

A SECOND CHANCE^{INC.}



National Kinship Review

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Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Center of Child Welfare: A 21st Century Perspective on Cultural Relevance and Humility

The pervasive issue of racial disparity in child welfare has long presented troubling implications for children and families of color. The concept of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) is essential in developing inclusive practices that work to dismantle historical and systemic racial biases in the sector. ASCI's founder, president and CEO Dr. Sharon McDaniel engages in crucial conversations with industry thought leaders —the first of which you can read here—to explore DEI in America's child welfare system and highlight the transformational work these leaders do to address the same.



Installation One



Kimm Campbell
Director of Human Services
Broward County, Florida

Note: This is a small excerpt from a larger conversation. [Click here](#) for the full version.

Sharon McDaniel: Do you think there's racial bias in the child welfare system? And if so, why and how?

Kimm Campbell: Racial bias and structural and institutional racism exists in the child welfare system, not unlike every other public system in the United States, because the country was founded on racist practices and a belief that black people are subhuman. And if you go all the way back to the framing of the Constitution and look at federal legislation over time, you can see the institutionalization of racism in our structures. It isn't until we take a conscious look at our structures and our policies and our subsequent practices that we're able to actually do something intentional about it.

None of us come into the child welfare arena to do further harm to children, and all of us are doing really great work and have seen some success. But we haven't seen the kind of deep and broad transformational change that's necessary to protect all kids and families, because we haven't at this point been able to deal with, honestly, the structural and institutional racism that exists in the child welfare system. In [Broward County](#), we have decided that we're going to take the blindfold off and have an honest conversation about the reality of institutional and structural racism in our community.



Kimm Campbell at the Urban League of Broward County's Game On! Red Gala

SM: You have your own lived experience around this work, but what was the moment as a leader when you said, “Let's take the blinders off”? You had been working in the sector and saw some things, but when did you say, “Kimm, I need to challenge the status quo. I need to have the team really look at this and let's begin to have honest dialogue”?

KC: I can say exactly why I took action. There are local advisory committees in each of [Florida's] circuits, and ours looks at data every month. And the local lead agency, ChildNet, was facing a huge multimillion-dollar deficit. There were thousands of kids coming into care; they were staying in care way too long. It was a crisis point for us, and the state came down in a full contingent to ask Broward County what we were going to do about the crisis we were facing. They had a complete set of slides to show us all the data and all the pain points, basically, that needed to be

addressed.

Unfortunately, a slide that clearly showed the disproportionality of the kids that were coming into care wasn't included, and it [upset me] because that is the crux of the issue with our system, and so I arranged a meeting with the president and CEO of the [Urban League](#) down here and said to her, "I'm not sure you're aware, but right down the street from you, the child welfare system is decimating black families, and you are an institution charged with serving this community, and it's happening right under your nose. You need to serve as the lead to mobilize this community and say we are not going to stand for black [families] being decimated unnecessarily in Broward County."

Because child welfare is not the core mission of the Urban League, I spent some time giving her a tutorial about child welfare and how the system runs, its history, and you know, just how it works locally, and we strategized about who needed to be at the table from a leadership perspective. We wanted our partners that are at our level in this community with decision-making authority and resources to bring to bear, and we convened the group using the weight of the Urban League as the lead entity, and I can talk to you about the process we've gone through to impact the removal of black kids; it's quite an extraordinary journey. But that was the impetus, the fact that everyone knew there was a disproportionality issue that was outrageous, and that they chose to ignore it was just infuriating, so I felt I had no choice.



Kimm Campbell accepting the Margaret Roach Humanitarian Award at the Red Gala

SM: What personally keeps you in the work?

KC: I'm really compelled to do the work. I think it comes from my own personal experience—the fact that I'm a product of the child welfare system myself. That a Swedish woman and a German man wanted me enough to threaten to sue the state of Illinois to get me. The fact that they had already adopted a Native American son long before the [Indian Child Welfare Act](#), I might add. That they raised this multi-cultural family with an eye towards equality. This family spent a lifetime in and out of communities all over this country, working towards equality.

Both my parents are 89, still married, living in Charlotte, and when I saw them in July, we had a conversation about the need to move from working towards racial equality to working towards race equity. That was a very hard conversation for them to have because they didn't have a concept of what equity means, so I broke that down for them and my dad got a little bit

offended thinking that I was discounting his lifetime of work towards race equality. He tells stories as a white man going into the south side of Chicago knocking on doors in order to build relationships with people of color in his effort towards equality. Then I had an opportunity to explain to him this concept of white fragility and what that looks like and how that impacts people of color. So, even at his age and stage, there's opportunities for growth and advancement of the work, so I do it, Sharon, because I have to; I was raised to, under the mantra, "Be bold and audacious in the face of adversity and fearless in actions."

To read Kimm's interview in its entirety, [visit our website](#).

Kimm Campbell has 25 years of experience in human services within state and local governments. She has provided leadership, direct services and consultative services in adult and child mental health, child welfare, special education, juvenile justice, domestic violence, homelessness and substance abuse. Ms. Campbell has designed family support services frameworks for housing authorities, standardized supportive services within school districts, and created detention transition services for incarcerated youth. At the time of this interview she was the Director of the Broward County Human Services Department, responsible for the leadership and administration of approximately \$160 million in local state and federal funds across a wide range of services to impact the lives of Broward County's most vulnerable residents. She has since been promoted to Assistant County Administrator. Additionally, Ms. Campbell is a national consultant working with the U.S. Department of Justice, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law and various state disability rights firms. She serves as a member on the Board of Directors for Broward Behavioral Health Coalition and OIC of South Florida and is a member of the Coordinating Council of Broward. She serves as a national board member of Black Administrators in Child Welfare.

Ms. Campbell is most passionate about social justice and race equity and approaches the work of human services from these perspectives in order to create lasting community change. She was recently recognized as the Margaret L. Roach Humanitarian of the Year for her implementation of the Dismantling Racism Initiative in Broward County, in addition to her work dedicated specifically to race equity in child welfare.

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*Racial equity consultant
President/CEO, Joyce James Consulting*

*"We have to transform our culture to really
begin to tell the truth about history."*





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