

# NATIONAL COUNCIL *of* YOUNG LEADERS

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH UNITED

www.OYUnited.org

# Recommendations to Increase Opportunity and Decrease Poverty in America



The National Council of Young Leaders and Opportunity Youth United are sponsored by

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August 2016

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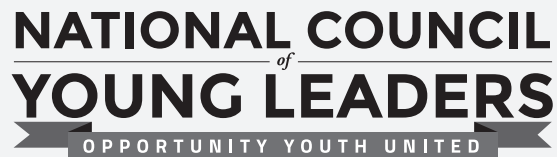
Kerry Sullivan, President, Bank of America Charitable Foundation

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The Circle of Allies and Champions will help uplift the ideas of the National Council of Young Leaders through providing avenues for them to be heard in policy discussions affecting low-income youth and their communities.

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# **Recommendations** to **Increase Opportunity** and **Decrease Poverty** **in America**



[www.OYUnited.org](http://www.OYUnited.org)

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**Funded by**

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**Hosted by**

YouthBuild USA, Inc.

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# Recommendations to Increase Opportunity and Decrease Poverty in America

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## Council Members

*Brief biographies of Council members begin on page 18.*



Jamiel  
Alexander



Lashon  
Amado



Gilbert  
Bonafé Jr.



Ramean  
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Ryan  
Dalton



Francisco  
Garcia



Megan  
Gregory



Timothy  
Gunn



Tekoa  
Hewitt



Shawnice  
Jackson



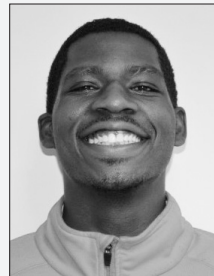
Julie  
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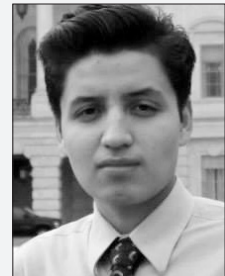
Deon  
Jones



Dominique  
Jones



Jarrett  
Jones



Humberto  
Palacios



Kimberly  
Pham



Teresa  
Rivera



Adam  
Strong



Philan  
Tree



Shanice  
Turner

# Recommendations to Increase Opportunity and Decrease Poverty in America

## Introduction

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The National Council of Young Leaders was formed in July 2012 in response to a recommendation of the White House Council on Community Solutions. Funding came from the Bill & Melinda Gates, Open Society, and Starbucks Foundations. It is now funded by State Farm, and the Skoll, Marguerite Casey, and Schultz Family Foundations.

The council is sponsored by Aspen Forum for Community Solutions, Be The Change, City Year, College Advising Corps, Gateway to College National Network, Jobs for the Future, Mikva Challenge, National Congress of American Indians, National Guard Youth Foundation, Partners for Education at Berea College, Public Allies, The Corps Network, The Philadelphia Youth Network, Year Up, and YouthBuild USA. It is staffed by YouthBuild USA and supported with in-kind collaborations by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Citizen University, Get Schooled, National Rural Assembly, Opportunity Youth Network, and Spark Action.

As members of the Council we were each nominated and selected by our sponsoring organizations as outstanding young leaders representing diverse geographical communities and cultural groups. Each of us has overcome enormously challenging conditions to become dedicated leaders and servants of our communities and our peers.

We were offered wonderful opportunities by our sponsoring organizations to find our true hearts, our real selves, our talents, and our passion to make a difference through service to our communities. Each of us has experienced what a comprehensive program that provides education, employment, personal counseling, caring adult mentors and role models, a positive peer group, leadership opportunities, pathways to college and careers, and service to our communities can mean

to a lost soul. We have experienced the amazing respect and love that come from staff in organizations that are based on a philosophy of recognizing our sacred value and seeing us as potential assets to the community rather than threats to it.

Before finding these blessed pathways, we suffered all manner of difficulties including child abuse, rapidly changing and sometimes abusive or neglectful foster care placements, homelessness, traumatic loss and suffering of family members through murder or the impact of chronic and fatal diseases, discrimination based on our race or ethnicity, gang violence, the absence of our fathers through murder or incarceration, the loss of our mothers through suicide or drug overdose, neighborhoods that were unsafe for children to even walk to school, teachers who told us we were doomed to fail, schools that kicked us out, public policies affecting Native Americans that prevented our tribes from building the infrastructure needed to support our people, police who stereotyped us and overlooked the rampant drug dealing surrounding us, and prison records that will follow us for the rest of our lives and lock many doors to us.

In a thriving society that invests in its children and youth, supports family and community life, and is structured to diminish poverty, we should never have had to face these challenges as children and youth. Nonetheless, we have found ways to forgive those who hurt us, and to recognize and appreciate the learnings and the strength we have gained from overcoming the odds. We are resilient. We are proud. We are smart. We are united. We aim to be a positive force for good in the world, motivated by love and guided by a strong moral and spiritual compass.

We recognize the need for people of all backgrounds to come together, to work together to create a society in which it is recognized that all people are created equal, where there is liberty and freedom, opportunity and responsibility, justice and love, for all. That is the America we aim to create in our lifetimes.

We look to our elders and to those who hold the keys to power to support our efforts. We are looking to our peers to join forces and align resources with us as we fight for equal opportunities for all young people to experience the benefits of public and private investment in our education, employment, personal development, and opportunities to serve and give back to our communities.

In 2015 we launched Opportunity Youth United, a national movement to engage young people like ourselves in this effort to increase opportunity and decrease poverty in America. You can join at [www.OYUnited.org](http://www.OYUnited.org).

Below we have stated our principles for action, our priority recommendation, and a broader agenda for change. Thank you for listening and reading. Please join us.



## Principles for Action

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**Love.** Action for change must be grounded in love, led by moral and spiritual consciousness, to transform societies and individuals.

**Responsibility.** We must lead by example, taking responsibility and being accountable to others and to ourselves for all of our actions, knowing that we must be role models for our peers.

**Forgiveness and empathy.** We must forgive others and ourselves, with empathy, understanding the full reality faced by all of us.

**Community empowerment.** We must empower our peers and the residents in our communities to overcome their feelings of powerlessness, apathy, and fear, to work together proactively to create stronger communities in which everyone is committed to everyone else's well being, where we take care of each other, correct each other, and love each other. We must organize, vote, become active, and take charge and responsibility for our lives and communities.

**Inclusion.** We must be inclusive, refusing to stereotype any group of people or any individual.

**Visibility.** We must make ourselves visible, tell our stories and our truth to influential people who are uninformed and insulated from the twin oppressions of poverty and racism. We believe if they truly hear us, many of them will care and join with us. We must equally become visible to other young people who need to see that it is possible to transcend the obstacles they face and to find pathways to productive citizenship.

**Collaboration.** We must encourage more collaboration and less competition among nonprofits that have been pressured by resource shortages to be in competition for limited funds. We need them to be in collaboration to expand the resources, and to share their knowledge and resources with each other, on our behalf.

