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# Presenters:



- **Gracy Mora Gracy** (she/her)
  - *2nd year YAC Member*
- **Ayshah Brown** (she/her)
  - *4th year YAC Member*
- **Kevin Barron** (he/him)
  - *2nd year YAC Member*
- **Kimberly Esquivel** (she/her)
  - *Former Youth Voice Coach + STAY FLY Lead Case Manager*
- **Marguerite L. De Loney** (she/her)
  - *Former YAC Manager + Current STAY FLY Manager*



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# AGENDA

1. The Spirit of the YAC
2. Projects
3. Reflections
  - a. Youth
  - b. Staff
4. Recommendations
5. Future of the YAC



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# YAC Mission and Vision

**Mission:**

- To end youth incarceration and prevent recidivism\* by leaning into the power and expertise of youth who are system impacted and as advocates who will center youths' needs, prioritize the voices of those incarcerated and collaborate with the community to co-create systems change.

**Vision:**

- The Youth Advisory Council envisions a community in which youth who are system impacted have access to housing, food security, mental health services, and job placements that provide a livable wage and a pathway to education in order to support their personal growth and healing process.

**\*\*The above text is youth-informed original version. The text to the right is the youth-written second version. Allow yourself to feel the difference.\*\***

Who We Are

We are the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of Alameda County—system-impacted youth reclaiming our power. We are foster youth, formerly incarcerated youth, probation youth, undocumented youth, and youth from marginalized communities. We come from kinship care, group homes, special education, mental health institutions, and survival systems. We are not broken—we are builders. We are organizers, dreamers, and truth-tellers.

Our Mission

To end youth incarceration, dismantle systemic harm, and center the voices of those most silenced.

Our Vision

A world where every young person—regardless of background—has access to housing, healthcare, education, food, and dignity.

Our Values

Radical kindness. Relentless integrity. Collective healing. Revolutionary joy. We are anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-oppression, and anti-cages. We believe in power to the people, in freedom over punishment, in support over surveillance, and in a future where no child is criminalized for surviving poverty.

We are not asking for permission for change. We are the change.

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# Land Acknowledgement

The YAC's mission is to end youth incarceration, dismantle systemic harm, and center the voices of those most silenced. In alignment with this mission, we pause to acknowledge that approximately sixty incarcerated youth stand above us as we stand on the stolen land of the Ohlone people. We recognize that we stand in a space of the carceral system, a space which is rooted in the dispossession of Indigenous people, slavery, and the exploitation of Black and Brown bodies. As system-impacted youth, we are committing to building on the knowledge of our ancestors and from our experiences to heal our communities and create alternative futures in the pursuit of transformational justice. This recognition and commitment is what informs the spirit of the YAC.



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## History of YAC:

- In 2020, after years of community organizing and advocacy, Governor Gavin Newsom signed SB823 into law, officially closing the JDD in California.
- In response to SB823, the JJDPDC mandated the creation of a YAC to incorporate youth voice into decision-making processes that impacted system-involved youth and their communities.

## Timeline:

- 2020-2021: FLY awarded the first contract to establish and facilitate the YAC
- 2021-2022: Focus groups to design the structure of the YAC
- 2022-2023: 1st year of the YAC
- 2023-2024: 2nd year of the YAC
- 2024-2025: 3rd year of the YAC
- 2025-2026: 4th year of the YAC, new contract facilitated by Beyond Emancipation



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# YAC Projects



*\*\*YAC had autonomy in choosing which projects they wanted to participate in and to what extent.\*\**

- 2024-2025 Projects:
  - Voter Workshop Series
  - School-to-Prison Pipeline Workshop
  - DPN Rebranding (Now RCN)
  - Best Credible Messenger Contest
  - **Entrance and Exit Survey**
  - **Youth Leadership Council Workshops**
  - **Zine and Podcast**



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# Entrance and Exit Survey



## Purpose:

- To identify the needs and experiences of youth moving through probation, identify systemic patterns in those experiences, and assist ACPD in determining what needs can be addressed versus gaps in support

## What we did:

- Collaborated with ACPD in designing youth-focused questions around access to basic needs such as safety, housing, food, health, etc.
- Administered pilot survey to youth at ACPD Summer Summit in July 2024.
- Edited survey questions based on learnings from 1st pilot + created plan to administer 2nd pilot using structured qualitative interview methods.

