

A Message from our Executive Director

Change has come to America! We are very excited at BYA about the hope that our new leader in Washington has inspired. Our children and youth are living in a time when they too, can dream of new heights.

While the changes in Washington DC are energizing, we still face an uncertain economy as well as an unending state budget crisis. Unfortunately, the proposed state budget as it currently stands will be "balanced" on the backs of the very people that BYA serves. As the safety net continues to whither away, we are fighting to ensure that policymakers and stakeholders understand that **prevention still pays enormous dividends to society**, that **ordinary citizens need bailouts too**, and that **nothing stops crime more than jobs** and opportunities for youth and young adults. *Not only must education and mental health services for those most vulnerable in society be preserved, but also we must invest at unprecedented levels in these areas in order to give our children and youth a fighting chance in this global economy*. There are no more excuses, no more reasons for us to accept failing schools, to accept policies that keep our youth behind bars, and to accept employers that are unwilling to give our population an opportunity to reach their innate potential.

We, at BYA, are challenged at this moment to meet the employment, health, academic, and basic living needs of our youth and their families. We are thankful that entities such as the Alameda County Workforce Investment Board and the Alameda County Office of Education have recognized that now is the time to invest more in our communities which are struggling in this recession.

At this time, as state, county, and city budgets are being cut, we know that it is also difficult for the private sector and caring individuals to donate to our organization. I would ask that if you are able to donate, that you consider making a request to BYA where over 90% of all donations go directly to supporting families in need. We are on the frontlines and we could use your support now more than ever.

Thank you in advance for your support of children, youth and young adults in our community!

Niculia Williams Executive Director Berkeley Youth Alternatives