

Former Juvenile Probationers Speak Out on How Probation Changed Their Lives

As America focuses on Restorative Justice and Alternatives to Incarceration

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Former Juvenile Probationers Speak Out on How Probation Changed Their Lives in New Documentary Short "In Their Own Words"

Los Angeles, CA – Juvenile justice reform is one of the hottest topics in America today, and no piece of the puzzle is less understood than the work of the professional probation officers who supervise and rehabilitate kids who have lost their way. "In Their Own Words," an original documentary short, features former probation clients who reflect upon how their probation officers helped to change their lives. The landmark film is premiered virtually and it included a panel discussion with former probation clients and the officers who have committed their lives to helping them get their lives back on the right track.

"I am blessed beyond measure to have had Mr. Shabazz, who was more than a probation officer. He was more than a therapist. He was more than a life coach. He was more than a friend. He is the person who should have been my dad," said Shai Brown, Former Juvenile Probationer at Dorothy Kirby Center, L.A. County Probation Department.

Ms. Brown's sentiments are consistent among formerly detained juveniles, who directly experience and understand the difference Probation Officers and their support team make in their lives. Those who have been through the system know that Probation Officers act as guardians of the community, counselors, and rehabilitators. "We wear a lot of hats around here. Monday I might be a coach. Tuesday I might be a counselor. Tuesday I might be a teacher," said Mel Bailey, Supervising Deputy Probation Officer and member of SEIU Local 721.

The premiere of "In Their Own Words" is sponsored by the Coalition of Probation Unions, which includes the Deputy Probation Officers; Union, AFSCME Local 685; the Supervising Deputy Probation Officers, which is affiliated with SEIU Local 721; and the Professional Managers Association, AFSCME Local 1967. Together, these professional organizations are pulling back the veil from one the least understood yet most critical aspects of the restorative

justice system to portray the true image of probation officers.

Cookie Lommel
Probation Union
+ +1 3106250363
clommel@afscme685.com

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