

“Exclusive: One-on-One with Jaliel Rainwalker’s Adoptive Parents.”

Kerr: So when I said that about them finding clues, or ah about finding dead ends, that I feel like continues to reaffirm our position that the search resources should be allocated somewhat more equally to the different theories that are out there.

Reporter: And the sign you’re referring to.. the sign says Albany...

Kerr: yeah, he left it

Reporter: he left it...

Kerr: In his, in his handwriting

Reporter: So this is, this is again going back to this. What has this done to both of you? A lot of people from the outside... like perspective is everything..and..and a lot of people who that watch these stories are like..Ok, they’re getting bits and pieces that you can cram into a minute thirty story, but nobody really understands what, what this is doing to you as a family.

McDonald: Ummm, my eight year old said it best when he said he feels pulled apart inside. Umm, I think that as a family we uh have experienced enormous amounts of loss in the last (inaudible) amount of time.

First we lost our son and.. And slowly we lost, you know, our home. Uh, the children lost the opportunity to be with their father and me with my husband, uh, and he with the rest of the family. I lost the relationship with my mother..Umm

Kerr: The children were taken by CPS

McDonald: Umm, and...that I don’t want to talk about.

Kerr: Ok. Sorry.

McDonald: *:Laugh:*

Reporter: That’s, That’s been reported by a number of news agencies.

McDonald: Has it?

Reporter: Ya, so..

McDonald: That actually I don’t know

Reporter: That’s.. That’s out there. So, um..

Kerr: She’s not just saying that to you is she?

Reporter: No

:Laugh by Kerr and McDonald:

Kerr: I’m just kidding

Reporter: No, umm, in fact you can check online if you feel that...

Kerr: I’m just kidding. Sorry.

Reporter: There’s uh, there’s things that, that are out there..Uh.. So I mean that has to do a lot.. Here’s Stephen is at this one house here and the kids are here, he cant be connected to the kids..

McDonald: He can now actually..

Reporter: He can now right..But for awhile..

McDonald: For quite awhile that wasn’t true and what happens is when you take a family who’s in crisis because we lost our son, um, and then you divide the family in half and you place all these restrictions on when and how they can see each other and where they’re allowed to be and where they’re allowed to live and you divide the children away from their home, their pets, their own beds, their own bedrooms ..Uh.. Yeah. It creates an

enormous amount of stress for the children, uh as well as for the parents... and it is mostly for my children that I... I'm an adult. I can seek medical help. I can seek therapeutic help. I can do what I need to do to help myself and I can say, "People go through things like this and people go through worse things". But my children.. This is their first experience with uh, trauma. And this situation has gone from a tragedy to a trauma for me and for my children that are now exhibiting PTS symptoms.

Reporter: Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome?

McDonald: Absolutely.

Reporter: There's umm.. What do you want people to know about your husband? There's been so many things that people have.. Ya know..There's been not straight on accusations.. But.. but... lots things that are kind of.. Ya know, alluding to certain things. What do you want people to know about Stephen?

McDonald: Umm. What do I want people to know about Stephen? Well I could go on a long time about that. Um, Stephen is the funniest person I know. He is a complete goofball. He loves to play with his children. He wrestles all the time with them. Um, Jalieq and he adored going out and.. And playing those rough and tumble soccer kinds of games that I would never be interested in.

Umm, That Stephen has always been an amazing father and people have come to me and said, "You're so lucky". He not only does all the cooking and he's an amazing cook but he teaches the kids how to cook and Jalieq and he would often cook in the kitchen. Um, and, that doesn't mean that he's been a perfect father but he has been such a role model for fathers everywhere... and.. And he's a kind and good person who takes responsibility when he makes mistakes..And.. um,.. and.. His children adore him.. so.. (*Inaudible*) (*McDonald winks at Kerr*).

Reporter: Stephen, what, what do you want people to know about, about you? A lot of there's been.. you know.. A lot of people don't, don't know you. What want them to know about you? Do you care.. I mean, how was your relationship with Jalieq and..

Kerr: I want people to know that I made a conscious choice to be Jalieq's father. We adopted him, my wife and I. Knowing it would be hard and we stuck with it and are sticking with it. And looking back, listening to my friends. Many of my friends have come to me over the years and said, "I don't know how you do what you do. You have endless patience", which I don't. "You have a deep well of compassion", which I don't.