**Accountability for results.** We must be willing to look critically at results, asking programs that we support to track demographics, outcomes, and return on investment.

**Respect for faith.** We must respect each other's sources of faith and spirituality, accepting differences and welcoming the strength that comes from different religious faiths.

**Humility.** We must remain humble and committed, remembering that good works are always in service to others, not to promote our own careers.

**Planning.** We must take seriously the responsibility to plan and move systematically toward our individual futures and the futures of our organizations and our world.

### **This Is Our Moment**

We have formed this National Council of Young Leaders at a good moment in history. There is growing momentum toward taking seriously the need to provide opportunities for low-income youth to overcome the odds and join society as contributing members.

Those of us who have spent time out-of-school and out-of-work, formerly called “at-risk” or “disconnected” youth, appreciate the new language that names us “Opportunity Youth.” It accurately reflects the twin facts that we are seeking opportunity and we offer a major opportunity to our nation if it will invest in us and our peers.

There is growing willingness to listen to the voices of young people. The White House Council on Community Solutions, the GradNation Campaign, the Opportunity Nation Coalition, Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Council, the National Youth Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, and My Brothers Keeper Alliance, are among visible efforts that provide fuel and credibility to our campaign to lift up our voices for opportunity and responsibility for all.

The Council, moved by the reality that “This is Our Moment” and seeing the need to build our influence, has launched a new social movement of young leaders called Opportunity Youth United (OYU). In cities and counties across America we are organizing OYU Community Action Teams (CATs): groups of young leaders from low-income communities speaking up, organizing their peers, and addressing the issues that matter to them. Using these Recommendations, young leaders in CATs will continue engaging their communities to improve the lives of all Opportunity Youth.



## Primary Immediate Recommendation

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Our top priority recommendation is to invest in pathways out of poverty for all opportunity youth. When young people are entering adulthood they are ready to make new choices, to create a positive future for themselves and their families if they can see any path to achieving their goals. It is an inflexion point.

We ask our nation's leaders to expand all the existing pathways out of poverty to open the doors to least one million young people a year.

A study done by Civic Enterprises, shows that it would take an annual federal investment of \$6.5 billion a year in proven existing federal programs to reconnect one million young adults per year.<sup>1</sup> Each 20-year-old permanently reconnected to education and/or employment will directly save the taxpayer \$236,000 and will save a total social cost of \$704,000 over his or her lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Thus, if these programs succeed with just half of their participants, the lifetime direct return on investment to the taxpayer would be over \$118 billion for each year of investment. The social benefit would be \$350 billion. Adequate State, City, and private investment to complement the federal investment could actually solve the problem of young people disconnected from education and employment.

The measurable benefits to society of investing in opportunity youth are enormous. Beyond those, the powerful ripple effects of our becoming responsible role models, family members, and community leaders can never be fully measured. Increasing public and private investment in proven program models whose data demonstrate success, is the first obvious step.

After describing these pathways, we will address changes needed in underlying systems. Our long-range goal is not simply to provide escape routes for highly motivated young adults, but to create leaders, policies, and practices that will eliminate poverty and create healthy communities and robust opportunities for all.

Below we list our top six priority pathways out of poverty to be expanded.

### **1. Effective comprehensive programs**

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The comprehensive programs that are already succeeding with opportunity youth should be dramatically expanded. These are typically full-time programs that integrate education, job training, counseling, personal supports and mentors, leader-

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<sup>1</sup> *Bridge to Reconnection*, Civic Enterprises, John Bridgeland, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*, Clive Belfield et al., 2012.

ship development opportunities, a positive peer group, pathways to college and jobs, and service opportunities in which young people can learn that it is possible to get paid for doing something good.

Every urban and rural low-income community should have an array of these programs that should be well publicized so that young people can find them and can see alternatives to street life. Many of us have experienced AmeriCorps, Back on Track Schools, Public Allies, Service and Conservation Corps, or YouthBuild programs. Through these publicly funded comprehensive programs we found inspiring pathways to responsible adulthood. These and other effective federal, state, and local programs should be expanded to welcome all the young people knocking on their doors.

## **2. National service**

Increase the inclusion of low-income people of all ages in giving service to their communities through national service programs like AmeriCorps, NCCC, Senior Corps, Service Learning, Volunteer Generation, and VISTA.

The impact of giving service dramatically changes the identity of low-income service-givers, causing them to commit to long-term civic engagement. The impact is similarly powerful on the rest of the community when we experience our own neighbors and peers as service-givers, rather than being passive recipients of charity from people of different class and racial backgrounds. This experience can strengthen the culture of service in the community.

## **3. Private internships**

Support internships that offer paid employment experience with private corporations that provide appropriate supports to the interns and potential for long-term hiring. Establish a corporate tax credit of up to \$4,000 for each six-month paid internship offered to low-income young adults that results in employment. Some of us have experienced amazing internships in the private sector through Year Up, coupled with college prep and a supportive community.

## **4. All forms of mentoring**

Expand mentoring programs and elevate both formal and informal mentoring as a core component for all programs serving opportunity youth. Young people need caring individual mentors to give us confidence, respect, and support in planning and working toward a productive future. We need mentors both from a similar background who have overcome familiar obstacles, and mentors from different backgrounds who can open whole new horizons.

## **5. Access to higher education**

Make sure that college and registered apprenticeships are affordable and attainable for low-income students. AmeriCorps education awards, scholarships, low-cost or free community and state colleges, loans that are not predatory or excessively burdensome, and Pell Grants for nontraditional students must be protected and expanded, barriers to obtaining them reduced, and pathways to college strengthened. We understand that higher education is one key to lifelong success. Also important are initiatives that support student knowledge of how to access college, and how to succeed once enrolled, such as College Advising Corps and Gateway to College.

## **6. Diversion and re-entry programs in the justice system**

When a person is convicted of a crime it should not be the end of hope for that person's life. A variety of nonprofit and public diversion and re-entry programs should be funded at the state and municipal levels. Education and training with certifications should be available while people are incarcerated so they can prepare for successful re-entry to society.

## **Core Elements of Interventions That Work for Opportunity Youth**

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We have experienced what works and what doesn't work for individuals like ourselves. Below we list the program elements that, combined, provide effective pathways for opportunity youth. To fulfill our priority recommendation successfully, programs need to include these elements.

