



The year was 1980 and the job listing advised applicants to bring their lunch. It would be a long day. When then-18-year-old Cynthia McCoy-Miller arrived at the specified location, a line of hundreds of prospective candidates snaked outside of the Los Angeles County Hall of Administration.

A less focused young person might have been discouraged at the sight and bailed, but not Cynthia. By the time Cynthia was done, it was dark out and she had been hired on the spot by the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). Since that day 40 years ago, Cynthia's county career has been nothing short of remarkable.

"I remember coming to the county for the first time and walking into this big government agency," said Cynthia, now a senior deputy director with the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

"I thought to myself, what is this organization all about? While I didn't quite know what my contribution would be at the time I knew that, whatever it was, I wanted it to be meaningful, deliberate, impactful, and to bring about positive change," she added.

In her current role, which she has held since 2012, Cynthia provides executive leadership and oversight for more than 1,300 employees in the Department's Mega Bureau. The bureau is comprised of contracts, budgets and finance, information technology, and human resources and training, as well as other programmatic and administrative functions.

But Cynthia's ascent didn't come overnight. It took years of hard-earned preparation and involved coaching and mentoring from experienced leaders and colleagues who recognized this high achiever's potential and talents early on in her career. While working full-time in various capacities, Cynthia pursued a formal education and earned an associate degree from Southwest College, a bachelor's degree from Cal Poly Pomona and a master's degree from the University of Southern California. All of her studies were in social work with her post-graduate education focusing on community organization, planning and administration.

While the Fremont High School graduate began her county career with DPSS eventually becoming an eligibility worker with a specialization in foster care and adoption cases, in 1984 DCFS was established and Cynthia decided to join the newly founded department two years later. As Cynthia explains it, she made this decision because she has always been inspired by the fervor, commitment and heart of people who devote their lives to child welfare work.



The sixth child in a family of 10 siblings, Cynthia says her achievements have not come without challenges and setbacks. The key, however, is to view these as opportunities and to remain focused and forge ahead. And, that's just what she has done.

Over the years she has remained hopeful and positive, always striving for excellence, by deriving inspiration and motivation from her childhood heroes, her now-departed mother and grandmother, whom Cynthia says, "remain the wisdom and knowledge beneath her wings." And, now, all of these years later, the self-described servant-leader is paying it forward.

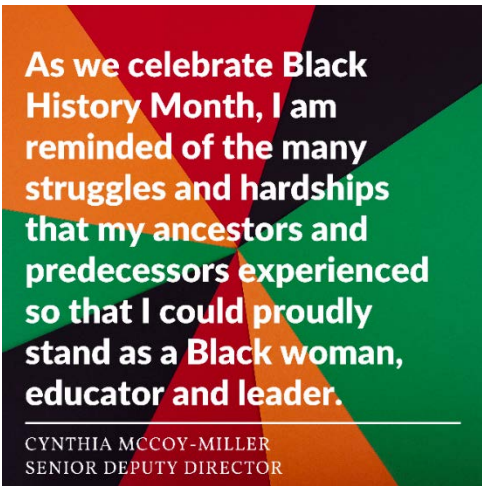
"I want to be able to give back and empower others and inspire the next generation of leaders so that they too can make a difference," Cynthia said. "As we celebrate Black History Month, I am reminded of the many struggles and hardships that my ancestors and predecessors experienced so that I could proudly stand as a Black woman, educator and leader. It is this history that keeps me grounded, keeps me dreaming for greatness, and keeps me hopeful of what's to come."

During her years with the county, Cynthia has witnessed many changes. Among the most profound in recent years has been the open dialogue encouraged by the county and DCFS on matters of race and racism.

Cynthia – an executive sponsor for Invest LA, the department's five-year-plan to optimize its services and workforce – credits Director Bobby Cagle for creating a safe space in which employees may engage in these conversations. Cynthia also is pleased with the department's commitment to addressing systemic biases that disproportionately impact people of color through its Office of Equity.

In public service, transparency, respect and accountability are among the hallmarks of excellence, according to Cynthia. While to some the work of her administrative personnel may seem far removed from the day-to-day heroics of front line staff, Cynthia says she helps her team connect the dots, always underscoring the significance of their contributions.

"My bureau is critical to the mission, vision, goals and values of the department," Cynthia said. "We are the infrastructure, the core that supports the entire department."



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