

Young Professionals of Color Fellowship Report

2021-2022 | Cohort III



2021-22

INTRODUCTION



In October 2021, the leadership of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform (NICJR) launched the third cohort of the Young Professionals of Color (YPOC) Fellowship.

The Young Professionals of Color Fellowship is a leadership development opportunity specifically designed for emerging leaders who are advancing the well-being of communities of color through social justice-oriented careers. Each Fellowship cohort comprises young professionals working in a variety of sectors such as community organizing, policy advocacy, research and evaluation, media and storytelling, organizational development, and direct services.

Ten fellows were selected for the third YPOC Cohort. Fellows attended a series of convenings, each of which included a welcome dinner; professional development workshops; and opportunities to engage with social justice leaders who shared wisdom related to professional and personal development, leadership, organizational development, fund development, self-care, and work-life balance. The first two convenings were held in Oakland, California, and the third was held in Los Angeles, California. Fellows traveled to Montgomery, Alabama for their final convening, where they visited the Legacy Museum, the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, and the local Office of Violence Prevention.

MEET THE FELLOWS



Kerby Lynch
Program Manager,
Ceres Policy Research



Hugo Amaya
Youth Services Supervisor,
Community Youth Outreach, Inc.



Paris Davis
Intervention Director, Youth Alive



Maria Recarte
Program Lead Transitions Manager,
El Camino Community College



Manny Flores
Senior Program Manager,
University of Miami



Rabia Qutab
Strategic Partner, Impact Justice

MEET THE FELLOWS



Avelina Richardson
Program Director, Bonafide



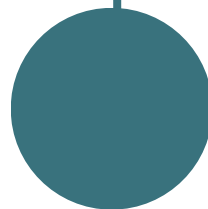
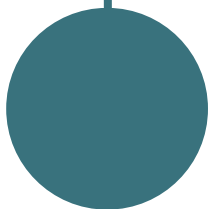
Javier Rodriguez
Regional Coordinator, Rising Scholars
Network, California Community
College Chancellor's Office



Khariyyah Shabazz
Deputy Executive Director, Higher
Ground Neighborhood Development
Corp.; Founder, Khariyyah Speaks, Inc.



Kenzo Sohoue
Partnership Fellow, Los Angeles Rams;
Resident Advisor, Anti-Recidivism
Coalition; Ambassador, Cafe Momentum



CONVENING 1 - OCT 2021

The cohort's first convening in Oakland, California kicked off with a group dinner for fellows at a local restaurant, giving them an opportunity to get to know one another. The following day, NICJR Executive Director David Muhammad and DeVone Boggan, National Partner of NICJR and founder of Advance Peace, provided an overview of the Fellowship program and scheduled activities. Fellows spent the first half of the day presenting their backgrounds, professional accomplishments, and individual goals and spoke about what it took for them to navigate life's challenges to become the leaders they are today.

Fellows articulated the following goals and learning objectives:

- Learn how different individuals use their power and influence to make a change
- Broaden network
- Build professionalism
- Develop skills in public speaking
- Learn how to create and manage budgets
- Develop leadership skills
- Find solutions for justice reform
- Enhance social service skills, marketability, and value
- Better understand criminal justice policy issues, solutions, and reform
- Learn more about Black history



CONVENING 1 - OCT 2021

Fellows also had the opportunity to learn from the Founder in Residence of PolicyLink, Angela Glover-Blackwell, and YPOC alumna and Associate Director of UC Berkeley Underground Scholars, Daniela Medina.

Angela recounted her journey founding PolicyLink. She described how it began with her drive to empower the community and understand more closely the correlation between the law; local policy; and drivers of racial and social inequities including housing, job markets, and health. She also spoke about how she navigated the difficulties of being a woman leader during a time when women were not given equal rights, and she shared principles, practices, and pieces of wisdom that have helped her and her teams to be successful. She also spoke about what drives her to continue to fight for equity and change. Lastly, she described a podcast she recorded with author, facilitator, and pleasure activist adrienne maree brown and recommended brown's book titled *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, which fellows read in preparation for discussion at the second convening.

Daniela Medina opened her discussion by sharing the story of her 10-year incarceration and went on to speak about her recent achievements, including graduating from UC Berkeley with both undergraduate and graduate degrees and becoming the Associate Director of UC Berkeley Underground Scholars.

PRESENTERS



Angela Glover-Blackwell
Founder in Residence, Policy Link



Daniela Medina
Associate Director, UC Berkeley
Underground Scholars; YPOC Alumna

CONVENING 2 - JAN 2022

The cohort's second convening in Oakland, California began with a welcome dinner. The following day featured presentations from David Muhammad, Executive Director of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform; Arnold Chandler, Principal of Forward Change Consulting; Ariel Jimenez, Network Coordinator for the National Compadres Network and YPOC alumnus; and Fatima Angeles, Executive Director of the Levi Strauss Foundation.