I can do what I do mostly because of my relationship with my wife. Deep trust and love for each other and a commitment to care for the children that New York State has thrown away, which are the foster children. You go in the foster care system and you see kids who are abused by the State of New York, which means they're abused by the people of New York. By the citizens who do not give the resources to the Department of Social Services, who do not give these children a chance.

So I would like everybody watching to know that my wife and I committed to two children that the rest of you threw away.

Reporter: There's.. There were, speaking of, of what really happened before, there were, there was, there were having some accusations about abuse in the home. That CPS was there. That Social Services was called to the home.

McDonald: Uh.. Are you talking about recently or..

Reporter: No recently and in the past.

Kerr: Recently..

McDonald: Recently AND in the past?

Reporter: Yes, yes..

McDonald: Um, uhh. Let's see. When Jalieq was with us for approximately three months he told his social worker that we locked him in his bedroom. And, uh, that, uh, we punished him more often than we did our older son, which um, was true because our older son had always lived with us and knew all the rules and was not mentally ill. Um, and, the social worker, uh, reported us to CPS and CPS came and said, "I have this report. You lock your children in your bedroom", so I said, "Please, go upstairs and look at the bedrooms".

Kerr: "Let's go upstairs right now!".. And what did they find?

McDonald: Nothing. My own bedroom door does not have a lock on it. I do not allow any locks on the bathroom doors because I had little children and I was afraid they would lock themselves in the bathroom.

In fact, we never even locked our front or back door, our car doors or any doors and we certainly never locked our children in and that CPS thing was found.. Was not founded, that CPS report was unfounded because it was all a lie and that's a part of what children with the type of mental illness that Jalieq has do. They seek to separate themselves from the people who love them because they're so scared of being abandoned one more time.

Reporter: So they're more comfortable leaving than they are staying?

McDonald: Absolutely. Jalieq used to do something that he and I would joke around about, uh, called Family Shopping. And we would be out in public and I would say, "Oh, whadda ya think? Do you think they're the ones that you wanna go live with?" and he'd say, "Oh.. no..they, they have too many girls in their family" or .. We would joke.. It was a joke because he was always looking for another family. He never wanted to be.. he was too afraid to be close.

Reporter: There's..um.. There's still.. the.. the other question too which is what, what was going on that evening? What, what can you tell, um... what can you share that will give us a glimpse inside of what, what happened that night when, when you came back with Jalieq? What was the situation like? What was his mood like?

Kerr: Well I would say for about two thirds of the evening, he was very animated. He was sharing with me the time he had at the person's house. What a good time he had. All the kind of bizarre experiences that he had there. For example, um, the mother found a knife in one of the kid's drawers while he was there, which was kind of disturbing to me. A knife that this child had threatened three girls with. And so, ya know, that was a little concerning for me, cuz ya know, cuz I thought, hmmm.

Anyway, so he was very animated. He told me all the wonderful experiences he had with these three seemingly highly dysfunctional 16-year-old African American foster children, and I listened and some of it was harmless and some if it was a little more than harmless. Uh, and then after awhile we kinda sat in the car for a while and somewhere in Easton I mentioned to him that he was going to have to get together with the group of children who he had seriously damaged

McDonald: His relationship with.

Kerr: His relationship with. And then he didn't say another word. He stopped talking. He withdrew completely. When we arrived here I asked him to go to bed. I don't even think he said goodnight. He just completely withdrew. And sometimes when he withdrew.. withdraws, I reach out to him, and sometimes I don't.

Reporter: And he just went to bed?

Kerr: *:nods:*

Reporter: Did he, um, did he grab all of his, all of his stuff that he.. you said he had all of his stuff. Did he grab all of his stuff and, and hold onto it? I know he had some toys and things like that. Did he take all that stuff with him?

Kerr: No. No. He had a clipboard which he carried around with him pretty much all the time.

Reporter: Uh uh

Kerr: Which was the clipboard that the police now have and that he left the note on.

Reporter: So he didn't bring any of his clothes or anything with him upstairs to his bedroom?

Kerr: No, he had his pajamas with him but that was about it.

Reporter: That was it?

