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City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission, Racial Equity Ad Hoc Committee,
Upward Mobility Roundtables
Report Back

Ad Hoc Committee Members: Anthony Mack (Committee Chair), Irma Beserra Nuñez, Nirinjan Singh Khalsa Irene Tovar, Stacy Twilley

Ad Hoc Purpose: The Racial Equity Ad-hoc Committee focused on examining equity and upward mobility opportunities for youth from underserved communities. The committee convened two roundtable discussions in part to gather ideas and recommendations for best practices to inform the Department's youth engagement strategy. This two part roundtable discussion theme centered on addressing the specific topic of breaking the "*school to prison pipeline*" and offering on-ramps towards upward mobility for youth.

Roundtable Events: The first roundtable discussion was hosted on Thursday, December 17, 2020 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and included a total of 10 participants that identified as Black or Latino, 6 females and 4 males ages 17-23. The youth participants resided within the City of Los Angeles' geographic boundaries and represented the following areas: South LA, Boyle Heights, North East/San Fernando Valley, Crenshaw/Leimert Park Area, East LA, West LA. The group was a blend of high school and college students with the majority of participants being between the ages of 18-23, each of which were freshman, sophomores and juniors representing their respective undergraduate colleges and universities.

The second convening occurred on January 26, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m. and brought together diverse experts including representatives from the private sector, policy makers, educators, service providers, and youth to engage in a meaningful discussion to elevate collective efforts and maximize positive impacts for youth populations. The roundtable included a total of 15 attendees and reflected diverse perspectives including members of the Native American, Latino, African American, White, and LGBTQIA communities. Both roundtables were facilitated by LA Civil Rights with members of the ad-hoc committee in attendance.

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Overall, the input received from both the youth focus group and the roundtable discussion exposed a number of gaps, challenges and perspectives including:

1. **Unequal Gaps in Learning Worsened by Online Shift:** Inaccessibility to quality education due to the technology gap, and increased familial and financial struggles due to the Pandemic.
2. **Exacerbation of Mental Health Crisis in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic:** Youth in particular expressed increased feelings of isolation as a direct result of the lack of in-person school, loss of relationships with teachers, mentors, peers, and a rise in substance-related self-medication.
3. **Lack of Basic Needs:** Safe shelter, proper nutrition, and health care were all referenced during the discussions.
4. **Barriers to Upward Mobility:** Limited access to private industries (i.e. entertainment industry) for youth without a college degree and a social capital gap between students from various backgrounds and socio-economic levels.

Recommendations: The roundtable discussions offered meaningful input and feedback regarding on-ramps to achieving upward mobility opportunities for youth. We learned from participants that in order to achieve direct solutions to systemic barriers, a collaborative long-term strategic effort and commitment amongst public/private partners is required. Several recommendations emerged from the discussion. Here is a list of the top points:

- Build networks between community-based organizations to find points of connection and collaboration.
- Leverage connections with community-based partners to coordinate targeted outreach and utilize existing social media platforms, including LinkedIn, Facebook, among others.
- Develop online systems to connect youth with professional institutions including private sector corporations to support social capital.
- Incorporate a financial element, such as paid internships, to youth programs in recognition of the financial constraints faced by many young people.

Based on input from the roundtable, the following are suggested recommendations for an impactful youth engagement strategy:

1. **A Seat at the Table:** Organize joint efforts between the City of Los Angeles, community and corporate partners.
2. **Convene a Hub:** Provide opportunities for intra-collaboration and outside funding. Continue to deepen relationships internally with other City efforts aimed at promoting youth engagement and upward mobility, while also continuing to include corporate partners to provide funding support and mentorship opportunities.
3. **Surplus Mindset:** Focus on the maximization of existing resources and expanding current efforts rather than creating new systems.