## Challenges:

- Miscommunication within ACPD staff around project goals.
- Infrastructure needed to implement the survey.
- Misalignment between YAC's and ACPD's goals for the survey.

## Project Status:

- Delivered survey to ACPD, edited by ACPD research team, YAC gave comments, ACPD research team recently updated another version, to be reviewed again

## Recommendations:

- More clarity within and from ACPD as to what they are hoping to get out of projects and what their capacity is to support in the development and execution of projects.

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# Entrance and Exit Survey



Original question number	New number	Original question	Notes/comments	Recommended action	Entrance or Exit?	YAC Comments
6		What does safety look like to you? a. When was the last time you felt safe? Describe it for me.	Defining safety is valuable for interviews, but because this is now an anonymous survey, we recommend removing as it is vague and open ended, and we would not be able to aggregate and analyze the results in a meaningful way. Is there anything we can do if they don't feel safe given that this will be aggregated? Recommend removing if not actionable.	Remove.		Youth expressing that they don't feel safe was not meant to be a problem with an immediate solution, it's a systemic condition to address over time. This survey was not intended as a triage tool. It was meant to surface patterns of lived experience.
7		Do you or your loved ones feel unsafe: a. at home b. walking through your neighborhood c. at school?		Remove.		
8	8	When you think about your housing situation, do you: a. have a safe space to sleep? b. have access to a shower? c. sleep in a bed? d. is your living situation consistent?	The responses will be aggregated, so it will be difficult to respond to specific housing issues, like lack of a shower.	Rephrase to: I have a safe and stable place to stay a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Not sure d. Disagree e. Strongly Disagree	Entrance & Exit	Whether or not it leads to direct intervention, it exposes the realities youth navigate while on probation. Actionability was not the point, pattern recognition was. Removing it erases insight into how unstable living conditions shape system contact. What does stable and safe housing look like? What resources are they using and what resources do they need? You will be able to see trend to see how to allocate money to different resources.
9	9	Do you have access to 3 meals a day? a. follow up: are you able to get food?		Rephrase to: I usually have access to three meals a day. a. Strongly Agree b. Agree c. Neutral/Not sure d. Disagree e. Strongly Disagree	Entrance & Exit	
10		Do you live with anyone other than your parents or guardian? If yes, who?	This is not actionable, because this is an anonymous survey.	Remove.		
11		Is your caretaker/guardian ill or going to the hospital frequently?	This is not actionable, because this is an anonymous survey. Also, we want to minimize the risk of retraumatization.	Remove.	Entrance	If the goal is to understand why youth struggle to comply with probation, I would see this as important context. Does the survey design include opt-outs? Giving youth control over disclosure to me is preferable to sanitizing the reality of trauma.
12		Are you responsible for anybody aside from yourself? (For example, siblings, parents, grandparents, etc.) If yes, who?	This is not actionable, because this is an anonymous survey.	Remove.		Caregiving burdens are a clear indicator of adultification and structural neglect. This question was meant to shed light on invisible labor that might be often overlooked. Youth raising siblings, managing elderly grandparents, or helping disabled parents may miss meetings, school, or court, this would help identify the proportion of youth in AC with that obstacle, not meant for immediate intervention. You should have mechanisms to measure where youth are at and what prevents them being able to comply with probation. In terms of services, probation SHOULD be providing a means to support youth in achieving the terms of probation.
13		Do you have access to the following documents: birth certificate, social security number, ID card, unsure	Recommend removing from entrance survey in order to avoid duplicative questioning at intake and to prevent survey fatigue.	Keep only for exit survey, and then rephrase. Do you have the documents you need to get a job and/or rent an apartment (birth certificate, social security number, ID card, etc)?	Exit	having access to documents has been issue for youth in custody, like driver license that is necessary for bank accounts, voting, signing up for college courses, etc. - programs that waive fees for driving courses
14		If not, would you be able to get this information?	Recommend removing in order to avoid duplicative questioning and to prevent survey fatigue.	Remove.		
15		In the past 5 months, have you experienced any sudden changes or losses in your life? For example: moving, death of a peer/friend, loss of	This is not actionable, because this is an anonymous survey. Also, we want to minimize the risk of retraumatization.	Remove.		Same as Q11, institutional avoidance. Removing this erases the opportunity to correlate instability with