David Muhammad discussed his personal and professional journeys, sharing important lessons he has learned along the way. His presentation was followed by in-depth conversations with the fellows about networking strategies, salary negotiations, and the importance of mentorship.

Arnold Chandler presented his acclaimed work titled “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 either negative or pro-social experiences. Following the presentation, fellows engaged in a robust discussion with Arnold about his work.

Ariel Jimenez spoke about his work as the Network and Program Coordinator for the National Compadres Network. In particular, Ariel spoke about overseeing the Forward Promise Initiative and providing culturally relevant services to marginalized young men and adult men in promising communities. He also discussed how the Network has an impact on reducing the incidence of substance abuse; domestic violence; child abuse; teen pregnancy; gang violence; heterosexism; racial inequity; and other individual, family, community, and societal issues.



CONVENING 2 - JAN 2022

The last presentation of the second convening was given by Fatima Angeles, Executive Director of the Levi Strauss Foundation. Fatima spoke about her professional journey and her commitment to social justice and change making through philanthropy focused on worker health, environmental justice, and youth development. She spoke about her lived experience as a woman of color and an immigrant and the barriers she has had to navigate both personally and professionally. She also offered advice to the fellows on how to navigate predominantly white spaces as a person with marginalized intersecting identities. The fellows engaged in deep dialogue with Fatima and had the opportunity to ask her questions about her work and journey as a philanthropic and programmatic leader.

The second convening concluded with a discussion of adrienne maree brown's book *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, which was facilitated by Natasha Johnson, a Policy Analyst at NICJR and the YPOC Coordinator. Natasha encouraged fellows to contemplate pleasure as a form of liberation and freedom from oppression, particularly as it relates to patriarchy, sexism, capitalism, and racism. She also discussed the importance of finding pleasure in social justice work in order to sustain one's satisfaction in the profession and the larger movement toward liberation.

PRESENTERS

David Muhammad

Executive Director, National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform

Arnold Chandler

President, Forward Change Consulting

Ariel Jimenez

LCC Network & Program Coordinator, National Compadres Network; YPOC Alumnus

Fatima Angeles

Executive Director, Levi Strauss Foundation

CONVENING 3 - MAY 2022

During the third convening in Los Angeles, California, fellows attended another welcome dinner and the following day heard from DeVone Boggan, Founder and Chief Executive Officer at Advance Peace, and Alex M. Johnson, Interim Vice President of Programs at the California Wellness Foundation. Fellows also engaged in a budget workshop led by David Muhammad and DeVone Boggan and traveled to Skid Row for a tour and discussion on homelessness led by Social Model Recovery Systems staff Zelene Cardenas, Senior Director of Community Initiatives, and Charles Porter, Prevention Director.

DeVone Boggan kicked off the convening by sharing his journey and providing pieces of wisdom he has gathered along the way. He encouraged fellows to remain humble regardless of the heights of success they will experience and to care deeply about the issues they are fighting for and the people impacted by those issues. He also spoke about resilience, building the next generation of leaders that will take your place, and knowing when it is time to advance your career.

Alex Johnson discussed the number of employees, budget size, and political landscape of the California Wellness Foundation. He also spoke about his rise to the role of Chief of Staff at the foundation and his previous career as an attorney. One question he asks himself that he encouraged the fellows to also ask themselves is: "How do I stay happy while making an impact?"—reminding them to prioritize their health and wellness while maintaining purposeful work.



CONVENING 3 - MAY 2023

Because most leadership positions involve some type of fiscal management, in the budget workshop, fellows were given a budget template and scenario prompting them to complete a budget form as if they managed their own nonprofit organization. After completing the exercise, the fellows came together to discuss why they each listed certain allocations in their budget and the impacts of those decisions. The discussion was facilitated by David and DeVone, who offered feedback throughout.

Lastly, fellows traveled to Skid Row, where they met Zelene Cardenas and Charles Porter. Zelene and Charles each spoke about what inspires them to work in an area that most would never think to visit. They spoke about the passion and drive they have for seeing homelessness eradicated. After the tour and presentations, fellows walked to the Skid Row Community ReFresh Spot. Open 24/7 to anyone in the community, this spot offers a safe space for the Skid Row community to access showers, restrooms, laundry, phone charging, and drinking water free of charge.

