



Credible Messenger Program: Strengthening Youth & Communities

A Report to the JJCC Subcommittee - SB 823

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**“Restorative justice is not about what was broken,
but about what can be healed.”**



RJOY's Mission & Values

Mission:

To increase mental health and wellness for underrepresented and BIPOC communities using restorative justice practices.

Core Values:

- Healing-centered justice
- Transformative accountability
- Community-led intervention
- Uplifting system-involved youth



Context of Practice

- Severely underserved marginalized and BIPCOOC communities
- High rates of gun violence, community violence and gender-based violence
- High rates of poverty and incarceration
- 1 in 3 males incarcerated; 1 in 2 girls victim of sexual assault or commercial and sexual exploitation
- High levels of gentrification, homelessness, unemployment, property and violent crimes
- Silicon valley, high MH tx participation, city becoming more white, among the highest cost of living in US; racial disparities among the greatest in the US



Principles of RJ at RJOY

- Need to change our hurting justice to healing justice – punitive justice to a restorative justice
- Words, thoughts, actions, self-care
- “Sawubona” – Zulu greeting – “I see you.”
- “Ubuntu” – S.A.; humanity towards others
- When harm happens people are taken for two days to center of village to be reminded of their good deeds

Goal is to create prevention and early mental health intervention, healing, reflection, life planning and protection from the trauma of racial harm in city life.

We focus on indigenous community healing using restorative values and practices.



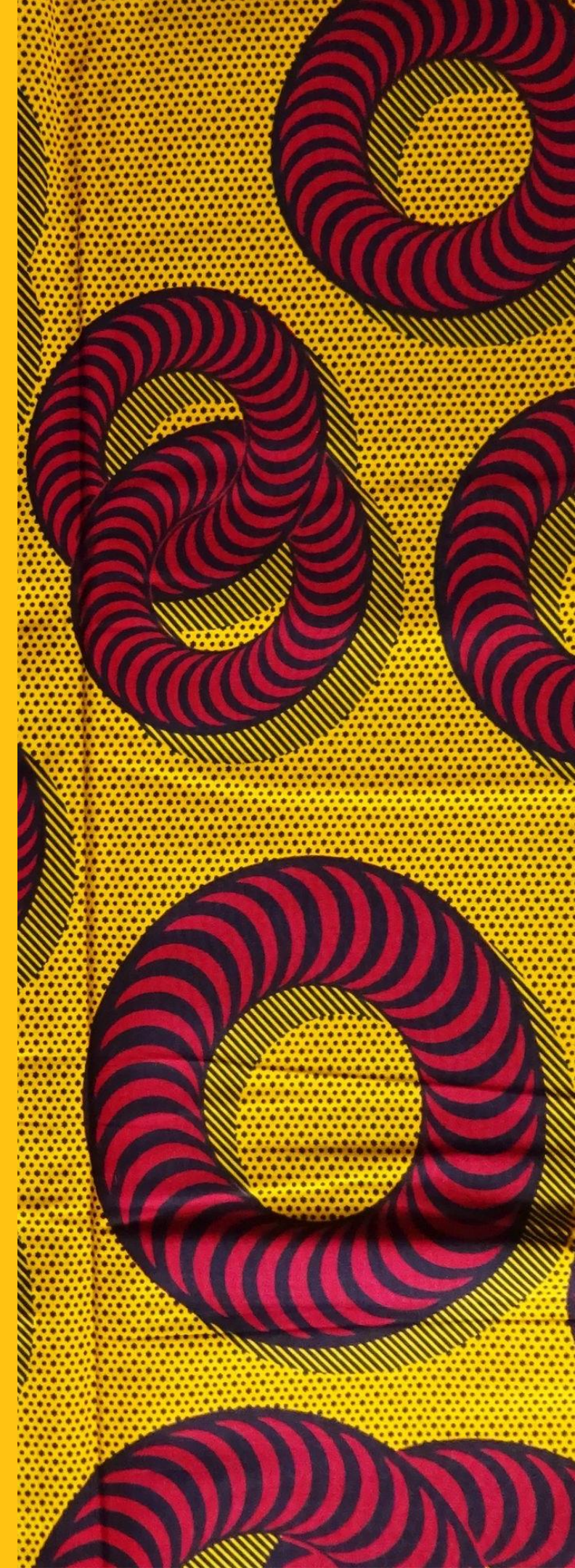
Organizational Overview

RJOY Priority Areas:

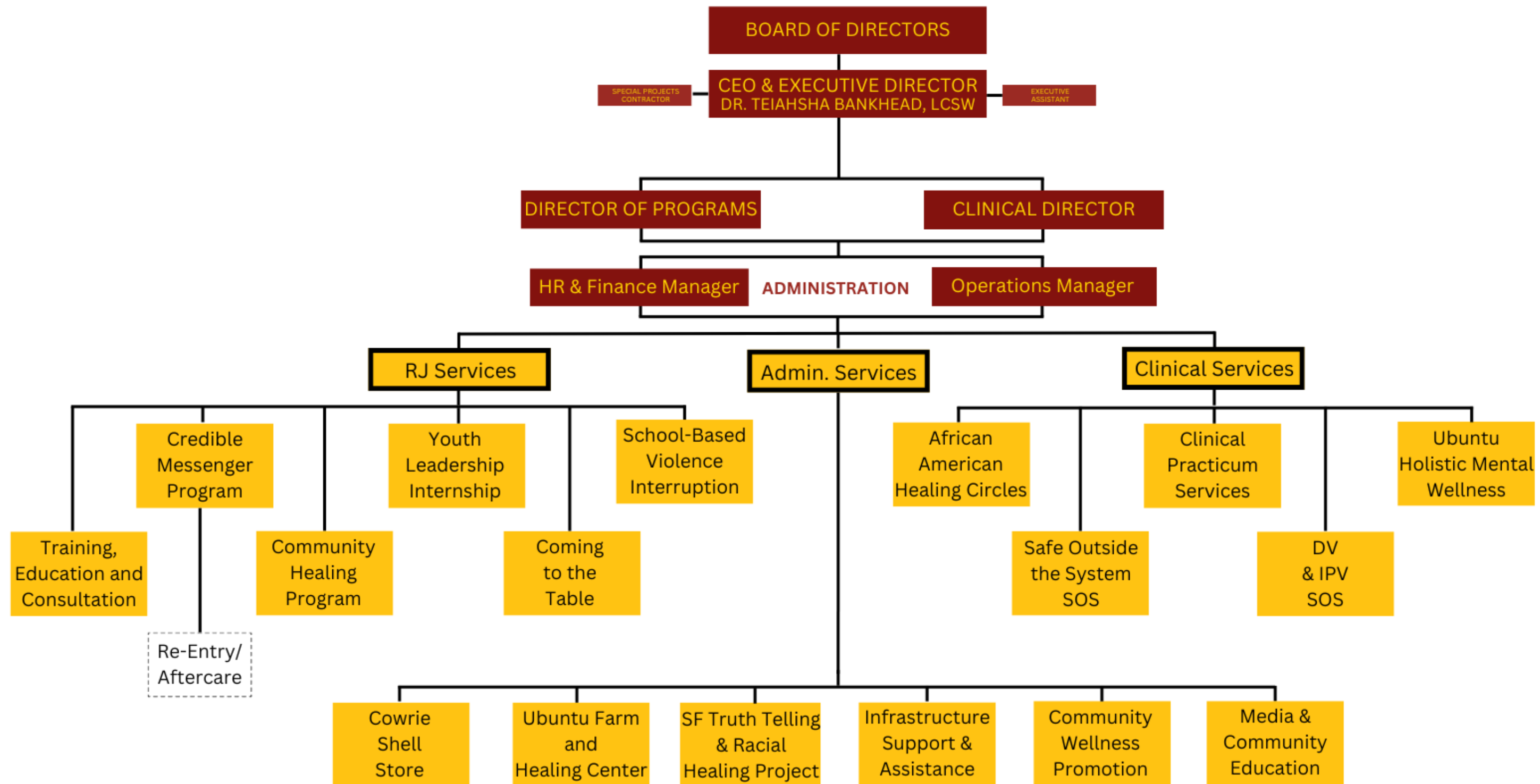
- Reducing youth incarceration & violence
- Increasing mental wellness & racial healing
- Implementing restorative justice principles in education & juvenile justice
- Truth Telling, Racial Healing & Reparation
- Community Restorative Justice