Kerr: He didn't take the whole bag, no. No, he left the bag in the car.

Reporter: He left his bag in the car so really he had nothing on him at the time he disappeared?

Kerr: Naa noo he went back, I'm assuming back into the bag but I don't know what happened. All I know is when he went to bed he had his pajamas.

Reporter: That's it?

Kerr: *:nods:* yeah

Reporter: Did he tell you.. Was he angry? Did he lash out, like how he would have sometimes rages? Did he do that?

Kerr: I completely described exactly the way he was. He was very withdrawn. He didn't say anything. He didn't lash out. He was angry. I can assume he was angry, but he didn't express his anger. He didn't express his anger in an aggressive way, he expressed his anger in a withdrawn way.

Reporter: So he goes, he goes to sleep and you went to sleep

Kerr: *:Nods:* yup. I watched a movie and I went to bed.

Reporter: And then in the morning what do you find?

Kerr: *:Points:* I found the note on the table.

Reporter: And what'd you think?

Kerr: Oh my God. And then an avalanche of feelings came and, confusion, and the only thing I wanted to do was connect with my wife. Just to figure out what we should do.

Reporter: What did you say *(to McDonald)*

McDonald: Well you know, its interesting because my response for the first three days was denial which I've since learned is part of the whole grief piece. I, I searched this house it must have been thirty times in the first three days.

We would wake up in the morning and drive over to the house and search the house, thinking, well what if he spent the night there. The last thing at night before we went to

bed we'd come here and search the house top to bottom, flashlights in the basement, looking under and over everything. We couldn't believe he would actually go anywhere.

Um, its, its part of the piece of grief and loss and we just, we couldn't believe it and Stephen was unable to sleep at night and so he was handing out flyers in Albany, but my..

Kerr: And Troy.

McDonald: And Troy

Kerr: And Schenectady. And Glensfalls. And Saratoga.

McDonald: And, um, I was trying to keep everything, keep the children.. you know they still need breakfast, lunch and dinner and all the regular things that children need, that, at at home. But then in between time I would come here and we would search and we would put out posters and um...

Kerr: And we, we were working very closely with the police and we gave them complete and full access to everything in our lives. Both houses. All three vehicles that we were using. Our phone records. Our credit cards. Our bank statements. Our doctor's records.

McDonald: Our passwords to our computer

Kerr: Our passwords to our computer. They took our computer. We have nothing to hide.

McDonald: And we did..

Kerr: And our actions prove that we have nothing to hide. We gave them complete access.

McDonald: That, That's..

Kerr: Until...:long pause: Tom Adkin said to me, "If you don't take a polygraph test, CPS will take your children."

Reporter: So why not take it then? Cuz you want to keep your children right?

McDonald: Where is it legal to use children as a leverage to coerce someone to take a voluntary test? At, it is so unethical. It has completely traumatized my children, and my belief is it's against the law.

So they made false allegations that were completely false cuz they included me and I hadn't seen Stephen.. I hadn't seen Jalieq in a week, and.. Because he had been at Rasputin, he was here and I was at home putting my own children to bed. And they, the police called in false allegations against Stephen and I to have our children removed, to coerce Stephen to take a test he was willing to take. All he asked them to let him do was to have a good night's sleep. To take some sleep medication or something because he hadn't slept in three days

Kerr: So lets go back..

McDonald: :Holds hand up to Stephen as to motion to hold on: You have to sign a form saying that you are in good physical health in order to take the test, and Stephen went through the whole two hour process prior to the test until he had to sign that form and he said, "Well I'm shaking. I haven't slept in in days. I, I'm not in good physical health. I, I cant take this test." And they said, "Oh just take it anyway." And Stephen said, "I can't take this test because I can't sign this form because I am not in good physical health. Let me go home. I'll get some medication. I'll sleep. I'll come back. I'll take that test." And then began a series of twelve hours of abuse and torture, where they refused to allow Stephen to go to the bathroom. Where they taunted him for taking medication for

depression, which is pretty normal when you're working with children who are struggling so much. Uh, where they, uh humiliated him, uh and uh refused to allow him to eat and threatened him, um repeatedly and basically tried to force a confession from an innocent man. And then at the end of the confession, er the end of the uh whole interrogation, when Stephen still refused to take the polygraph and refused to confess to something that they were trying to get him to confess to.. They were asking him questions which were totally inappropriate like, "Oh so you watched a porn movie with your son and you had sex with him and then you hit him on the head and dropped him in a ditch. Just tell us where the ditch is and then you wont get the death penalty." This is.. he had not been given his Miranda Rights; he'd not been told he was a suspect. But he was treated like this for twelve hours, without any sleep, without any food. Without being allowed to go to the bathroom.