All young people need the following:

### **Safety in community**

- Relief from the struggle for survival that comes with homelessness, hunger, violence, drugs and alcohol, family breakup, and suicidal depression
- A safe, caring community where everyone is committed to each other's success

### **Caring**

- Caring individual mentors who give us confidence that we have value and help us identify and achieve our goals
- People who see the good in us
- A positive peer group

### **Inspiration**

- Connection to various sources of faith and spirituality
- Opportunities to serve others, to give back, to find the joy and satisfaction of making a positive difference
- The space to redefine and believe in ourselves, to realize "this negative life is not for me," to embrace the backgrounds from which we come, to recognize our strengths, to plan for a meaningful and satisfying future
- A chance to study the history of our own people and to become aware of the strengths in our cultural history

## **Learning**

- Access to quality education and job-skills training to become employable
- Opportunities to experience new horizons
- A chance for creativity and for recreational opportunities
- Assurance that college is within reach if we choose that path
- Opportunities to learn leadership skills and play leadership roles, realizing our larger value to society

## **Earnings**

- Stipends, wages, or living allowances during training and/or service, to enable participation for young people who must earn money

## **Follow-up support**

- Actual placements in college, advanced training, and/or jobs, and follow-up support to overcome obstacles or setbacks.

Programs that combine the above elements will work for the majority of young people as long as they are well led, well planned, and well staffed. They will break the cycle of poverty, one young person at a time, profoundly benefiting society.

## Broader Systems Change

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While we believe pathways are needed for individuals to climb out of poverty, we also think big changes in several systems are needed to transform our communities. It should not take heroic resilience and major investments for individuals to triumph over systemic barriers. We need to create safe, welcoming, opportunity-rich communities for every child born in America.

Below we outline our initial thoughts in the areas of **education, criminal justice, upward mobility, community development,** and **family**. All of these systems are intertwined. Each one improved will influence the others. When all are fixed we will have a very different society.

### Education

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Education is the key pathway for individuals to transcend poverty and for our nation to succeed economically and socially. We support the following as elements of a successful public system of education:

- Quality Head Start and other pre-kindergarten options
- High-quality, passionate, caring teachers who are skilled, experienced, and culturally competent to work with low-income students
- Well-managed, safe, organized schools with predictable policies and procedures
- Instruction that is relevant and rigorous, that includes high level of engagement, high standards, and prepares students for college and careers
- Increased funding—and more effective use of existing funding—that allows for:
  - Smaller classes
  - Individualized academic supports for students
  - Enough staff in the classroom to support all students and help them learn
  - Grouping by learning style
  - More technology resources like computers and internet access
  - More support for bilingual students
  - Guidance counselors
  - Enrichment programs such as art, music, poetry, and sports



- Training in financial literacy, asset development, and entrepreneurship
- Internships
- Curriculum that includes the young people’s cultural history in an accurate and fair manner, life skills, and information about college access
- Assessment measures that take into account different learning styles, are not too burdensome, and don’t put all the attention on the tests
- Disciplinary policies that are used as learning opportunities, are more restorative than punitive, and that don’t serve as a pipeline to prison through expulsion
- Greater community connection with the schools, engaging parents and family, police, and positive role models from the community, and including service-learning projects for students in the community
- A college-going culture that offers early exposure to college and career options, and full information about college access
- Multiple pathways to success, including college, technical trade schools, and internships. Each pathway should respect a student’s skills and interests and not direct a student towards a single career pathway—college versus trade schools, for example—based on race or income level.
- Second-chance alternative or charter schools for students who left high school without a diploma
- A funding structure that does not favor wealthier communities

All of these elements should add up to schools in which every student knows that the teachers and other adults respect and care about them and are committed to their success.

### **Upward mobility**

Our economic system needs to provide adequate employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for all to earn and contribute at the highest level possible, while producing useful products and infrastructure, and not destroying the planet as a habitat for humans.

- **Employment**

Employers should:

- Provide internships and hire opportunity youth, consistent with the 100K Opportunities Initiative of employers

- Provide the training, education opportunities, and support systems that enable employees to advance
- Offer a decent minimum wage, health insurance, and sick days (including to care for sick family members)
- “Ban the box,” that is, not require potential employees to indicate on their applications if they have a criminal conviction

Unions should :

- Make pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships available for opportunity youth

▪ **Financial literacy and asset development**

Schools, job training programs, community-based organizations, one-stop job centers, and even banks should:

- Provide training in financial planning, credit management, savings, home ownership, avoidance of predatory loans, investment
- Connect young people to Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) for asset development

▪ **Entrepreneurship**

Government and nonprofits should:

- Offer small-business development opportunities in low-income communities for entrepreneurs, including low-interest loans; business incubation centers with co-working space, computer access, mentors, and training in business planning and pitching to investors; and other supports

**Criminal Justice**

The criminal justice system should end the pipeline to prison for children and youth; make sure punishments actually fit the crimes; eliminate disparities in sentencing that correlate with race; and end the various forms of lifetime punishments for all offenders that destroy lives, families, and communities.

Too many of our peers are expected to be dead or in jail before they are 25, and many internalize this expectation for themselves. We see evidence all around us that this is what happens in our neighborhoods when young men and women fall off track. It appears that the pipeline to prison has been well laid. We need young people to have ways to break this cycle. The improvements listed above in the public schools will help break that pipeline. In addition we support the following:

- **A renewed effort to build collaborative community commitment to safety and crime prevention by:**
  - Engaging churches and community centers in supporting children and youth
  - Providing mental health and grief counseling for children and youth who have lost friends and family members through violence
  - Highlighting positive role models in the neighborhood
  - Rebuilding relationships and communication between the police and the community so residents can trust police and work with them
  - Making sure police are actually policing the hot spots instead of ignoring them
  - Training police in community relationships, sensitivity, and not stereotyping young men of color and communities of color
  - Creating safe routes for children to get to school, and safe playgrounds
  - Bringing back activity programs like the Police Athletic League
  - Encouraging residents to take responsibility for correcting each other
  - Making sure young people and all residents are aware of the laws and the consequences of various types of action; new laws should be publicized widely
  
- **The elimination of unfair sentencing**
  - Juveniles should not be sentenced as adults.
  - Black, Hispanic, and Native American individuals should not be subject to more severe sentences than white individuals who committed a similar crime.
  - Mandatory sentences should be eliminated, “three strikes you’re out laws” reversed, and judges should have more discretion to recognize the potential of offenders to benefit from alternatives to incarceration.
  
- **Second chances for youthful offenders to rebuild their lives**
  - Create pathways other than incarceration, including community service options, for lesser offenses.
  - Provide high quality education, job training leading to certifications, and group reflection behind the walls.
  - Provide re-entry programs smoothing the path to employment, education, and community service.

- Allow for expunging records.
  - Allow ex-offenders to submit their achievements to the criminal history systems bank so that potential employers can see not only the criminal record but the subsequent positive actions.
  - Do not permanently deny offenders the right to public housing, voting, scholarships, running for office, and the like.
- **Strengthen accountability for police performance and eliminate police practices that alienate or exploit the community**
    - When a credible charge is made against a police officer of using excessive force, an independent prosecutor should be assigned to the case.
    - Quotas for police performance based on numbers of arrests should be eliminated.
    - Militarization of local police forces should be avoided.
    - The practice in some communities of raising funds for municipal services through fees constantly charged for minor infractions should be ended.
  - **End the for-profit prison system.** We do not believe that some people should have a financial stake in other people being incarcerated.

