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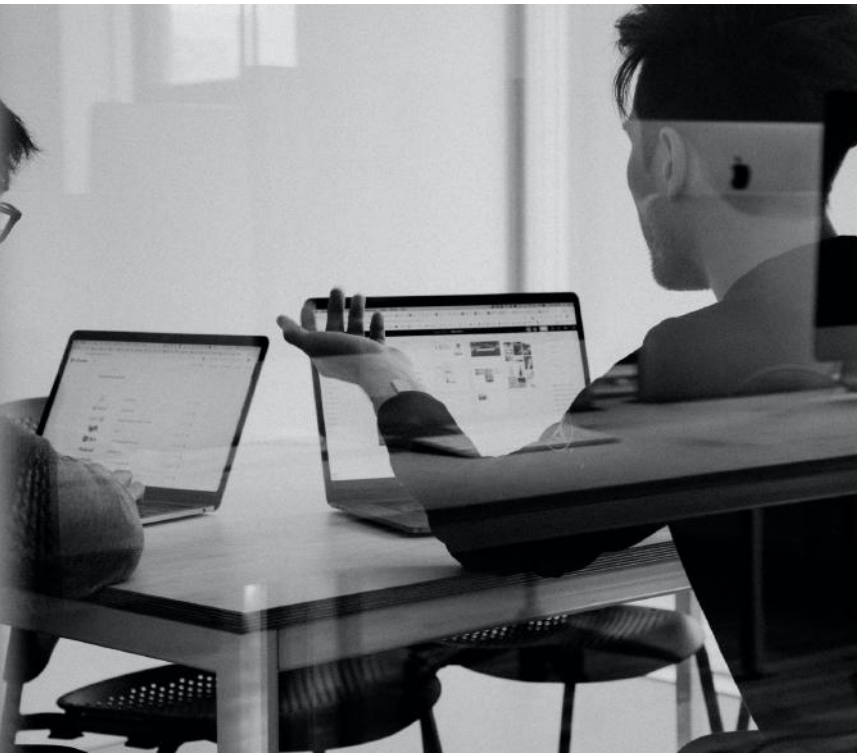
# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS OF COLOR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Cohort II  
2020 - 2021

# INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a strategic partnership between the leadership of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR), Advance Peace, and the LIVE FREE Campaign (collectively, the Alliance) launched the Young Professionals of Color (YPOC) Fellowship (Fellowship). In 2020, the Alliance launched the second cohort of the YPOC Fellowship.

The YPOC Fellowship (Fellowship) is a leadership development opportunity specifically designed for emerging leaders advancing the well-being of communities of color through various types of social justice oriented careers. Each Fellowship cohort comprises young professionals working in sectors including community organizing, policy advocacy, research and evaluation, media and storytelling, organizational development, and direct services.





# Global Pandemic

The intended structure of the 2020 Fellowship was to have the nine selected fellows attend customary dinners to begin each cohort convening, participate in professional development workshops, and engage with social justice leaders who would present and share wisdom on various topics relating to professional and personal development, leadership, organizational development, fund development, self-care, and work-life balance. In addition to the workshop convenings and dinners, fellows were scheduled to travel to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, in Alabama.

However, this year's Fellowship was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the scope of planned activities.

In order to accommodate the demands of pandemic restrictions, the Alliance shifted the program to include virtual convenings, canceled pre-convening dinners, shifted away from interactive workshops and focused more on presentations, and postponed the planned visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice.



# Meet the Fellows



Da'Shon Carr

Senior Project Assistant, Public Profit



David Durand

Director of Student Affairs, Prison University Project



Ariel Jimenez

Network Coordinator, National Compadres Network



Terah Lawyer

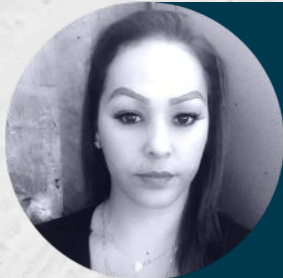
Program Manager, Impact Justice



Leo Mercer

Founder, Mercer Brotherhood

# Meet the Fellows



**Rosalina Santiago**

Life Coach, Communities United  
for Restorative Youth Justice



**Amanda Valtierra**

Data Outreach Manager, Measures  
for Justice



**Nate Williams**

Executive Director, Choices for  
Freedom



**Brittany Ware**

Director of Human Resources (FITV) /  
Program Coordinator (NBCD), Faith in the  
Valley / New Birth Community Development

# Convening 1 - March 2020

In early March, just before COVID-19 shelter in place orders went into effect, NICJR hosted its initial convening to launch the 2020-21 cohort. To kick off the convening, the Alliance organized and hosted a group dinner for fellows to get to know one another, at a women- and minority-owned restaurant in Oakland, California.