Kerr: And I asked to leave eight times

McDonald: And he asked to leave repeatedly and they refused. And then at the end of that they said to him, "Well if you're not gonna take the polygraph now, we'll take your children away from you." And then he's supposed to take the polygraph then? Once they've coerced him. You also have to sign that you weren't coerced to take this test.

Reporter: What about, what about um the DNA? They've also asked you to eliminate everyone uh as far as like getting, getting Jaliel's DNA and and that way they can put him in as part of a registry.

McDonald: Anya, how does that help find my son? How does that help find my son? It doesn't it.

Reporter: What have the police..

McDonald: I've asked the police and they said it doesn't help find our son, find my son. The purpose of that is to prove somehow that Stephen murdered Jaliel. They have no evidence, the have nothing of Jaliel's to test. They don't have a body part or anything because my sons not dead.

Kerr: However..

McDonald: They don't need to test any DNA..

Kerr: We have freely given them his toothbrush..

McDonald: His hairbrush..

Kerr: His hairbrush..

McDonald: His hat

Kerr: His hat..

McDonald: His boots...his..

Kerr: His boots..

McDonald: His pillow that he slept with that night..

Kerr: If they cannot confirm with maybe seven or eight specimens of his, that its his DNA, I don't think DNA's very useful then, wouldn't you agree?

Reporter: Uhh

Kerr: Hmmm

Reporter: I'm not involved in it...

Kerr: Yeah..

Reporter: And sort of...

Kerr: Doesn't that seem odd?

McDonald: At this point we're, we're feeling like this whole case has been mishandled and uh, we're looking to see what we can do uh, to reee...

Kerr: Remedy the situation..

McDonald: Remedy the situation. Um, the police have been very unprofessional and uh I have gotten one apology for very inappropriate talking to me, umm..

Kerr: From Chief Bell..

McDonald: From Chief Bell. But at this point he's uh lying on camera about me. Um, he, I went back in the records and I don't have a television but I went on the Internet and I found uh, that he had said that three weeks after Jaliel left that Stephen and I had not called him or contacted him. Uh, and I went back to my log which I keep everyday of who I call and who called me and what I did everyday, because this is all I do, all I do is live for my son and take care of my children and uh, sure enough I'd called Chief Bell. I called my State Trooper who is assigned to me Todd McFail as much as three and four times a day and I had Stephen download the, uh records of the Internet from Verizon which is where through we get our phone.. and I have..

Kerr: Our cell service

McDonald: I have physical proof that Chief Bell is lying on camera about Stephen and I, uh.. to what end...

Reporter: He says, "Where are you? Where have you been?"

Kerr: Where is he? Last I heard a telephone works two ways :*making a gesture with both hands as to look like telephones:* . :*Holds right hand up to ear:* You wanta call me, great. :*takes right hand down, puts left hand to his ear:* I can also call you.

McDonald: At no point...

Kerr: Who's the professional in this situation? Who are the victims?

Reporter: Could I ask you real, one quick question but before.. but ya know I what I think Jocelyn, you and I have talked about this before. Like, um, there are, I don't know how people grieve, I don't know how people help people as, in this situation that you're in, get stressed out. I really don't know and I hope to God that I never go through it. There was some, some.. what a lot of viewers, a lot of people, and the only reason why I said this was we're out and about so often. I run into, we run into so many people..

Kerr: Great

Reporter: And they all say what's going on with them and I say what, what's going on. And they were talking specifically about the vigil evening and how you didn't want to talk to the press and how you wanted to sell eggs and it seemed like strange behavior. Can you explain what was going on?

Kerr: Let's see. Uh, I cannot account for behavior that might seem irrational that evening. I was under a tremendous amount of stress. Mostly for the week prior to that I listened to speeches by Martin Luther King, which bring me comfort. They also bring me great sadness. Because he is speaking from 1957 to 1968 about great suffering that our Country, that the African Americans in our Country, that the Whites in are Country are experiencing..