### **Community development**

We envision a community that is empowered and educated to know that every individual's actions matter—that what you do, what you buy, whether you vote, whether you help your neighbors, matters. We need role models and leaders to carry out campaigns for engagement, for building social, financial, educational, and cultural capital. We would like to see residents of all ages volunteering to benefit the community. We would also aim to break the cycle of dependence and generate opportunity for residents to take responsibility for themselves and their community.

Some specifics in our vision include:

- Access to basic services like low-cost public transportation, good public schools, affordable housing, weatherized homes, public health clinics, mental health services, and child care
- Access to healthy food, green space, farmers markets, and neighborhood gardens

- Increased investment in alternative energy and environmental protection in low-income communities
- Special attention to the needs of tribal and rural communities for low-cost public transportation, broadband access, and rights to natural resources especially including water
- Attention to the needs of people with disabilities
- Policies for immigrants that avoid the break-up of families
- Voter registration, education, and engagement
- Youth forums to strengthen youth knowledge and voice and youth councils to provide input to policy makers
- A process of engaging youth in mapping the assets and needs of their communities and making this information publicly available
- Basic community organizing, knocking on every door, to engage people in community improvement projects
- A full array of positive recreational activities including football, basketball, soccer, music, and art
- Incentives to local business owners and contractors to hire local residents and encouragement of residents to buy from local small businesses
- Effective rehabilitation for drug abuse, and resolution of root causes of drug abuse through fulfilling the rest of these recommendations!
- Comprehensive second chance programs for “opportunity youth” as described in our primary recommendation.

## **Family**

In our experience the reality of family has changed, and so has the definition of family. Most of us do not have two parents. In our families the oldest boy is the man, siblings raise siblings, foster care or grandparent care is common. We deal with negative family influences daily, including drugs and alcohol, unemployment, dependency, and poverty. The family once influenced and defined society. Now it seems that various forces in society have broken our families.

For children and youth to overcome these negative influences, society must find ways to answer our deep need for human connection. Every child needs a father or another strong positive male influence, and we all need a mother, someone to talk to, someone to hug us, whether it’s a blood relationship or not. We need something we can call a family, where we know that people care about us. We are

struggling to answer the questions “Who Am I” and “What’s my Purpose in Life?” We need people to help us answer these questions.

In a larger sense, we also need to belong to a more united society with a positive culture that does not discriminate against people based on race or culture, income level, or residential zip code, and where neighbors take an interest in each other and help each other. We understand this is a big challenge. Neighbors are more afraid of helping each other than they used to be.

Here are some specific suggestions:

- Strengthen all nonprofit community-based support organizations for children and youth, including things like Big Brothers Big Sisters, community centers, and all forms of mentoring programs as well as programs that assist with healing from trauma.
- Create caring and smaller school communities where teachers and counselors take a personal interest in the students.
- Reform foster care, screening and training foster parents much more thoroughly, making sure the motive for serving as foster parents is not money, lifting the age at which foster children age out and ensuring that they do not land homeless.
- Expand affordable housing and eliminate eligibility requirements that incentivize single parenthood.
- Ensure availability of health care, including mental-health services.
- Add respectful and sensitive curriculum in schools and community centers about various groups’ cultural history to help us answer the question “Who Am I?” and to counteract the internalized negative stereotypes that we experience growing up.
- Expand the job, education, and service programs that allow us to belong to a positive peer group gaining skills, supporting each other, finding caring mentors, and giving service to our communities, so we can build a positive identity and realize that we have value and can build a responsible future. This brings us back to our top recommendation.

We believe that in the absence of a strong family it does take a village to raise a child. However, not only our families but also our villages are in disrepair. **Now it will take a nation to repair the village.**

We ask the leaders of our nation to please invest in the programs that have already saved our own and many other young lives, and will do the same for the young people coming behind us. These programs help repair our villages and they create surrogate families.

## **In closing**

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We believe in what Martin Luther King called the “Fierce urgency of now!” There is no time to waste. Millions of lives are at stake.

Please join Opportunity Youth United at [www.OYUnited.org](http://www.OYUnited.org).



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# About the Members of the National Council of Young Leaders

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## Jamiel L. Alexander

York, Pennsylvania

Sponsoring organization: YouthBuild USA



Jamiel L. Alexander is the senior fellow for Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions. In this role he coordinates AFCS youth engagement strategy.

Prior to joining the Aspen Institute, Jamiel was

manager of youth and family programs at Crispus Attucks Association for 12 years, serving as the director of afterschool education programs and a case manager, and promoted to the dean of students at YouthBuild AmeriCorps Charter School. While at the Crispus Attucks Association he was responsible for a variety of tasks including managing afterschool and summer programs, professional and leadership development, youth and family workshops, and various community service projects.

Jamiel is a Rising Star award recipient in his community and currently serves as a committee member for the York City General Authority Commission, NAACP, Ancestors Dream Organization, and Helping Offer Options & Directions LLC in York, Pennsylvania. In 2012 he was appointed to serve on the National Council of Young Leaders as an advisor to its policy makers and in 2013 was chosen to speak at the 50th anniversary march on Washington. Additionally, earlier this year, his colleagues on the YouthBuild National Alumni Council elected him as their president.

Jamiel continues to engage and serve with many organizations but makes it a priority to take care of "home" first.

## Lashon Amado

Brockton, Massachusetts

Sponsoring organization: YouthBuild USA



Lashon Amado enrolled at the University of Massachusetts Boston for the fall 2011 semester after receiving an associate degree at Massasoit Community College (MCC) with a GPA of 3.8. Today, Lashon stands poised for a future career

in criminal justice. He also serves as a local and national student leader, participating in speaking engagements across the country. In this role, Lashon's leadership skills, resiliency, and spirit of service have inspired hundreds of students and educators in his community of Brockton, Massachusetts, and beyond.

Lashon achieved all of this success after dropping out of Brockton High School. When Lashon enrolled in YouthBuild in 2009, he says he had never considered college or anything beyond getting a GED and a paycheck. However, the staff and other students and graduates of YouthBuild Brockton helped Lashon consider all the ways that college could fit into his life and work plans. Lashon participated in classes at MCC while he was still at YouthBuild. At the conclusion of YouthBuild, Lashon transitioned into a bridge program at MCC that helped prepare him for academic and personal success in college.



