

JJCC-CAC Meeting February 26, 2021
Public Comments Submitted via E-mail
Agenda Item V. b

1. Hi and Good afternoon, my name is Kenzo Sohoue and I am a youth advocate with the Anti Recidivism Coalition and the LA Youth Uprising Coalition. I am here today to share my experience within the “Compound” inside Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall. I want to start off by making it clear that the compound is not the ideal environment for a DJJ alternative in the county because it does not have the ideal exposure and wants to meaningfully rehabilitate our youth. The environment is very much like prison and nothing better than DJJ. How do we expect youth that is facing juvenile life to be empowered internally and mentally in the compound? Youth here are living in an environment that has nothing to do with remodeling or changing their thinking and behavior? Just looking at the Compound, it literally projects and resembles Prison, in other words, it forces youth to have a “I got to survive” type of mentality. Putting them in the compound is like further punishing them for their mistakes again. I KENZO SOHOUE was in this compound facing many years for mistakes I made as a youth but today because of my strong mentally and exposure to GROWTH and OPPORTUNITIES, I have become one of the strongest youth advocates and youth leaders in my community. Many youths inside the Compound right have so many skills, potential and want to change but are unable because they have no guidance or a STABLE environment to fully grow. When youth are in an environment that obtains a common behavior and you're living in that environment for a long period of time; the mind and body adapts to that same way of thinking and operating. So how do you expect someone to grow and learn from their mistakes, when there isn't any space for it. I urge the JJCC to listen to us and align its vision for youth justice with the Youth Justice Reimagined DJJ report and recommendations. . Thank you for your time and god bless you.

2. Hello my name is Ezekiel Nishiyama I am a youth advocate and community organizer fellow with the Anti Recidivism Coalition. Also a leader with LA Youth Uprising. As a youth who experienced CAs Division of Juvenile Justice I can assure you that the compound - Barry J Nidorf is not the alternative to DJJ. Throughout my incarceration, the compound was one of the worst facilities I experienced. A jail within another jail is what I would call it. Very little programs and opportunities to prepare for my re-entry were provided to me while inside the compound. In moving towards the DJJ transition we should focus on a safe and secure healing center where youth would have the experience to be exposed to many rehabilitative programs. Youth should have access to Career development as well as building on their education upon re-entry back into our community.

The implementation of Credible messengers and Restorative Justice is another big part of what needs to be aligned when we think about how we deal with the trauma that youth are experiencing on the inside. Imagine having people like me, work with these youth. I can assure you I would be more effective in building meaningful trust and relationships with the youth simply because I actually understand their experience. On the other hand, Probation

has failed at doing this and we have not seen what they are doing with their supposed credible messenger programs. What's going on there? The county should ensure we are hiring and employing the right individuals when we are giving them access to our youth futures. We as a county can't continue to keep youth inside these prison-like facilities. Our youth futures should not be housed in the compound, they are still youth and deserve dignity and respect in their development. They are not adults. Thank you for the time given to me today.

3. Hello my name is Alexia Cina and I am a youth advocate and community organizer with the Anti- Recidivism Coalition (ARC) and the LA youth uprising coalition. As a young woman who was incarcerated at the age of 21, for three years, and experienced the trauma of being a young adult incarcerated I am here to stress to you all that probation should NOT use the "compound" known as Barry J as the alternative for DJJ youth incarceration. I'm very disappointed at the fact that probation wants to keep our DJJ youth in this non-healing institution, having them feel even more incarcerated and adding more trauma. This place will be detrimental to their mental health and their self worth. Instead, we must move forward on our work from the Youth Justice Work Group DJJ report and bring that to life. It is crucial that youth like myself along with other community-based organizations serving and working with youth, help guide this process. The JJCC must create this avenue of community and youth engagement as they develop their DJJ alternative plan. This is important in order to help benefit youths' futures. It is time we move away from traditional punishment and set youth on a good path in life. Helping them with their reentry and providing them with the guidance to success and resources they truly need to have bright futures away from crime. These youth have so much potential and talent and simply need the right youth developmental services that can help them get to reach their goals. I urge the JJCC body to listen to the youth that are speaking to you all here today. Thank you.