

# Faded Red Beads

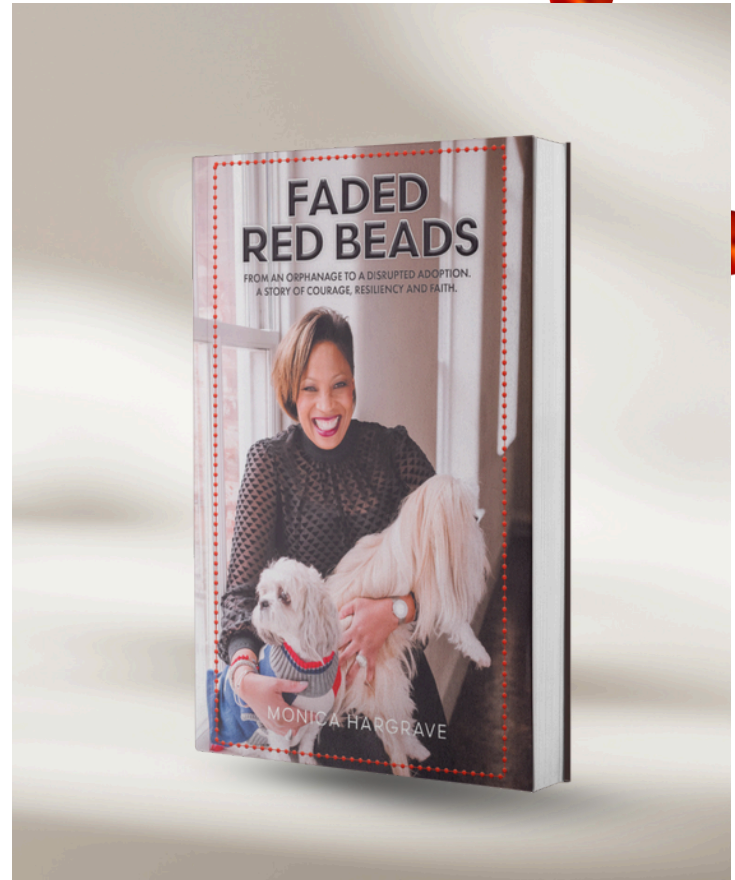
From an Orphanage to a Disrupted Adoption.  
A Story of Courage, Resiliency and Faith.

## THE BOOK

As I began to head upstairs to my bedroom, he abruptly asked, "Where have you been?" I responded and said, "What do you mean? I called you at 3:15 p.m. and told you I had a game and would be home afterward." He said, "No, you did not. I did not talk to you today!"

As I stood there, frozen, thinking, You're crazy as hell, he proceeded to tell me what my future was going to be, and I didn't agree with anything he said. "You will not participate in sports; you will come directly home from school, cook dinner, clean the house, etc." As he yelled, I began plotting my next move. When I tuned in, he said, "You will have no outside interaction with anyone." I recall thinking, This is my last day in this hellhole. It didn't matter where I ended up, I knew anything had to be better than this. I wasn't living at all. His home felt like prison, and I was ready to be free. This wasn't about me trying to sneak around and see boys. It was about a robbed childhood. I didn't have many answers, but I knew living with Mr. O'Neal was suffocating. He wasn't equipped to be an adoptive parent. The system failed. Providing a roof isn't enough.

This story is written to inspire individuals. To move when you don't have all the answers about what lies ahead, but if you stay where you are, you will die. To trust your gut and to not copy anyone's life, you are an original. It just so happens this story is about a little girl's journey from an orphanage to a failed adoption to charting her path forward. Whether you experienced foster care or adoption or neither, this story will encourage you to keep believing that good will find you.



## THE AUTHOR

When Monica was born, the doctors said, "If she makes it overnight, she will survive." Monica spent approximately nine years in foster care and then ran away from her adoptive family. She strives to empower women to actively address whatever is holding them back from leading fulfilled lives. You get one life. Live it.

Monica completed her undergraduate studies at Niagara University and has a masters degree in health administration from Central Michigan University and a masters in human resources development from Villanova University. She completed Emory University's executive coaching program and coaches women who are unfulfilled in their careers.

Monica loves trying vegan recipes, loves animals, exercising and reading James Patterson novels. She has three furry friends.



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Sitting in the living room, I looked around and noticed the stillness. My foster mother was reticent; my foster siblings were in the bedrooms, laughing, playing, jumping around, and having a good time. My hair was pulled up in a ponytail on my head, held by a black elastic band with those white balls in the center. The strands of my hair were plaited tight, and as I walked, the braids scattered around my head, returning to the middle when my head was still. I loved that my hair moved. Sometimes, I sat and moved my head back and forth to feel my braids hit my face.

Today was different because I was dressed in my red turtleneck, my red pants with embroidered blue sailboats and white socks. This was by far, my favorite outfit. I loved clothes but only had a few items. This top and pants were considered “good clothes.” So if I wore them to school, I had to take them off as soon as I returned home. Why was I dressed up today?

The doorbell rang, and three people entered my foster home: Pat Tarr, the caseworker from New York State, Joan O’Neal and Clarence O’Neal. This was my first time seeing these people besides Mrs. Tarr. Tarr visited me several times a year and always said I could trust her. Even though I was only eight or nine years old, I knew that wasn’t the case. During our visits she asked me privately if I was being treated okay and if anyone pressured me to answer a certain way. I remember my answer like it was yesterday: “This is my home, and I love being here.” *I think I’m safe—there really isn’t any reason for me to think I’m not.* What did my young self have to compare this to?

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