## Gilbert Bonafé Jr.

*The Bronx, New York*

*Sponsoring organization: College Advising Corps*



Gilbert Bonafé Jr. is the school program coordinator for Higher Edge, a nonprofit that helps high school students get into and through college. A native of the Bronx, Gilbert grew up in a low-income housing district and attended Aviation

High School in Long Island City, Queens. In high school, Gilbert joined a TRIO program called Upward Bound. The assistant director of Upward Bound nominated him for the Posse Scholarship, a full tuition leadership scholarship, which he received. The scholarship allowed Gilbert to attend Dickinson College (in Carlisle, Pennsylvania), where he majored in Spanish. After Dickinson, Gilbert became a college adviser for Greencastle-Antrim High School in Greencastle, Pennsylvania, through the College Advising Corps. Upon completing his two-year term with the Corps, Gilbert attended the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where he received a master's degree in education with a concentration in higher education. Following Harvard, Gilbert led a team that created an app for a competition to help community-college students, assisted high school students through the college process under a grant at Eastern Connecticut State University, and coached adult students through an online college program called College for America.

As a member of Higher Edge, Gilbert is living out his dream job—creating and executing programs that assist high school students through the college process. He has seen many of his family members and friends struggle economically and he aspires to help the next generation break that cycle through higher education.

“I wouldn't have been able to make it to where I am today if it weren't for people betting on me. I am now ready and willing to step up to the ticket window to place my bets on the next generation.”

## Ramean Clowney

*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

*Sponsoring organizations: Jobs for the Future and the Philadelphia Youth Network*



Ramean Clowney recently began his sophomore year at the Community College of Philadelphia. A native of Philadelphia and a product of the Pennsylvania foster-care system, Ramean overcame personal struggles—exposure to violence, drugs,

and abuse—to graduate with honors from the One Bright Ray Community High School, where he was a member of the basketball team and participated on the drum line.

Ramean is currently chief youth ambassador for the Philadelphia Youth Network, one of the city's leading youth programs. In this role, he is one of several advocates for local youth.

Ramean, who aspires to one day run for a seat on the Philadelphia City Council, intends to study political science at Howard University and eventually attend law school.

“Retrospectively (speaking), I guess you can say I was in search of me . . . now I no longer settle for mediocrity—excellence is a must.”

## Ryan Dalton

*New Orleans, Louisiana*

*Member-at-Large*



Ryan Dalton attends Southern University at New Orleans, where he is pursuing a business degree. He worked as a trainer and manager for Café Reconcile's culinary training and workforce development program in his hometown of New

Orleans, Louisiana. Ryan Dalton now works for

the mayor's Office in addition to serving as a National Youth Ambassador for the Youth Leadership Institute, engaging America's opportunity youth to raise their voices and tell their stories, to educate communities and bring allies together, to make change, and to empower and engage young people to make a difference in their own communities. The National Ambassadors program brings together youth from across the country to highlight the underlying challenges facing opportunity youth—youth between 16 and 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor participating in the labor market—supporting efforts that help communities come together to address the challenges experienced by members of our generation many times forgotten within political spaces.

Ryan also serves as an advisory board member for The John Besh & Jessica Bride Mayor "Chefs Move" Scholarship, which prepares aspiring chefs for positions in the culinary profession. In this role, Ryan is working to recruit young minority chefs from New Orleans. Additionally, Ryan is the creator and CEO of The PUSH Project, a program dedicated to helping youth develop their passions.

During his youth, Ryan faced tremendous hardships. He was a victim of violence, was shot multiple times, nearly lost his life, and experienced the murder of his oldest brother and close cousin. He and his family were displaced following Hurricane Katrina, and he had to leave high school without a diploma to help and support his family. Later, in 2007 he returned to New Orleans alone, on a mission to obtain his high school diploma. Yet, not only has Ryan attained great success in improving his own life circumstances, he has assisted many young people in doing the same. In his time of doing this amazing work, Ryan have impacted over 2,100 youth across the New Orleans area.

Reflecting on his childhood and his ability to overcome personal challenges, Ryan says that "the solution must come from within and in order to identify the solution, you must fully understand the problem."

## Francisco Garcia

Los Angeles, California

Sponsoring organization: Public Allies



Francisco Garcia is a youth development specialist through Public Allies and AmeriCorps. He is currently placed at the Tumbleweed Center for Youth Development's Casa De Sueños program, where he works with unaccompanied minors from Latin America.

An international artist and social entrepreneur, Francisco creates murals and artwork that are created with community and contain empowering themes about immigration, justice, faith, and Chicano culture. In 2008, while studying abroad in Mexico, Francisco was inspired and challenged by the work of *Los Tres Grandes*, the three major figures of the Mexican muralist movement, and Frida Kahlo. He won the Eric Fischl Vanguard award, which recognizes emerging student talent in the fine arts at the Phoenix Art Museum, and was extended invitations to speak at the White House. In 2014 Francisco was invited to attend the International Artist Residency in India. He has created public art across the United States and in other places such as Mexico, Europe, and India.

Francisco's experience includes collaborating with different nonprofits, art organizations, businesses, and schools. He is passionate about celebrating culture, creating cultural events for the community, and working with diverse groups of youth throughout the country.

## Megan Gregory

Anchorage, Alaska

Sponsoring organization: National Congress of American Indians



Megan Gregory is originally from Keex Kwaan (Kake, AK), and is of the Ch'aak' (Eagle)/Wooshketon (Shark) clan of the Tlingit tribe and a member of the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA). Ms. Gregory

currently resides in Anchorage, and is committed to serving Indian Country and actively supports addressing the critical health needs of her people. She advocates strongly for addressing the cultural, educational, and social issues affecting Alaska Natives and American Indians, and works diligently to address the high rates of suicide across Indian country.

Megan works for Best Beginnings, an early childhood development nonprofit, as the partnerships manager, facilitating local, sustainable community empowerment to improve outcomes for young children through early childhood coalitions. Previously she worked for Southeast Alaska Regional Health Consortium's (SEARHC) Behavioral Health Division as the community project coordinator. She began her work with SEARHC as a volunteer on its 1 is 2 Many Suicide Prevention Task Force, and founded the Southeast Alaska Youth Ambassador program to bridge the gap between youth and adults and give all youth a role, and a voice, in creating positive change in their communities. The program includes one youth leader from 16 communities in her region that work with the 1 is 2 Many Task Force. It encourages students to generate new ways to champion suicide prevention.

Megan was a Youth Board member for Sealaska Corporation and a member of the Executive Council for CCTHITA. In 2012, she was nominated by the National Congress of American Indians to serve on the National Council of

Young Leaders. She was also one of three young board members named to the Center for Native American Youth Board of Directors. The Center is dedicated to improving the health, safety and overall well-being of Native American youth through communication, policy development and advocacy.

Megan also works with the Rural Alaska Community Action Programs Alaska Native Youth Success Advisory Group, which was created to identify best practices for intervention, diversion, enforcement, treatment and reentry services while providing feedback on the development of the ANYS Resource Center. She also serves on the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention—Alaska Native and American Indian Native Taskforce, a public-private partnership advancing the National Strategy for Suicide Prevention.

She received the 2011 National Indian Health Service Behavioral Health Achievement Award for outstanding leadership in suicide prevention. In 2012, she received the Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies Woman of Distinction Award—the youngest honoree to date.

