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Deputy Director Angela Parks-Pyles has been a vocal champion for equity efforts throughout her nearly 35 years with the Department of Children and Family Services.

For Angela Parks-Pyles, working to support child and family well-being has always tied back to equity.

“I have always been inspired by the strong women in my family who triumphed over adversity and fought to achieve greatness in a world not designed for their success,” said Angela, who worked her way up from boots-on-the-ground line social worker to deputy director over the Contract Services Bureau within the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS).

“I specifically sought out a career where I could focus on making the safety of children a priority and inspire others to think holistically about the well-being of those families that society tends to overlook,” she said.

She is passionate about building pathways of hope for marginalized children and families, especially those in the African American community. She is proud of how she has been able to promote equity within DCFS.

“Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us that we cannot stay silent about things that matter,” Angela said. “I will never be silent when it comes to equity and the need to do more to support African American children.”

Over the years, Angela has championed a variety of efforts aimed at reducing the disparate number of Black children in the foster care system. Among them, the Community Cultural Brokers program, which is focused on authentic and culturally responsive community engagement, and Father Strong, which expanded the engagement of fathers and paternal relatives.

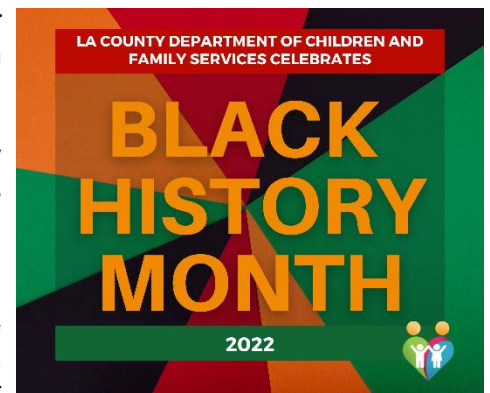
She also led the design and implementation of the department’s first-ever faith-based section, an office dedicated to strengthening partnerships with the faith-based community, and established the Office of Equity.

Acknowledging how far the department has come in its approach to equity since she began her social work career, Angela noted that leadership has been intentional in making equity a priority in recent years.

“There have always been those who advocated for equity, but we have evolved from quiet chatter to having our leaders proclaim loudly that we are putting a stake in the ground,” she said. “Now, we have equity as a foundational pillar of our strategic plan, and that is something I never thought I would see.”

Knowing that African American children tend to enter and stay in the child welfare system at disproportional rates and receive disparate treatment relative to other populations, Angela values that DCFS has taken steps to improve the use of data to inform decision making.

She recognizes that more must be done, but strongly believes that DCFS is moving in the right direction. In her view, the progress achieved during her tenure to intentionally infuse equity into all aspects of child welfare practice is evidence of the department’s unwavering dedication to building communities of hope.



Looking back at her time with the department, she is beyond grateful to have played a role in bringing an intentional focus to the needs of the African American community.

“I am unapologetically proud to be my authentic self and bring everything I have to this job, my heart’s work,” Angela said.

“I will always stand for what is right and am honored that I have been able to dedicate my career not only to child well-being broadly but also to highlighting the need to create better service delivery for African American children and families.”

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