pandemic. The HALO mission is to help one more child spend one less day alone.

"Poetry is my therapy. That's my healing process," Marjai said. "I put poetry on this pedestal because it has supernatural powers to me. When I was going through my darkest times, all I had was a piece of paper and a pen."

"When she is reciting one of her poems, it's this other worldly moment. You can see this transformation to painful subject matter to power, healing, strength and resilience," said HALO's Chalfant.

The HALO Documentary premiered at the HALO Virtual Auction "The Main Event" on Fri., Feb. 26, 2021 and raised over \$650,000 for homeless and at-risk children. Oprah Winfrey surprised Marjai with an exclusive interview after the documentary aired live.

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“You are such a bright light. Everything I knew that you would be,” Oprah Winfrey told Marjai. “When you read your words, you know that it comes from such a deep, powerful and soulful space.”

“It only takes one person to change the course of someone else’s life,” Winfrey said. “HALO is making a positive impact on your life and so many others. You are a shining example of what is possible for everyone.”

Marjai has become a powerful poet and is now attending one of the top journalism schools in the country.

“My poetry has made me this vessel to be the voice for the voiceless,” said HALO Alum Marjai. “HALO helped me find my voice, and a way to give back to my community, I want to share my story to help others.”

To see the full documentary and exclusive surprise Oprah Winfrey interview, visit the HALO YouTube Channel @HALOEmpowersYouth and watch [here](#).

ABOUT HALO:

HALO believes every child should have the foundation of a family. Since 2005, HALO has provided love in the form of housing, healing and education to heal homeless and at-risk children. Featured in the Moroccan film series, “American Spirit” of CBS Evening News, “Heroes Among Us” and “25 Women Changing the World” of PEOPLE magazine, “The Today Show,” and Variety Magazine, HALO serves thousands of children each year and supports 21 homes and programs around the globe. HALO has Learning Centers and Housing programs in Kansas City, and Jefferson City, Missouri, and art programming in New York and Portland. HALO also supports orphanages and programs in Uganda, Kenya, Mexico and India. Learn how [Love Heals](#) at HALO and help one more child spend one less day alone at www.haloworldwide.org.

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If interested in interviewing HALO Founder Rebecca Welsh, please contact nicolegerken@haloworldwide.org.