## Timothy Gunn

Charleston, South Carolina

Sponsoring organization: The Corps Network



Timothy Gunn has been working in his community as an assistant team leader for the Sustainability Institute. For the past two and a half years, he has been mentoring at risk youth between the ages of 17 and 24 about overcoming adversity, not conforming

to poverty, and becoming a statistic—ultimately teaching them a trade in energy retrofitting.

Timothy was recognized for his good work in the community and voted Corps Member of the Year in 2015— a national award for which five people were selected out of 23,000. Timothy is also a

member of the NAACP, for which he volunteers in the community as a speaker to the youth and advocate against violence in the community. He attends Trident Technical College in Charleston, South Carolina, in hopes to receive an associate degree in business.

Business is one of Timothy's passions. He started a landscaping company that he recently upgraded to an LLC. Teaching others and leading by example are his main objectives.

## Tekoa Hewitt

Flint, Michigan

Sponsoring organization: Gateway to College National Network



Tekoa Hewitt is a student in the Gateway to College Program at Mott Community College in Flint, Michigan. After graduating with his diploma in the spring, he wishes to continue attending Mott until he earns an associate degree.

Currently, Tekoa is in the honors program at Mott and actively volunteers by mentoring other Gateway students trying to make the transition to the college environment. He has aspirations to one day attend graduate school to pursue a degree in higher education. In addition to his studies, Tekoa works as a math tutor and writing center consultant. Along with his regular duties as a tutor, he also is a peer tutor mentor, helping incoming tutors get acclimated to the collegiate work environment by leading focus groups designed to improve the quality of tutoring services.

Born to a working-class family in a small suburb of Flint, Tekoa saw firsthand the difficulties America's youth face achieving an education in a poor economic climate. After his twin brother passed away from complications from hemophilia, Tekoa dropped out of high school at sixteen and started working. He spent the two years after dropping out working at a pizza place on Flint's east side.

But he knew he had to get a quality education to help better his family's quality of life so he joined the Gateway to College Program at Mott.

While in the Gateway program, Tekoa traveled to the District of Columbia to participate in the GradNation Summit as a youth scholarship recipient. He observed seminars focusing on reducing the number of high school dropouts throughout the nation. He has also participated in the Flint Literacy and Basic Skills Summit, whose mission is to help improve the literacy and graduation rates of Genesee County, Michigan. He also was invited to speak at one of the Summit's planning sessions to share his story.

"The beautiful thing about being a youth in America is that there are virtually limitless opportunities to those who seek them. The problem facing most young people today is that there is not enough academic, emotional, and financial support available. As young leaders, it is our duty to do our best to help the growth of not just ourselves, but our communities and peers as well."

## Shawnice Jackson

Baltimore, Maryland

Sponsoring organization: Public Allies



Shawnice Jackson is a young nonprofit professional committed to building better and stronger pathways to opportunity for underserved and at-risk youth through mentoring, service, and advocacy.

Shawnice started her undergraduate career as a criminology and social deviance major at Notre Dame of Maryland University but transferred to University of Baltimore to pursue her passion for communities and nonprofits as a human services administration major. Shawnice currently serves as a consultant for the Baltimore City Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ) and The Aspen Forum for

Community Solutions. She also serves as an advisory board member with The Opportunity Youth Network, a leadership council member with The Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund and opportunity leader with Opportunity Nation.

Shawnice's areas of expertise are nonprofits, youth development, and qualitative data management. A native of Baltimore, Maryland, she has served as a data collection manager with University of Maryland, project coordinator for Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents, a Baltimore Rising program, volunteer and provider relations coordinator at Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Chesapeake, and case manager for the MOCJ.

Shawnice was recently invited to speak at the Corporation for National and Community Service's 20th anniversary celebration and keynoted the 2014 Service Learning and Civic Engagement Conference. She continues to give of her personal time in support of the well-being of young people in her community as a court-appointed special advocate for abused and neglected children with CASA Baltimore City and volunteer Big Sister. She currently leverages her unique skill set as post-high school individualized services manager at Thread, a Baltimore-based nonprofit that engages under-performing high school students confronting significant barriers outside of the classroom. In this role, she directly advocates and case manages Thread's opportunity youth population in crises.

## Julie Jent

*Berea, Kentucky*

*Sponsoring organization: Berea College*



Julie Jent is currently a student at Berea College where she enjoys cross country running and volunteering. Julie is working towards a double major in political science and peace and social justice. Julie grew up in the one-stoplight town of

Jackson County, Kentucky, where she was involved in many educational programs at her high school, such as Family And Schools Together, Upward Bound Math and Science, and Youth Working Group. Julie was the first in her family to go to college. Despite the challenge of having absent parents and being adopted by her great uncle, Julie has risen above and done more than anyone expected.

Julie received the Kennedy Lugar YES-Abroad Scholarship to Malaysia and was a youth ambassador during her senior year of high school. She grew immensely over the year and adapted well considering being out of her comfort zone on a daily basis. Julie has a passion for learning about other cultures. Upon arriving back to the States, she received the honor of representing her TRIO program at a session—at this 'Beating the Odds' session, led by First Lady Michelle Obama, Julie got to tell her story and give suggestions on a personal level.

Julie is thrilled to see where she can make more differences as a new member of the National Council of Young Leaders.

## Dominique Jones

*Oakland, California*

*Sponsoring organization: Year Up Bay Area*



Dominique Jones, known artistically as Dom Jones, is an entrepreneur, author, orator, performer, and graduate of the Year Up program from Oakland, California.

The dream of being self sufficient and able to pursue her artistic endeavors came through her success in Year Up and her internship with salesforce.com, where she now works as a full time IT systems analyst.

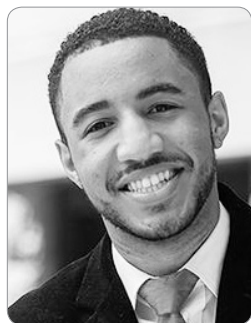
In August 2013 she self-published her first book of poetry, *Boss Patois*, which became the runner-up in the poetry category at the 2014 San Francisco

Book Festival. Her writing has been published in the Huffington Post, Black Girl Nerds, and various anthologies.

After serving for two years as the Year Up Bay Area alumni president, she now serves on the National Year Up Alumni Board as the feedback chairperson, and represents Year Up on the council. She is the founder of Dom Empire, a performance-arts and lifestyle media company that purveys products and experiences that reconnect the audience with an elevated sense of self. Social justice and equity being a lifestyle, these topics are weaved throughout her work and service to community. To learn more, please visit [www.iamdomjones.com](http://www.iamdomjones.com).