PRESENTERS

DeVone Boggan

Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Advance Peace

Alex M. Johnson

Interim Vice President of Programs, The California Wellness Foundation

Zelene Cardenas

Senior Director of Community Initiatives, Social Model Recovery Systems

Charles Porter

Prevention Director, Social Model Recovery Systems

CONVENING 4 - OCT 2022

To wrap up the year, fellows traveled to Montgomery, Alabama for their final convening. On the first day, fellows visited the Legacy Museum, which provides a comprehensive history of the United States with a focus on the legacy of enslavement and its direct link to mass incarceration. After visiting the museum, fellows reflected on the experience, how it relates to their work, and why it inspires them to continue to fight for justice. The first day concluded with a final dinner, where fellows got a chance to catch up, celebrate their achievements, reflect on their year in the Fellowship, and provide advice to one another.

On the second and final day, fellows visited the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved Black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence. After the Memorial visit, fellows traveled to the Montgomery Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) to hear from Keith Moore, the Director of the OVP, and Ro Tyus, the OVP Community Liaison. Keith and Ro spoke about the successes and challenges of being the only two OVP employees for the entire city, as well as their hopes for the future.

PRESENTERS

Keith Moore

Director, Montgomery Office of Violence Prevention

Ro Tyus

Community Liaison, Montgomery Office of Violence Prevention



FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES

Following the last convening, fellows were given an anonymous survey where they were asked to provide feedback on their experiences in the program. Eight out of ten fellows responded to the survey.

Overall, fellows' expectations were realized, and the Fellowship proved to have a profound impact on their professional trajectories. **One hundred percent of the respondents indicated that the Fellowship:**

- Contributed to their professional growth and development;
- Increased their leadership qualities;
- Expanded networks and connections between fellows;
- Fostered their growth in transforming systems;
- And increased their involvement in their respective communities.

Some fellows' achievements during the year included the following:

- As a direct result of the Fellowship, Hugo Amaya was offered and accepted an elevated position as a Youth Services Supervisor at Community Youth Outreach, Inc. in Oakland.
- Paris Davis was promoted from Intervention Manager to Intervention Director at Youth Alive and was accepted into a PhD program at UC Berkeley in the School of Public Health.
- Kenzo Sohoue became an ambassador for Cafe Momentum, obtained his honorable discharge,¹ started his own production business, and became a Partnership Fellow with the Los Angeles Rams. He also appeared in:
 - Spectrum News 1: [Cafe Momentum hosts pop-up dinner to raise awareness for incarcerated youth](#)
 - The Imprint: [LA County Moves A Step Forward in a New Approach to Juvenile Justice](#)
- Khariyyah Shabaaz appeared in:
 - The Voyage LA: [Hidden Gems: Meet Khariyyah Shabazz of Khariyyah Speaks](#)
 - KRON 4: [Khariyyah Speaks talks 'Better Neighborhoods, Same Neighbors' initiative](#)
 - [All about Community News](#)

¹ An honorable discharge means that it has been 18 months or more since a person was discharged from the Division of Juvenile Justice, and that person has completed their probation or parole term, shown the ability to desist from criminalized behavior, and started a successful transition to adulthood.

FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES

Fellow achievements continued...

- After the Fellowship, Manny Flores relocated to Miami, Florida and became a Senior Program Manager at the University of Miami, where he supports criminal justice work.
- Avelina Richardson accepted a Program Director position at Bonafide, a nonprofit serving people affected by incarceration. In this role, she builds community alongside people returning home from life sentences and ensures that they have the resources necessary to rebuild their lives. Earlier this year, she provided \$5,000 grants to 10 formerly incarcerated people in transition and is currently in the process of planning a trip for formerly incarcerated elders to visit the Legacy Museum.
- Kerby Lynch became a Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA) Dezzie Woods Jones Fellow for 2022, studying the intersection of economic development and criminal justice reform. She also supports reparations organizing on the state and local level as a result of seeing how mass incarceration functions as modern-day slavery. She also completed her PhD in Human Geography while in the fellowship.
- Rabia Qutab graduated from the Education Trust Justice Fellows Policy Program and completed a summer research program at Howard Medical School, focusing her research on Type II Diabetes. She was also accepted into the 2023 Just Leadership USA Fellowship and advanced her career at Impact Justice via her work in finance, accounting, and strategic partnerships. Additionally, she spoke on various higher education panels and conferences and continues to partner with Project Rebound, Rising Scholars, and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition.
 - Rabia co-authored [A Toolkit for Advancing College Opportunity for Justice-Impacted Students - California](#).
 - She also appeared in numerous publications including:
 - The 19th News: [Peedey Green: Educational Access for Incarcerated Women Challenges and Opportunities](#)
 - The National Public Radio (NPR): [HBCUs are building a new prison-to-college pipeline](#);
 - The California State University, Los Angeles: [Public Memory Project Archive](#);
 - The Texas Violence Project: [After Violence Archive](#).

FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES

Reflections from the fellows included the following:

- *The Fellowship was an awesome experience that I would recommend to any serious social service provider across California. Gaining connections, learning logistical content, and being exposed to different social provision models is the sort of premium experience that I know future individuals will gain from this experience—as have I.*
- *The Fellowship has allowed me to develop myself and has exposed me to professional paths I otherwise would have not known. The biggest achievements and professional development gains were the relationships that were formed over the four meeting periods. We were able to meet with several leaders in the field of violence prevention and community development. Being exposed to this diverse field has allowed me to set professional goals for myself for the very near future.*

"All of the presenters we had in this cohort were amazing. What I take away the most is that no matter how hard life gets, you can always turn it around and make something of yourself. I appreciated how vulnerable the presenters were when telling us their stories. The presenters inspired me and helped me believe that I can take my career to new heights and help my community simultaneously."

- *I am so grateful for the experience and the network, overall AMAZING.*
- *I had multiple opportunities to speak in front of others. I was able to travel to Alabama and learn more about my African American history. I created friendships that will be lifelong. I saw other people of color in leadership positions and making a difference in their communities outside the Bay Area. I also heard insightful stories from previous fellows impacted by this great Fellowship.*

FELLOWSHIP OUTCOMES

- *If it weren't for the encouragement I received from DeVone and David, I would not have pushed myself to apply for other roles. The fellowship motivated me to challenge myself and really to see value in my work—and to walk away from organizations who don't!*
- *The experience overall brought camaraderie amongst young leaders and allowed us to explore ideas that you will not get on the job. It has opened my mind to my biggest dreams and allowed me to set goals for myself that I had not imagined before. The leadership in NICJR have been true mentors in the process. I believe with their continued guidance, we will continue to reach new heights.*

The YPOC Fellowship "has opened my mind to my biggest dreams and allowed me to set goals for myself that I had not imagined before."



AFTERWORD

As NICJR prepares to launch the fourth YPOC Fellowship cohort, we are pleased to look back on the program's growth. Since 2018, 26 emerging leaders have had the opportunity to learn from one another and from a variety of social justice leaders through three YPOC Fellowship cohorts.

The inaugural YPOC cohort brought together seven fellows for quarterly in-person convenings between July 2018 and August 2019. These convenings introduced fellows to an array of successful leaders with backgrounds similar to their own, provided fellows with a wealth of new knowledge and leadership skills, forged lasting bonds between fellows, and promoted confidence and a renewed commitment to social justice.

While the inaugural cohort began the experience as an accomplished group of young professionals, several fellows experienced significant professional achievements during the Fellowship. For example, Sam Lewis began the YPOC Fellowship as the Director of Inside Programs at the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), a nonprofit that empowers formerly and currently incarcerated people to thrive by providing a support network, comprehensive services, and opportunities to advocate for policy change. In June 2019, during the Fellowship year, Sam was named the new Executive Director of ARC. As the first formerly incarcerated ARC member to assume the Executive Director position, Sam now oversees the organization's programs, operations across two offices, and multi-million-dollar budget.

Another fellow from the inaugural cohort said this of the experience: "The Fellowship was like iron sharpening iron. I truly felt I was in the presence of accomplished and esteemed leadership and simultaneously among future leadership across multiple sectors. I will use the experiences, conversations, and literature provided to continue to improve myself and my community."

The second YPOC Fellowship cohort launched in March 2020 with nine fellows. This cohort was able to convene once in person, just before COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders went into effect. The remaining three convenings were adapted to a

AFTERWORD

virtual format that focused on presentations from field leaders, rather than interactive workshops. A planned visit to the Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama was postponed to the fall of 2021, several months after the final virtual convening.

Following the final virtual convening, seven out of nine fellows responded to an anonymous survey where they were asked to provide feedback on their YPOC experience. While there was a general consensus that pandemic restrictions limited the impact of the Fellowship, fellows did still provide very positive feedback about the experience. One acknowledged the challenges of the year, saying, “Covid tried to disrupt this process, but 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.” Another noted tangible impacts from the Fellowship, saying, “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 nonprofits that would like me to collaborate with their efforts. I know none of this would have been possible without this Fellowship.”

As described throughout this report, we were able to return to in-person convenings with the launch of the third YPOC Fellowship cohort in October of 2021. Building upon successes of previous cohorts, we were able to offer even more unique and transformational experiences to the ten fellows, including a site visit to Skid Row, interactions with successful YPOC alumni, and meaningful discussions with a variety of highly successful leaders of color.

In looking back over the last five years, we are immensely grateful to the many field leaders who have invested their time and talent in nurturing the next generation of leaders, and we are equally grateful to the extraordinary young people of color who have participated in the first three YPOC Fellowship cohorts. We look forward to continuing this vital work.

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Advance  Peace

