

Dear DYD Community,

My work with the Department of Youth Development (DYD) begins at a crucial time as we mourn the loss of Tyre Nichols, Takar Smith, Keenan Anderson, and Oscar Leon Sanchez. These tragedies underscore the need for structural change and serve as a reminder that police violence and systemic racism continue to pose a threat to the lives of young people in the United States. DYD is more committed than ever to creating structural change and equitably reducing young people's involvement with the justice system through a range of youth development services.

As we celebrate Black History this month, we also reflect on the 2023 theme of "Black Resistance." Judge Songhai Armstead, interim director of LA County's Justice, Care, and Opportunities Department (JCOD), put it best: "Healing is a form of resistance, an intentional act against violence and injustice." I invite you to join DYD and your community in healing and connecting at "A Healing Space," a community event hosted by JCOD on February 19th at Earvin Magic Johnson Park. You can find more information below or at <https://jcod.lacounty.gov/event/a-healing-space/>.

In my first few weeks with DYD, I have been reflecting on my own youth and how personal this work is for me. At an early age, I was involved in the foster care and adoption systems, and young Black men like me were considered more likely to drop out of school, become incarcerated, or become victims of violent crime than to graduate from college.

Caring teachers, committed mentors, and countless youth development opportunities helped put me on a path to graduate from Harris-Stowe State University with honors. Even with that intervention, I was still impacted by the criminal legal system, a stark reminder of how easily a person can find themselves embroiled in the system.

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Years later, after building a career in the corporate sector, an experience with a crime committed by adolescents was the catalyst for me to leave the corporate world and pursue a career focused on serving youth. Ultimately, I would return to school to earn my master's degree from Washington University in St. Louis and move into senior leadership and advocacy focused on providing opportunities for young people.

Led by the Board of Supervisors, the growing DYD team and its many community partners are equally as determined as I am to provide Los Angeles County youth with high-quality developmental and learning opportunities – the same types of opportunities that profoundly impacted my own life. I feel privileged to play a role in this effort to shape a better future alongside the DYD team and our partners.

Thank you for your continued support of this critical work.

David Carroll, Director

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