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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## Purpose:

- To empower YLC members to connect with peers (both inside and outside juvenile hall) and cultivate leadership and advocacy skills to positively change the experience of incarcerated youth.

## Who is the YLC?:

- The Youth Leadership Council was established about a year ago and has been facilitated by Superintendents Ebrahimi and Bañuelos and JIO II Richard Valle.
- The council was originally comprised of three youth from Firm Roots Academy. When we began the workshop, the council was expanded to include two representatives from Firm Roots and one representative each from Units 6, 5, and 2 (selected by Probation for their leadership potential)
- The goal of the YLC is to provide opportunities for youth in the Hall (particularly those in custody for an extended period of time) to advocate for their needs, uplift youth voices, and present recommendations to ACPD.

## What we did:

- In December of 2024, Deputy Chief Shauna Conners asked the YAC to lead a workshop series providing leadership and communication training for the YLC.
- In February, we submitted a proposal to Facilities leadership and collaborated with them to plan logistics
- Designed youth-led curriculum for 6-week workshop series culminating in a presentation of the YLC to ACPD Leadership (May-April)

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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## Workshops Overview

### Purpose:

1. Support in establishing the foundations of the YLC so that its work is youth-led, effective, and sustainable
2. Develop leadership capacity and advocacy skills so as to make positive changes to Facilities' policies.

### Timeline:

- April 5: Values + Storytelling
- April 12: Community Agreements + Effective Communication
- April 19: Roles + Restorative Justice Practices
- April 26: Teamwork + Effective Advocacy
- May 3: Time Management + Strategy
- May 10: Facilitation + Implementation
- May 17: Advocating to ACPD Leadership + Celebration

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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## Uplifting the Work of the YLC:

- **YLC Structure**
  - Council members identified the values, mission, and vision they want to guide their work.
  - Decided on member selection process and cadence of meetings.
- **Partnerships**
  - Monthly meetings w/ ACPD leadership
  - Bi-monthly meetings w/ JJDPC
  - Continued support from YAC/other CBOs
- **Issue Focus Areas**
  - More effective programming, improvement to visitation policies, continued educational opportunities, youth feedback on living spaces, increased staff training on how to engage with youth.
- **YLC Recommendations to ACPD**
  - Addressed challenges with and advocated for changes to programming

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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## YLC ADVOCAY IN ACTION: CHALLENGES WITH PROGRAMMING

- Programming **not equal** for all units
- Programming is **not based on youth needs**
  - Not supportive for skills youth need when they leave
- Programming **does not align with youth interests**
- Programming **lacks variety & feels repetitive**
- Programming is often **not age appropriate or developmentally aligned**
- Programming is **not targeted to youth rehabilitation needs**
  - All youth would benefit from IRPs
- Program **group size is often too large**
  - Need mix of one-on-one support & group work



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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF THESE CHALLENGES?

### Impact

1. Programs have a lack of youth engagement
2. Youth are not learning sufficient or appropriate self-improvement skills.
3. Programs cover the same content, especially for longer-term youth.
4. Youth not offered opportunities for leadership & mentorship skills.
5. Programs are not youth-led.