## Deon Jones

Hollywood, CA  
Member-at-Large



Deon Jones joined the Council when he was project assistant to the president at Be The Change Inc., a social entrepreneurial organization that creates and manages national issue-based campaigns, such as ServiceNation, Opportunity Nation, and Got Your 6. He is also the founder and facilitator of the Manifest Leadership Institute, an academic and leadership development program for formerly incarcerated teenage boys. Prior to joining Be The Change, Deon served as national spokesperson at the Campaign for Youth Justice, where he traveled globally speaking on the organization's mission to end youth incarceration in the US adult criminal justice system. Previously, Deon served as a DC advisory neighborhood commissioner representing Ward 3 from 2011–13, making him the youngest elected official in Washington's history. In 2013, the DC City Council passed the "Deon T. Jones Recognition Resolution of 2013" honoring his service to the city and commitment to empowering young people.

Deon has a BA in political science from American University and King's College London, and was a public policy and international affairs fellow at the University of California, Berkeley. While at American University, he held fellowship and internship positions with the US Senate, the US House of Representatives, the White House, and Teach for America. He is the first African American from American University to be appointed a Harry S. Truman Scholar by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright and the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation.

In addition to being a member of the National Council of Young Leaders, Deon serves on the board of directors at America's Promise Alliance and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's Alumni Association.

## Jarrett Jones

Chicago, Illinois  
Sponsoring organization: City Year



Jarrett Jones was born and raised on the south side of Chicago, participating in community-based organizations as an adolescent, beginning with City Year Young Heros. However, although he was apart of this program at a young age, it was still difficult to

avoid the social norms of the community he grew up in. This included elements such as exposure to violence, gangs, and drugs. It wasn't until he reached the age of nineteen and had lost countless friends and classmates to the criminal justice system and the violence that plagues our society, that he realized he no longer had to accept the same faith as those before him. Being the only one out of his two siblings to obtain a high school diploma, Jarrett went on to work for three different law firms, one multibillion dollar corporation, and surpassed what society had expected for him.

Jarrett has gone on to dedicate his time to the same nonprofit that taught him such good values

at a young age. He is currently working for City Year's Chicago Corps as a team leader managing a group of young adults who are working at an elementary school a few blocks from where he graduated high school.

He has aspirations of establishing his own non-profit organization to counter the systematic oppression of people of color in all ways, shapes and forms (primarily in education, economically, and socially).

## Humberto Palacios

*Santa Ana, California*

*Sponsoring organization: National Guard Youth Foundation*



Humberto Palacios attends Santa Ana College and dreams of becoming an Internet entrepreneur. "I dream big like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs . . . my goals are to start an online business and to become a philanthropist to give back to my community and to the world."

Humberto graduated from Sunburst Youth Academy, a National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program that helps high school dropouts get back on the path to graduation. At the academy, he became more open-minded and had similar goals as the other teens enrolled in the program. "We were all tired of letting our circumstances control our lives. We all wanted to get on the right track."

Since graduating from Sunburst Youth Academy, Humberto has participated in Senator Lou Correa's Young Senators Program. In addition, he has shared his ChalleNGe story with thousands, including Congresswoman Grace Napolitano and other policymakers on Capitol Hill. Humberto also participated in the 2014 GradNation Summit, hosted by America's Promise Alliance, where he was able to share his views on the dropout crisis with influencers within the education community.

Humberto now lives by the Theodor Roosevelt quote "Believe you can, and you are halfway there."

## Kimberly Pham

*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

*Sponsoring organization: Aspen Forum for Community Solutions*



Kimberly Pham is a youth advocate from Philadelphia. She is a student at Temple University, where she majors in social work. She is a young professional who serves with the Philadelphia Academies Inc., whose work is focused on in-school

youth providing students with exposure and preparation for college and career pathways. Kimberly is a committee member for the Project U-turn Collaborative, who focuses on program, policy, and funding for opportunity youth in Philadelphia. Kimberly also represents Aspen Institute's Forum for Community Solutions and Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund.

Kimberly is a former opportunity youth. Her story starts as a girl, a part of the juvenile justice system, who traveled down a complex road to earn her high school diploma. Upon her return to Philadelphia to finish high school, she was left back grades because of the confusion between systems of juvenile justice and education.

Her resiliency and determination to earn an education led her down a list of reengagement programs in the city. But one day she was finally able to find a program model that worked for her—the GED to College Success Program. After she completed this program, she went on to earn her associates degree from Eastern University. She received the very first Distinguished Alumni Award from District 1199C Training & Upgrading Fund, NUHHCE.

Constantly reminded by the words of one her favorite civil leaders, Martin Luther King,

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” She continues to strive as a person for the people, and she has devotion to change the injustice and inequality in her community and country.

## Teresa Rivera

Bronx, New York

Sponsoring organization: Public Allies



Teresa Lynn Rivera is a social activist born and raised in the Bronx. Her passion for social equity was nurtured at The Point CDC. The Point aims to create a safe space for youth through education and the arts.

From a young age, Teresa has been sharpening her leadership skills. In high school, she was the president of a youth activist group, ACTION, that focused on social and environmental issues in the Hunts Point community. During this time, she also assisted in founding a women’s empowerment group at The Point. The women’s group is still providing young women with the resources they need to learn, grow and heal. Teresa is currently program coordinator.

In 2013, Teresa played a lead role in Michel Gondry’s *The We and The I*, a movie filmed in the South Bronx that used youth from the community who had no acting experience. The film became a platform for these young people to share their experience growing up in the Bronx.

Teresa is also a proud graduate of Public Allies NY. Upon graduation, she was offered a full-time position at her partner organization, Fordham Bedford Housing Corp. Her responsibilities include organizing events for tenants as well as facilitating an after-school program.

Teresa is dedicated to providing young people with a safe space to advocate for themselves and reach their full potential.

## Adam Strong

Hazard, Kentucky

Sponsoring organization: YouthBuild USA Rural and Native Initiatives



Adam Strong is currently working as a medical laboratory scientist at Hazard ARH Regional Medical Center. Assisting and working with doctors, and validating results for diagnoses, he aspires to one day become a doctor himself. “Service is a way

of life and I’d like to work with patients to not only rehabilitate them medically but to rehabilitate their lives as well.”

Raised by his father in an Appalachian community in Jackson, Adam attended his local community college, working as a security guard at a local coal mine at a time when the coal industry was in decline. He soon found himself unemployed and without options, but was able to gain entry into the YouthBuild Hazard program. At YouthBuild, Adam took part in community service and outreach projects while receiving a much needed stipend. The experience helped introduce him to a life of service where he could not only improve his community and other people’s lives but his own as well.

After YouthBuild he went on to serve two terms as an AmeriCorps member at YouthBuild Hazard working as a teacher’s aide. Adam characterizes this experience this way: “It feels great being able to work with young people and seeing them realize that they can not only dream but accomplish as well.”

After graduating from his local community college he went on to graduate with a bachelor’s from the University of Kentucky’s medical laboratory science program.



## Philandrian Tree

Flagstaff, Arizona

Sponsoring organization: *The Corps Network*



Philandrian Tree, born in the Edgewater Clan, is a member of the Towering House Clan of the Navajo Nation. She is currently the tribal and program liaison to the Coconino County District 4 Supervisor, tasked with, but not limited to, community

relations and communications between her office and tribal communities.

