

# MYTH BUSTER

POMONA DCFS NEWSLETTER

August, 2010

## Eliminating Racial Disproportionally & Disparity (ERDD)

### DEMETRIA BOYKIN



Growing up Demetria was told to "stop living in a dream world!" Here's a story that will dismiss all Myths that you can't overcome your circumstances.

Demetria Boykin, the seventh of nine children experienced a hard life growing up in foster care. She did not have a consistent relationship with her mother and father or older siblings due to her parent's drug abuse.

As a consequence Demetria and her twin sisters were raised by their aunt and grandmother in the state of New York. At the age of 10, her aunt died and her grandmother could no longer care them. DCFS tried to reunite the girls with their father in California, however due his drug habits he was incarcerated and the girls were taken into protective custody. In an effort to keep the siblings together, DCFS placed them in the foster homes of two Foster Parents who were sisters and lived just doors away from each other. Understanding the close relationships that twins have, one of the foster moms decided to clear out a room in her home to accommodate all three girls, and petitioned DCFS to also place Demetria in her home.

Demetria recalls the home in La Puente as being "a very nice looking house", but says she never felt welcomed or loved. Whenever her foster mom had family gatherings, the girls were not included. They were made to do all the cleaning and decorating but not allowed to participate in any of the functions. They were told to stay in their rooms and not come out until everyone was gone. This angered Demetria and she became very resentful. Her foster

mom often threatened to split the girls up if they did not do what they were told. Therefore Demetria and the girls kept quiet and did as instructed in order to stay together.

Demetria attended school in La Puente during a time of racial tension between Blacks and Latinos. Demetria was constantly getting into fights and was eventually sent to Juvenile Hall. There she began to act out even more, she felt at fault for being separated from her sisters. During her brief stay in Juvenile Hall, she befriended her probation officer who helped her to channel her anger constructively and this set her on the right path.

A family from El Salvador in the city of Ontario accepted custody of Demetria after she left juvenile hall. According to Demetria, this family went out of their way to make her feel at home and welcomed. Demetria shared with her new foster mom the guilt she felt about being separated from her sisters, and her new caretaker worked with DCFS to place all three girls in the same home. Things were finally looking up for Demetria. That is until her foster parents lost their home due to financial difficulties and the girls had to be separated again.

When DCFS gathered up her belongings, she was told that she was being placed in a, "manufactured home in the City of Pomona". Demetria recalls this experience as follows: "When I went to this trailer park home, the rooms were small and the lady, she looked real mean, a little old white lady by the name of [Ms. Rose](#). She just didn't look like someone I would connect with, but she ended up being the coolest foster mom. She helped me get to school everyday, helped me with my homework, with tutoring and she never complained. She talked to me about drugs, and answered any personal question I had, and I still talk to her to this day. When I moved out of her home, she helped me to get into transitional housing. She gave me a lot of focus and told me,

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'If I want something, I gotta go get it!' When everyone else kept telling me to stop living in a dream world, she kept saying 'if you want it, you can get it!' That's the kind of person she was, a real motivator."

Demetria continues, "I was 18 and really wanted to get a job. My foster mom said, 'You should get a credit check because there is no reason why you keep getting denied for a lot of these jobs.'

So I got my credit report and found all kinds of stuff in my name. At the age of 13 I had apartments in my name, cell phone bills, credit cards, anything you can think of, I had it in my name. I was a victim of identity theft. By then, I had been in so many different places. It seemed everybody had my information so it was difficult to tell who made the charges. Still, I was determined to find a job. I knew transitional housing was about to come through and I was being kicked out of the system, so I needed a job. That was my main goal, to find a job. "

"My ILP (Independent Living Program) coordinator's name was Phyllis Wilcher. She is responsible for teaching me the basic skills of life like cooking, cleaning, balancing a check book, filling out a résumé and completing college applications. When I met Phyllis she was like one of those strong Black Women. I kind-of-didn't really know how to take her, but she ended up being a huge mentor in my life. I still talk to her this day; she's like my second mom. Phyllis introduced me to Otho Day, the coordinator over transitional housing and he helped me get into transitional housing. I continued to put in applications to DCFS, the Fire Department, everywhere as a CDI (Career Development Intern). DCFS was the only agency that called me back for an interview. So I interviewed at headquarters in Shatto and got the job. I lived in West Covina and woke up at 4:00 every morning to catch the bus to LA everyday. I did this for 3 months and then I was transferred to the Pomona

Office, and I have been here for about two years."

Looking back, Demetria said her life in foster care was not the greatest. She initially thought she would be more comfortable living in a nice home, with people of her own race. However, she received much support, love, and trust from a "little-old-white lady" who didn't have much but gave her everything she could. Demetria says she is grateful for DCFS coming into her life, because it saved her from repeating the same mistakes as her parents and older siblings. This is a great example of how we can all help each other despite our differences.

The Pomona ERDD Action Team would like to thank Demetria Boykin for sharing such an intimate and personal story. She is a positive example for us all.



**Eliminating Racial Disparity & Disproportionally (ERDD)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
From 2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**Our next regular meeting will be held  
October 13<sup>TH</sup>**

**at Pomona DCFS  
100 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street – 5<sup>th</sup> floor  
Pomona, CA 91766**

**For additional information, please contact  
Co-chairs**

**Diquitha Aubrey, (909) 868-4451 or  
Iola Fountain, (909) 868-4411**