### Why it matters

1. When youth are not engaged, behavioral issues arise
2. No self-improvement = higher chances of recidivism
3. Repetitive programming = stalls rehabilitative development & skill-building progress
  - a. Ineffective use of funds
4. Youth cannot build self-confidence, independence, & interpersonal skills
5. Youth benefit from seeing other young people leading & an environment where they can take responsibility & ownership of their learning process

### However...

- Positive programming **DOES** currently exist & we want to recognize what they are
- These positive programs can serve as examples to improve other programming models

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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## YLC ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

### YLC facilitates feedback from youth

- YLC designs or advises in the creation & implementation of a survey for all units
- YLC interview youth in their respective units
- Supports in developing accountability measures through actionable project delivery & milestones

### YLC review CBOs proposals to ensure diverse models

- YLC representative sits in RFP interviews
- Proposals reviewed w/ YLC during regular meeting
- Establish a review committee between YLC, staff, & leadership

### YLC identifies leadership opportunities for youth in JH

- Design or assess curriculum
- Assist in facilitating programs or being a mentor to other youth
- Recognize youth experience & expertise



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# Youth Leadership Council Workshops

## Project Status:

- Workshop complete. Hoping to develop a follow-up workshop this YAC term.

## Challenges:

- Staff shortages and scheduling difficulties.
- Short time frame to fully engage youth in community building and skill development necessary for productive council work.
- Ineffective communication between YAC and ACPD staff.

## Recommendations:

- Create more spaces for youth to collaborate across units.
- Establish formalized, regularly scheduled meetings between YLC and ACPD.
- Participation of YLC in JJDPC meetings.
- YLC is facilitated by a CBO to ensure accountability and autonomy of the council.



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# YAC zine and Podcast







**Acquire Your Ward of the State Documentation**

Request your Ward of the Court letter or Proof of Foster Care as soon as possible. You'll need this for financial aid, scholarships, transitional housing, and more. If your case was ever open, especially after age 13, you may qualify for key program.

**Be Clear About Your County**

Know which county your case was in—this determines eligibility for many programs. Contact your ILP (Independent Living Program) worker or former social worker if you're unsure.

**Check AB 12 Eligibility**

AB 12 provides extended foster care to age 21 for eligible youth. If you were in a placement when you turned 18 and met certain criteria, you may qualify. You'll need to agree to participate in school, work, or a program and meet with a social worker regularly. If you're not AB 12 eligible (e.g., case closed before 18), you may not have access to some supports—this guide is especially for you.

**Decide on Decide on THP/THP+ or Monthly Payments**

THP and THP Plus programs provide supportive housing up to age 24. Ask:

- 1) Will I have my own room or a roommate?
- 2) Is it in a safe area?
- 3) Do they offer case management, therapy, or transportation?

If you choose the monthly payment route (usually around \$100/month), use this to:

- 1) Start applying for Section 8 or housing vouchers (some cities like Oakland and Alameda have their own)
- 2) Apply for Doorway Housing Portal notifications
- 3) Look into nonprofit transitional programs like Restorative Pathways (Castro Valley) or Abode Services (Alameda & Santa Clara)

**Friendly Disclaimer**

Due to shifting local, state, and federal budgets, some programs mentioned in this guide may be underfunded, cut, or restructured. Always double-check with your county or agency. Take a deep breath—you are not your past. You can build the life you deserve.

**Tip:** Apply to surrounding counties like Santa Clara or Contra Costa to boost your housing chances.

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# YAC zine and Podcast



**Purpose:**

- To uplift Youth Voice by providing a creative, uncensored outlet for youth to share their experiences, interests, and knowledge with each other, in addition to supporting our communities through resource sharing.

**Themes:**

- Storytelling (**community building**), tips to care for physical and mental well-being (**healing**), networking with other organizations/activists (**solidarity**), resource sharing (**community care**), knowledge sharing (**political education + liberation**)

**Podcast Episodes:**

- Episode 1: Introducing the YAC
- Episode 2: Healing from Childhood Trauma
- Episode 3: Resources for Foster Youth
- Episode 4: Navigating Re-Entry
- Episode 5: Navigating the Non-Profit Industrial Complex
- Episode 6: Building Emotional Awareness
- Episode 7: Issues of Identity

**Project Status:**

- All episodes have been recorded. They remain to be edited, hopefully in partnership with another CBO.



