



Dear Friend of OAR,

Together, we envision a better tomorrow. A tomorrow where one's past does not impact the opportunity to thrive. A tomorrow where race and the color of one's skin do not dictate the future. A tomorrow where our shared humanity sparks love, joy, and community.

Tomorrow starts today.

At **OAR**, we are working to build a stronger, safer, and more just community for all. Where those impacted by the criminal legal system can enjoy equal civil and human rights. Through our "**Upstream**" efforts, including training and legislative advocacy, we are confronting and dismantling personal racism, systemic racism, and structural inequalities plaguing our society. Our "**Downstream**" efforts support individuals of all genders participating in our alternative sentencing and diversion programs (including community service), our pre-release programs, and those returning to the community from incarceration. We also assist, connect, reunify, and encourage their families.

For 49 years, OAR has been privileged to partner with thousands of individuals as they journey toward *their* tomorrow - individuals like **Damian***.

Damian grew up in a complex environment. He described his mother as warm and supportive of her four children and described his home as a place filled with joy, laughter, music, and love. However, Damian had a complex relationship with his father, who was in and out of incarceration his whole life. Seeing his father struggle with a substance use disorder, Damian made the personal decision to stop using drugs and alcohol.

Damian had an equally complex relationship with the area where he grew up. Being the youngest child, he watched each sibling slowly succumb to what he saw as the "troubles" that seemed to always be around the corner in his neighborhood. He and his siblings would make plans for how they would be different and how they would get out. He quietly shared that "none of us made it." When Damian's father passed away and Damian's girlfriend gave birth to their baby, he said he felt "overwhelmed and desperate." He shared, "I just made a lot of bad decisions...It all started happening so fast, and before I could even figure out how to get out of it all, I was arrested." Damian came to OAR after he was referred by his public defender to do some community service

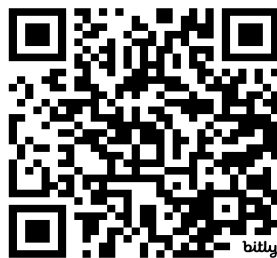
before he returned to court. He recalled, “Community service was great for me. I felt relief when I was doing it. I like connecting to such good energy and people doing something good for the community, and I was glad to be a part of it. I actually got there early each day because I liked it so much.” When reflecting on his experience, Damian shared, “I feel bad about the last year. There are many things I could have done instead of what I did...I want to be that one person who beats the odds. That person who is older and can say, ‘You know, I made mistakes when I was young, but I turned it around.’ I don’t want to be stuck like so many of my friends in this negative energy.”

Damian is also a part of the OAR Diversion Program and is in the process of being connected with a licensed clinician and peer recovery specialists. Damian said he is excited about these opportunities. He has the willingness, he says, to talk about all that he has experienced in life with a trained therapist, “I don’t feel sorry for myself, but I know I have to talk through some stuff with someone so that I can move forward, clear and strong.” OAR was also able to support Damian with his basic needs as he was released from incarceration, items such as clothing, phone, temporary housing, food, and transportation fare. Damian commented that he had been to many agencies in his lifetime, but he was never received as warmly as he was at OAR. He said that he doesn’t always feel comfortable talking to many people, but “I have talked with the people at OAR more than I think I have talked at one time to anyone in my life. I just really like the energy of this place.”

Damian is just one of the **2,000 individuals and families** OAR has been on the journey with this year thanks to the generosity of donors and the community. **I hope their stories uplift you this season and inspire you to encourage their efforts through your financial gifts to OAR.**

Donate Now

Your financial support allows OAR to stay in the fight for racial justice and liberation and to journey with participants and their families. Donations may also be made on our website at <https://bit.ly/oardonate>, or by scanning the QR code below.



If you have already donated, we are so grateful. Thank you always for your support and making it possible for us to be on this journey.

Thank you for supporting OAR and being on the journey with us. All of our tomorrows are brighter thanks to you and your generosity.

Wishing you and your loved ones many moments of joy,



Elizabeth Jones Valderrama
Executive Director, OAR Collective member of 18+ years

More About OAR

OAR is a community-based nonprofit organization that envisions a safe & thriving community where those impacted by the legal system enjoy equal civil & human rights. Through our Upstream work, we are confronting & dismantling individual racism & racism in the legal system & across all systems. Our Downstream work allows us to be on the journey with individuals returning from incarceration & their families. We also offer alternative sentencing options (including community service) and diversion programs so people can avoid the trauma of incarceration & instead help the community thrive.

OAR is a Collective, non-dominant, decolonizing, pro-Black, racially just, radically joyful, deeply loving, come as you are, liberated organization that puts participants first. We center authentic and fully engaged relationships with all members of the OAR community.

**OAR uses people-first and strength-based language and sees participants as experts on themselves and leaders for their own life and plans. We constantly seek feedback and guidance from participants and pride ourselves on having an ethical storytelling philosophy that respects the dignity and protects the privacy of each person we work with. To protect their privacy, we do not use the actual names, photos, or videos of actual participants. For more on OAR's Ethical Storytelling Policy visit our website [here](#).*

Our Contact Information

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OAR Walk-In Hours
Monday – Friday | 10:30am-12:00pm,
1:00pm-3:00pm