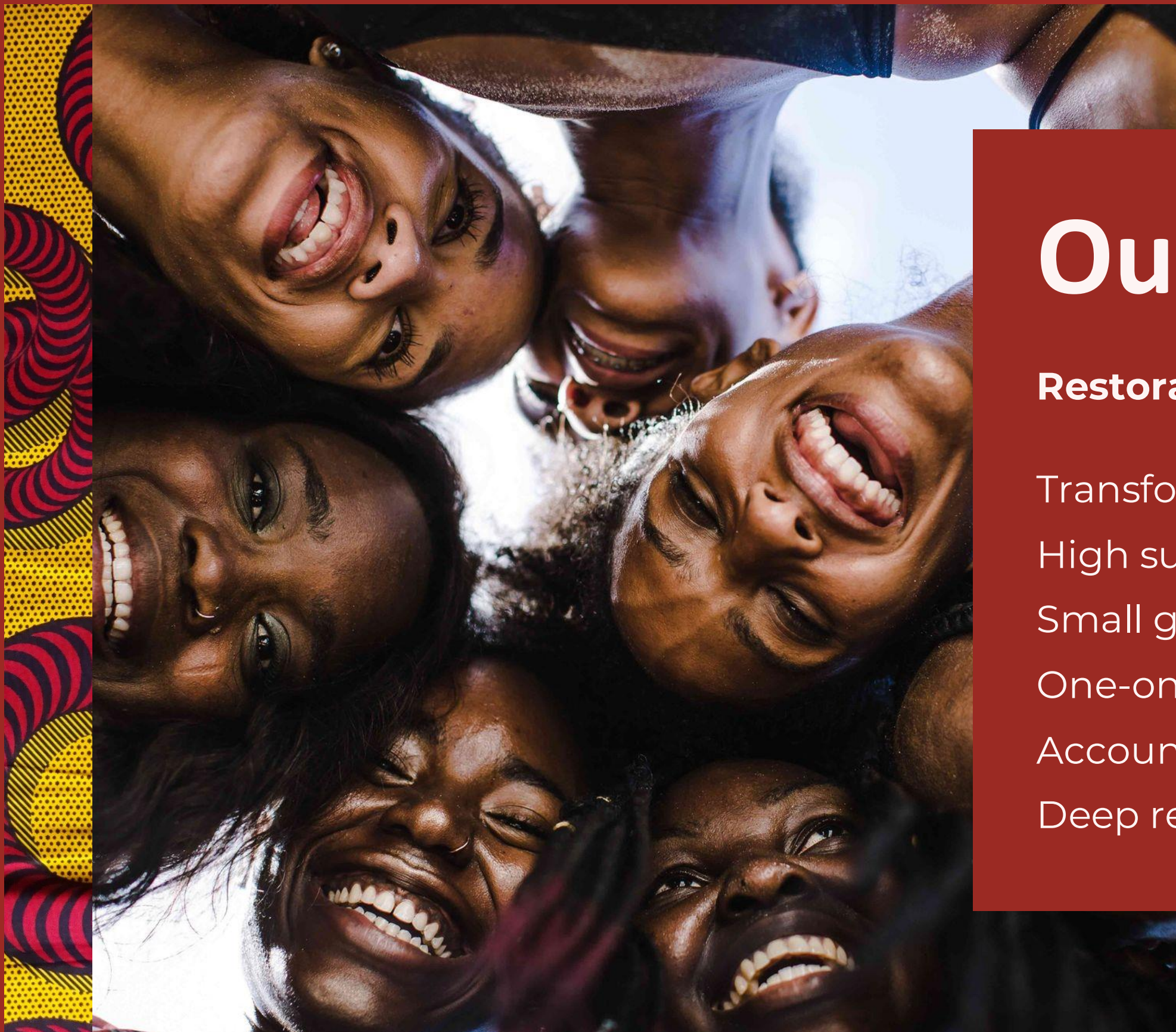
Some Core Programs:

- Credible Messenger Program
- Safe Outside the System (SOS)
- African American Healing Circles



RJOY ORGANIZATION CHART





Our Approach

Restorative instead of Punitive

Transformational healing process

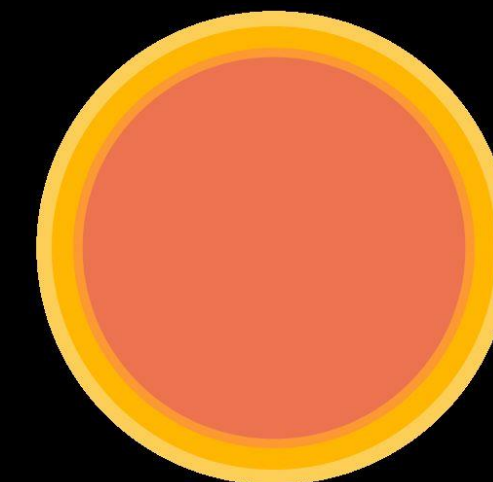
High support and high accountability

Small groups

One-on-one restorative conversations

Accountability buddies

Deep reflection





Restorative Approach to SEL and Skills Development

- RJ Circles
- RJ conversations
- Coaching
- Counseling
- Family Engagement
- Financial Literacy
- Independent Living Skills
- Mental Wellness
- Practical Support
- Courtroom support





“Hurt people hurt people. Healing people heal people.”



What is the RJOY Credible Messenger Program?

A Transformative Approach for System-Involved Youth

- Justice-involved youth are connected with mentors who have lived experience in the system
- Mentors guide youth through incarceration, reentry, and long-term stability

Core Program Model:

- Coaching & Mentoring
- Restorative Circles & Conflict Transformation
- Trauma Healing & Life Planning
- Family Reconnection Support
- Employment & Independent Living Skills Training





Length of CM Program:

22 months, 18 months
under SB 823

Youth Served:

37+

Typical Harms:

Homicide, armed
robbery, gun violence,
sexual harm

Length of Stay:

2 to 7 years

Connection with CM:

95% of youth
maintained
engagement

**CM Connection with
Families:**

75%

Courtroom Presence:

80%

Contact Aftercare:

85%

By the Numbers – Program Impact Metrics



Successes – How We Are Making a Difference

Strong mentoring relationships

built inside juvenile hall lead to lasting impact

Family engagement increased

through structured support & mediation

Educational & career pathways

for youth post-release

Positive shifts in accountability and leadership

for many participants

Reduction in recidivism & violence

among youth who remain engaged



Case Study – AJ (Latino, former Secure Track youth)

Charge:

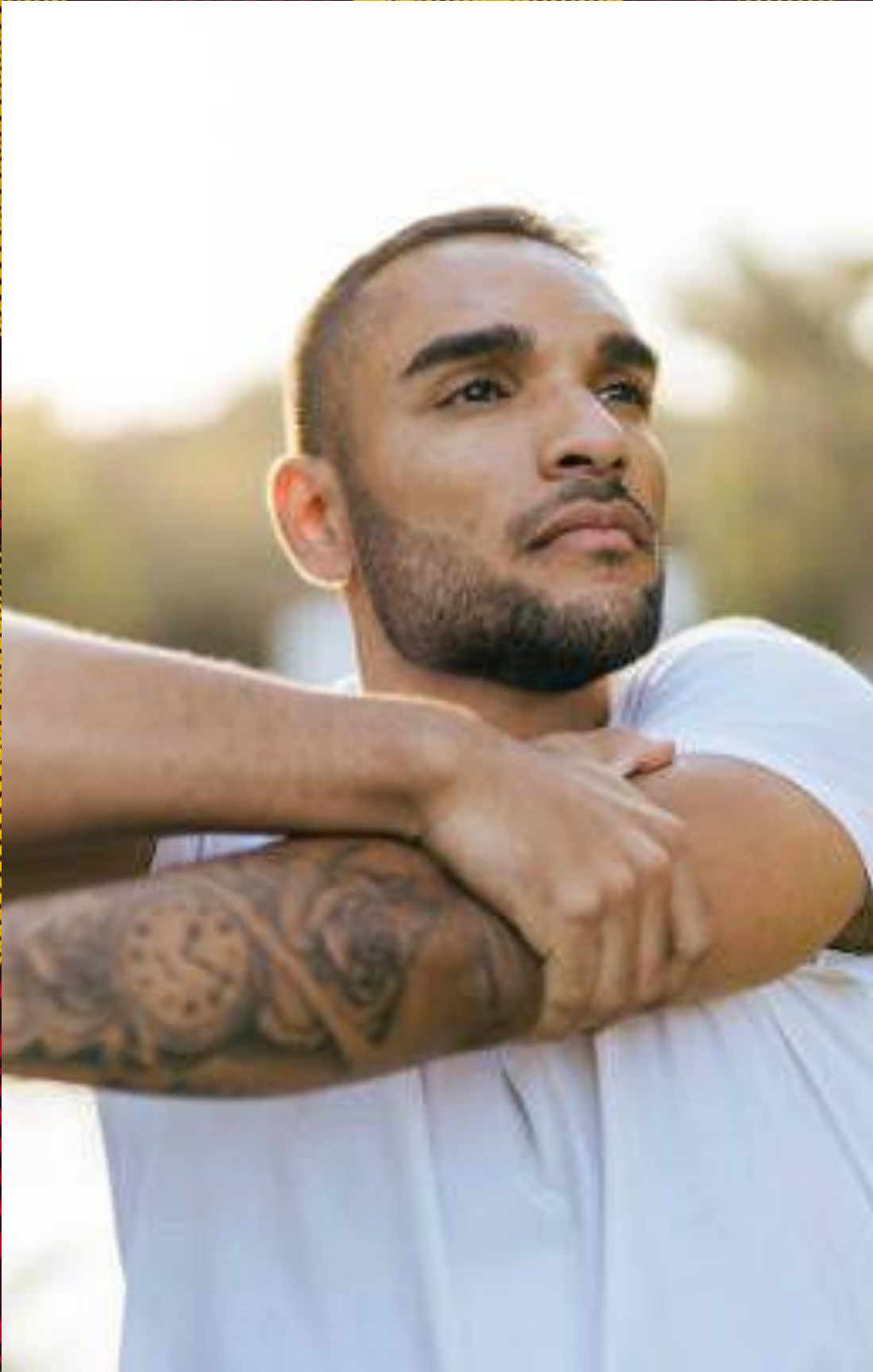
Sexual harm offense

Program Impact:

- Received one-on-one mentorship inside juvenile hall
- Successful transition post-release into employment
- Now a regular RJOY employee & mentor for other youth

Key Takeaway:

When youth receive the right guidance, they can become leaders in restorative justice.