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# Reflections: YAC Members



- **Stakeholder Relations**
  - Communication + Accountability:
    - The work of the YAC, particularly around collaborative projects with ACPD, would benefit from more effective channels of communication. Ineffective communication resulted in project delays, misunderstandings, and lack of follow-through.
  - Recommendation:
    - Hold more frequent meetings between YAC and ACPD to provide project updates and actionable timelines. Debrief sessions will allow for accountability and a sense of partnership by holding space for ongoing discussions for collaborative work.
- **The Commitment of Youth**
  - YLC + YAC: Youth show up because advocacy work matters to us.
  - Vision: The unique council structure of the YAC and the YLC sets a precedent and offers a model of how to incorporate youth voice into institutional decision-making spaces, but we need support and follow-through from adult allies.
- **Connections Matter**
  - Community Partnerships + Peer Relations: The connections that we made each other and community is what makes the YAC special. These connections put TAY in a positive position for personal growth and development.
  - Recommendation: More opportunities to build connections with other youth and community partners.

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# Reflections: Youth Voice Coach

## Practice:

- Youth Voice Coach led monthly check-ins with each council member to support them in developing their leadership and advocacy goals

## Patterns Observed:

- Resource Needs: Wellness, food, job/income, & housing
- Skill Development Needs: career/education planning, relationship building, identity/self-realization, growth mindset/life purpose, intentionality/accountability, asking for help

## Youth Growth Observed:

- Raising of critical consciousness
- Increased sense of belonging

## Challenges:

- Coaching vs case management
- Time & resources

## Recommendations:

- Additional staff (two coaches)
- Youth roles & mentoring
- More supportive transitions



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# Reflections: Program Manager



- **Train-the-trainer model:** Youth-led curriculum
  - Peer-to-peer engagement offers a positive feedback loop of mentorship/leadership, community building, and critical consciousness raising
- **Systemic-change:** Partnerships with entities within the juvenile justice ecosystem
  - ACOE, AC Libraries, Public Defenders' Office, CBOs
- **Intersecting interests:** data collection
  - Youth-based participatory action research
- **Program Design:** supporting system-impacted youth
  - Not just about projects, but also youth development
- **Autonomy of Youth Councils:** Necessary for accountability
  - YAC is the bridge between youth in community and youth in facilities through the YLC.
- **Infrastructure:** Creating structural change with youth voice
  - Build in formalized mechanisms that incorporate youth into decision-making spaces
- **Transitions:** They significantly impact youth.
  - Recognize the impact that transitions have on youth and create formal transition plans that mitigate the negative effects of contract transfer.
- **Partnerships:** Examples of positive collaborations
  - Lucia Moritz, Facilities Leadership, Transition Center (Shereen + Antonio), Musheer Abdul-Jabbaar, RCN



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## New Chapter of YAC:

- Continued Projects & Collaborations
  - YLC (Youth Leadership Council)
  - Entrance/ Exit Surveys
  - Podcast/Zine
- Youth Recruitment
  - Leadership trainings
  - Facilitation & research trainings
- Developing a more formalized youth feedback system
  - Youth interviews
  - Focus groups



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# Questions?

*Thank you to our community partners and stakeholders!!*

- JDPC
- ACPD
- ACOE
- AC Libraries
- Public Defenders Office
- Resource Connection Network
- FOK Alliance
- Novalia Collective
- Rashaan “New York” Thomas with Empowerment Avenue
- Anthony Walker with Finance Friday
- Cindy Li from Uproot Teas
- UC-Berkeley Ethnic Studies Changemaker Project
- Beyond Emancipation
- Underground Scholars
- **And many more!**