Reporter: But why bring that up in the case of, of...

Kerr: Why bring that up? Look at him! :*points to a flyer on the table of Jaliel:* Look at him! He was born cocaine addicted. He was in seven foster homes. He was given, and I will repeat myself, he was given by the citizens of the United States, which includes people... that's enough.

Reporter: I know that you are very passionate about Martin Luther King...

Kerr: No, I'm very passionate about my son! *:Pause:* And you know what? If you can't rely on people you call your heroes when the time is tough, who do you rely on? News media? Jerry Springer?

Reporter: Speaking of, of the.. I know this is very stressful for you, so I do understand. What about, what about.. I, I know that you're saying you fought for Jalieq and you're fighting for Jalieq...

Kerr: *:nods:* ummm

Reporter: But at this time for, for you.

Kerr: Yes. And we were looking into residential boarding home, boarding schools. We were asking various family members to take him for a, a bunch of time. Maybe six months, maybe a year. We had all different options on the table. None of which had been, none of which had been fully explored.

McDonald: It was very clear at the point at which Jalieq ummm..

Kerr: Threatened.

McDonald: Threatened a, a young child that he was no longer safe at our house. Our other children were no longer safe and that um, Stephen and I don't... didn't have the skill set to help a child with that level of need and so we needed to call in professionals. Which is what anybody would do whether a child is adopted or biological.

I'm very disturbed by how often people called Jalieq adopted. Yes he's adopted but he's also my son. And that doesn't change anything. And if he was a biological son and he was displaying these behaviors, I would be looking into every single option to get him the help he needed to heal and become a healthy of our Country.

Reporter: The same options? Like a lot, there are parents who, who send their ch.. who call the Department of Health. Who call and say, "I need help."

McDonald: Right

Reporter: And they are their biological children.

McDonald: And we called DSS and do you know it took them four weeks to respond. We've called them repeatedly and we had a meeting with them on Friday. We, we...

Kerr: Do you know what they could offer us?

McDonald: Jalieq was in, in um crisis for eleven days before he ran away. For eleven days we worked with this child who is in serious crisis. We called Saint Ann's; we called his prior therapist, his current therapist. We called DSS.

Kerr: Pediatrician.

McDonald: We called his Pediatrician. We were looking for all the help that we could get. We were looking into what can we do to help this child who is in deep.. emotional..

Kerr: Pain

McDonald: Crisis. Who's in a lot of pain. Who is mentally ill and yes we were looking into potentially putting him back into foster care if that's what was required to get him certain services. There are certain services you can only access through foster care, but that was not the only thing that was on the table for my son.

Kerr: And it would, that, that pert..

Reporter: Ok, well (*inaudible*). We have like two minutes something..

McDonald: *:laugh:*

Reporter: Ok, anything else that you wanted to ad before we hit the road and get outta your hair. There is, there is one question about umm...

Kerr: You're messin your hair up

Reporter: Sorry, uh..

:laugh:

Reporter: the uh, um, that's why the, we've, we've heard from a couple of people who said and, and again these are people that

Kerr: People on the street

Reporter: (*inaudible*)..conversations

Kerr: People on the streets

Reporter: well a couple of different people. \$1,800 a month to care for Jalie. That this was about money.

Kerr: *:Shaking head no:* No, not at all.

McDonald: You could not pay me enough to deal with a child who had his kind of problems.

Kerr: No.

McDonald: Not without love. You know, we had other foster kids in our home we could of adopted for the same price and I wouldn't of, I wouldn't of taken them because I didn't feel I could care for them. It has to be, come from the heart. Money does come into it. Um, we paid a lot for a lot of different therapeutic services for Jalie..

Kerr: \$10,000 intensive. We didn't, we, we..

Reporter: Services in the past year?

Kerr: We didn't, we do not get \$1800 a month for Jalie. Does he have services in the past year? Yes, he had services in the past year.

Reporter: Anything else you want to ad?

McDonald: It's like such a joke to think that we would do that for money. Oh my God.

:laugh:

Kerr: To ad that anybody who has any information, please come forward.