Challenges & Lessons Learned



**Lack of Secure Aftercare
Contracts limits
continued support**



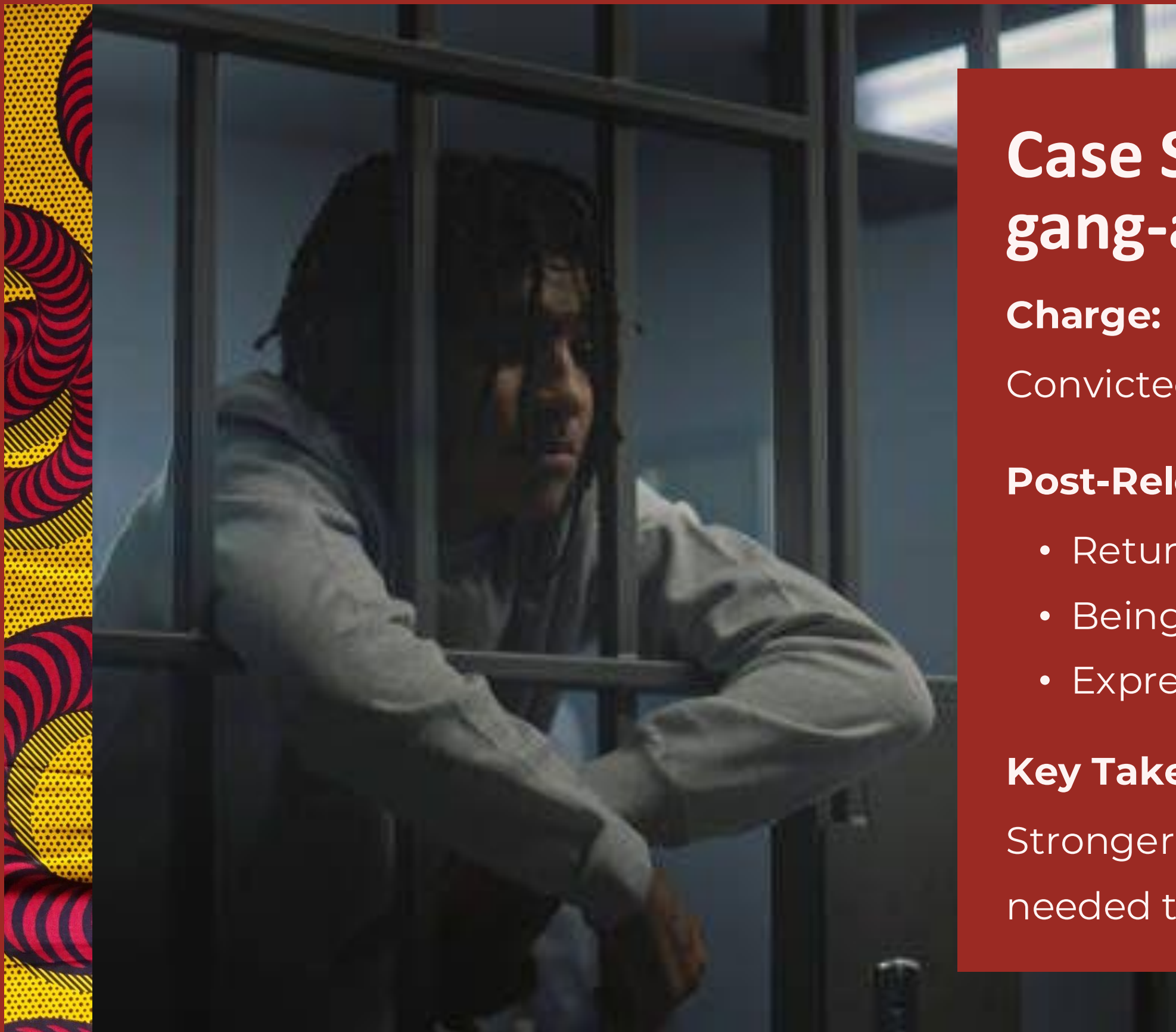
**High-risk youth require
more intensive and
resourced transition
plans**



**Families need greater
access to resources
post-release**



**More flexibility and
multisystem coordination
in aftercare support**



Case Study – JD (African American, gang-affiliated, convicted of homicide)

Charge:

Convicted of homicide (possibly didn't pull the trigger)

Post-Release Struggles:

- Returned to adult jail for a second homicide charge
- Being physically abused in jail, terrified for his safety
- Expressed suicidal thoughts before transfer to adult prison

Key Takeaway:

Stronger post-release supervision & relocation planning are needed to break cycles of harm.



Case Study – KD's Story

Charge:

Gun violence-related offense

Post-Release Struggles:

- Shot at on the day of release; guardian (uncle) was shot instead
- Lost stable housing, required relocation assistance
- RJOY provided financial & mentorship support for out-of-state transition

Key Takeaway:

Some youth require relocation & crisis intervention to ensure safe reentry.



**“Restorative justice sees the whole person,
not just their worst moment.”**



Restorative justice does not define youth by their worst mistakes.

The CM program works, but it needs stronger aftercare structures.

Next Steps:

**Advocate for long-term
aftercare contracts**

**Push for expanded funding
for non-secure track youth**

**Ensure structured
mentorship post-release**



Thank You!