Philandrian served two terms as an AmeriCorps mentor and was selected as The Corps Network's 2012 Corps Member of the Year. As an AmeriCorps mentor she had a great opportunity to work in her home community on behalf of the Coconino Rural Environment Corps and secured two memoranda of understanding between Coconino County and the Navajo's Leupp and Tonalea Chapters.

This collaboration between the county and Navajo resulted in all 17 Navajo chapters receiving Coconino County weatherization retrofits; and in the process, AmeriCorps members benefitted from on-the-job training with participating local contractors in the Navajo Nation Weatherization Assistance Program.

In addition to her work with Coconino County, Philandrian serves as the chair of the Native American Parent Advisory Committee for Flagstaff Unified School District, where she works with families and the District to support and enhance the quality of education for 2,500 Native K-12 students.

## Shanice Turner

Atlanta, Georgia

Sponsoring organization: *Year Up*



Shanice Turner is an entrepreneur, vocal artist, and youth advocate professional. Shanice is an alum of Year Up Atlanta and strives to make the better world better one day at a time. After graduating from Year Up, Shanice served as an

AmeriCorps VISTA with United Way of Greater Atlanta. In her time there, Shanice played a large role in securing an Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund Grant from the Aspen Institute. With the Aspen Institute she serves nationally with Opportunity Youth Incentive Fund Youth Leaders. Opportunity Youth are 16-to-24 year-olds facing barriers in their education and employment opportunities.

This experience launched Shanice into serving on multiple boards and associations such as the National Council of Young Leaders. Where she displays her passion for service and expertise in youth development. Shanice understands the need of underserved and at risk youth. At United Way Shanice is President of the Atlanta Youth Advisory Council. With Year Up she serves with the local Year Up Atlanta Alumni Association. Shanice encourages and supports youth ages 12 to 19 at Ray of Hope Christian Church. Where she facilitates group sessions. Shanice motivate all youth through her public speaking and drive for equal opportunities.

A servant leader at heart, she's always been passionate about her community and the people in it. Shanice pushes for the various programs that seek to level the educational playing field for all children, regardless of their economic background, and upbringing. Shanice has a passion for youth advocacy, public policy, and children welfare. She's currently pursuing her BA in community development with a minor in business at Roger Williams University. As a

community leader Shanice serves with Points of Light as a ServiceWorks VISTA Leader in her area of supporting low income economic communities and assisting youth development opportunities. As a vocal artist Shanice is a proficient voice actress and public speaker. Shanice is able express herself and vocal talent. Voice overs helps her create fables, and stories with words or tones to the audience.

One of her favorite quotes is from Mahatma Gandhi: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” The other is “A famous explorer once said that the extraordinary is what we do; not who we are.” (*Tomb Raider*)

## IN MEMORIAM

### **Ladine Daniels Jr. — Founding member**

*Charleston, South Carolina*

*Sponsoring organization: The Corps Network*



Ladine Daniels Jr. graduated at the top of his class at the Sustainability Institute’s Pathways to a Green Economy. Ladine was a crew leader and mentor for the Institute’s Energy Conservation Corps, an AmeriCorps program. He was also a 2012 Corps Network Member of the Year. Ladine passed away in November of 2014 suddenly as the result of a medical condition.

Ladine accomplished much after he was incarcerated. A high school graduate and star quarterback, while in prison he tutored fellow inmates helping them to obtain their GEDs.

Ladine turned his life around—and never looked back. In addition to his work with the Sustainability Institute and The Corps Network, Ladine immersed himself in a number of activities to advance his career and support his community. He was part owner of IMSEI Weatherization Company; managed the kitchen at the Charleston Riverdogs Baseball Team, operated his own landscaping business, and was a church usher. Ladine volunteered with youth, always “reminding them of the importance of getting an education and staying out of trouble.” Ladine believed “we should be defined by our accomplishments and not by our past mistakes.”

The National Council of Young Leaders will continue to keep Ladine in our hearts and minds and will carry on the work of fighting for equal opportunities for all young people in his honor.

# Acknowledgements

The National Council of Young Leaders would like to acknowledge the staff support that we have received from the sponsoring organizations that have planned and provided resources for our work, convened all of our meetings, handled logistics, and supported our community-building and policy-making processes. We also want to thank **Opportunity Nation** for inviting our participation in its 2012 national summit where we presented the first version of these Recommendations. We are grateful to **YouthBuild USA** for providing ongoing staff support and fundraising for this council.

Below are the individuals who spent time helping us launch this venture in 2012. Many thanks to them all. Since 2012 there have been more people helping than we can possibly name!

**Nicole Aiken** (The Corps Network) • **MacArthur Antigua** (Public Allies) • **Mary Ellen Sprenkel** (The Corps Network) • **Shawn Bohan** (Year Up) • **CJ Callen** (Youth Leadership Institute) • **Gerald Chertavian** (Year Up) • **Elizabeth Clay** (Opportunity Nation) • **Mark Edwards** (Opportunity Nation) • **Thaddeus Ferber** (Forum for Youth Investment) • **Abrigal Forrester** (YouthBuild USA) • **Jackie Gelb** (YouthBuild USA) • **Marcia Gray** (YouthBuild USA) • **Carol Huls** (The Corps Network) • **Caitlin Johnson** (Forum for Youth Investment) • **Russell Krumnow** (Opportunity Nation) • **James Mackey** (YouthBuild USA) • **Justin Kang** (Opportunity Nation) • **Kemal Nance** (Philadelphia Youth Network) • **Mamadou Ndiaye** (Jobs for the Future) • **Nelly Nieblas** (Public Allies) • **Steve Patrick** (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation) • **Elvera Perry** (YouthBuild USA) • **Charlotte Golar Richie** (YouthBuild USA) • **Paul Schmitz** (Public Allies) • **Catie Smith** (Year Up) • **Adria Steinberg** (Jobs for the Future) • **Dorothy Stoneman** (YouthBuild USA) • **Cara Willis** (Opportunity Nation) • **Tyler Wilson** (The Corps Network)

We also honor and thank the following former Council members who served diligently and creatively between 2012 and 2016:

**Anays T. Antongiorgi** (Public Allies) • **Agustin Flores** (Mikva Challenge) • **Cherise Flowers** (Year Up) • **Christopher Prado** (Opportunity Nation) • **Jamie Turner** (YouthBuild USA) • **Raechal Perez** (College Advising Corps) • **Sotheara Yem** (Year Up)

## **Principles for Action**

Love

Responsibility

Forgiveness and empathy

Community empowerment

Inclusion

Visibility

Collaboration

Accountability for results

Respect for faith

Humility

Planning

**NATIONAL COUNCIL**  
*of*  
**YOUNG LEADERS**  
**OPPORTUNITY YOUTH UNITED**

[www.OYUnited.org](http://www.OYUnited.org)