The following day, NICJR Executive Director David Muhammad and Advance Peace Founder DeVone Boggan, provided an overview of the Fellowship program and scheduled activities. Fellows shared their backgrounds, professional accomplishments, and individual goals as related to program participation. Fellows articulated goals and learning objectives including:

- Navigating White-dominated professional and academic spaces
- Program development
- Grant, budget, and proposal development
- Strategic professional networking
- Strategic community collaboration
- Building professional networks and strengthening connections
- Professional leadership development
- Guidance on identifying more challenging opportunities
- Building expertise
- Empowering formerly incarcerated people

Fellows also had the opportunity to learn from and engage with Robert Phillips, the President and CEO of Alluma, a nonprofit social enterprise that works with public and private organizations to help connect people to healthcare, nutrition, and other critical programs. Mr. Phillips also shared his professional journey, work, and tools for leadership development in social justice.



# Convening 2 - July 2020



**Arnold L. Chandler**

President,  
Forward Change Consulting

The cohort's second convening was held virtually in July and featured a presentation from Arnold L. Chandler, President of Forward Change Consulting. Mr. Chandler presented his acclaimed work "A Life Course Framework for Improving the Lives of Boys and Men of Color," which outlines the significant body of research showing the predictable life courses of Black boys resulting from both negative or pro-social experiences. Following the presentation, fellows engaged in a robust discussion with Mr. Chandler about his work.

# Convening 3 - October 2020

During the third cohort convening, David Muhammad and DeVone Boggan presented on professional development, including salary negotiation strategies and tips, the art of networking, and other important lessons for advancing one's career. They also discussed their personal and professional journeys and important lessons learned along the way. Their presentations were followed by in-depth conversations with the fellows.

Presenters:

**David Muhammad**, Executive Director, National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

**DeVone Boggan**, Founder and CEO, Advance Peace

**Advance**  **Peace**

**NICJR**   
National Institute for  
**Criminal Justice Reform**



# Convening 4 - February 2021

In light of ongoing pandemic restrictions, the Alliance was unable to hold a final dinner and gathering. However, to wrap up the year, the Alliance held a virtual convening session to provide space for a final check-in and a discussion with Lateefah Simon, a nationally recognized advocate for civil rights and racial justice in Oakland and the Bay Area. Ms. Simon spoke to the fellows about her incredible work in the areas of civil rights and racial justice, and her phenomenal personal and professional journey.



**Lateefah Simon**

President,  
Akonadi Foundation





## Fellowship Outcomes

Fellows were given an anonymous survey following the last convening, where they were asked to provide feedback on their experiences in the program. Seven out of nine Fellows responded to the survey.

Overall, Fellows' expectations were realized, however there was a general consensus that pandemic restrictions limited the impact of the Fellowship.

An analysis of survey responses indicated that the Fellowship:

- contributed to professional growth and development (7 of 7 respondents)
- increased Fellows' leadership qualities (6 of 7 respondents)
- expanded networks and connections between Fellows (6 of 7 respondents)
- fostered growth in transforming systems (6 of 7 respondents)
- increased involvement in Fellows' prospective communities (6 of 7 respondents)

# Fellow Reflections

“Participating in this cohort allowed me to see things from more of a leadership perspective and think through how I can lead from a place of boldness.”

“I used themes from the 'navigating whiteness' conversations to coach my white colleagues and supervisors to create and promote more equitable processes. Some minor advances have been made, but so much more work to go!”

“Being a part of this fellowship has tremendously increased my confidence and fearlessness!”

“I've taken the skills, tips, and tools I acquired in this fellowship back into my own personal and professional life and as a result, I received a promotion at my job and I now sit on several boards of other non-profits that would like me to collaborate with their efforts. I know none of this would have been possible without this fellowship.”

“This was a remarkable experience where I felt at ease among my peers with similar backgrounds. We developed a level of synergy that only fueled our own personal drives to move mountains for criminal justice reform efforts.”

“Covid tried to disrupt this process but the resiliency of the NICJR was able to move the fellowship online and still maintain its integrity. Extremely grateful on so many levels and can't wait to give back.”

“This has to be the cohort of the century. We stayed connected, on track, and successful through a viral pandemic, catastrophic fires, soul-crushing lockdowns and quarantines, an economic recession that rivals the Great Depression of the 1930s, traumatizing police responses to movements of racial equity and police reform, and we were forced to bear witness to an increasingly Fascistic political party and an administration's ongoing attempts to erode democracy. On top of that, I recently lost my father to a long battle with cancer. Through it all, I felt supported, encouraged, and empowered. Thank you so much, NICJR!”