



FEBRUARY 2022

## YES' Executive Director Meets with Mayor Ed Gainey

As we enter the second month of 2022, we are both excited and cautious about the way forward. We are met with daily excitement and dutiful responsibility as teens fill our office in anticipation of meeting their friends, classmates, and peers in a safe, inclusive space where they can just be themselves and remain healthy during the rise of COVID-19. Even in our shift to in-person programming, we remain steadfast and diligent in our pursuit to support youth and families in accessing the vaccine to protect our community.



As we strive to keep our community healthy and safe, we know that our efforts must extend beyond COVID-19. In an effort to tackle the heightened violence in our neighborhood, YES is spearheading important initiatives alongside local and regional stakeholders to mitigate these enduring community challenges.

In doing so, I have had the pure pleasure of meeting with the newly sworn-in Mayor, Ed Gainey. Mayor Gainey was a gracious host. We discussed youth interventions and community-based solutions to ongoing violence and underachievement of youth from some of our communities. I left with a better appreciation of the challenges facing this administration and the laser focus this Mayor has on addressing these challenges!

As mentioned in our previous newsletter, YES' yearly theme is one of Peace and Non-Violence. As one of our first priorities, YES is preparing a well-crafted curriculum to weave issues of public safety, mutual respect, academic achievement, career focus, and mentor/leadership for our young people. This will give our students the boost they need to address these issues firsthand and successfully move forward with a more positive and optimistic lens on their life outcomes.

More to come on these initiatives in our forthcoming newsletters.

For now, peace and blessings,



Dr. Jones

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## YES Meets with Zone 5 Police to Discuss Emerging Partnerships



In early February, YES staff met with Tiffany Kline-Costa, Sergeant in Pittsburgh Police Community Engagement Office, and Stephen Vinansky, Pittsburgh Police Zone 5 Commander, to discuss opportunities for YES to work with Pittsburgh Police personnel to build positive relationships with youth and law enforcement officers.

YES' longstanding success in its diversion efforts were praised and cited as evidence for emerging partnerships between the organization and the Pittsburgh Police's work to create pre-arrest support for youth. Moving forward, YES hopes to create meaningful relationships between individual Zone 5 officers and YES youth through informal interactions, like basketball games and shared meals, in order for youth to form relationships with law enforcement before a crisis occurs. More information on this partnership is forthcoming.

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## Former YES-Scholar-in-Residence Publishes Article on Justice Entrepreneurship



YES is a community laboratory where scholar practitioners test ideas, explore concepts, and learn from community members firsthand.

Dr. Paul Feigenbaum, an English Professor at Florida International University, has demonstrated this ethos through his recent publication that captures his thought work as a scholar-in-residence at YES.

Paul has been an instrumental partner in helping YES build its scholarly capacity and thinking about its entrepreneurial footprint. Dr. Feigenbaum's recent work focuses on literacy and Justice Entrepreneurship for which YES serves as a case study.

To learn more about this work and YES' entrepreneurial endeavors, [click here.](#) »



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### YES Commences Learn and Earn Recruitment

YES is excited to serve as an Application Support Center again for Partner4Work's Learn and Earn Program. As a Center, YES is helping young people ages 14 – 21 gain access to summer employment opportunities.

Learn and Earn is a dynamic six-week summer workforce initiative that allows young people across the City and County to develop valuable skills, obtain important employment insights, and build their economic capacity.



Please contact Jasmine Davis [jdavis@yespgh.org](mailto:jdavis@yespgh.org) if you know young people interested in

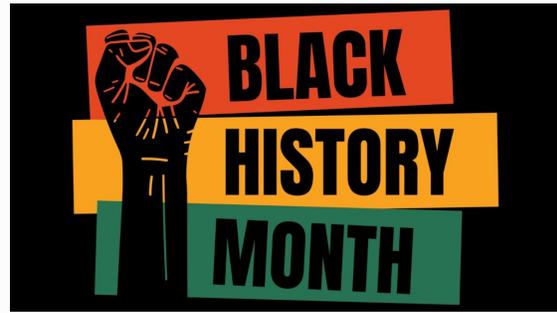
## YES Celebrates Black History Month

To celebrate Black History Month, YES students learned about the French colonization of Black countries throughout history. YES' Pitt Community Assistant, Kylee Kolbicka, created an engaging and in-depth lesson for youth to participate in.

YES students also had the opportunity to sample traditional Caribbean Cuisine. In particular, students participated in a mapping activity to identify which African countries France has colonized and learned about the Haitian Revolution.

The event concluded with a discussion of the thousands of French dialects and a lesson on basic French words and phrases.

#BlackExcellence #BlackHistoryEveryday



## Three New Board Members Join YES



Bill List



Prameela Janardanan



Don Seaton

As YES enters the second year of its Strategic Action Plan, YES welcomes three new board members: Bill List, Prameela Janardanan, and Don Seaton to support its strategic

initiatives, financial capacity building efforts, and program development alongside longstanding and dedicated volunteers.

Each of our newest board members has a genuine commitment to the young people YES serves and a sincere heart for YES' core mission. Their deep passion for YES is also coupled with their unique industry expertise that will certainly help push YES forward at a critical moment in the agency's history.

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

### Two YES Students “Return Home” as Junior Mentors

#### Na’Caira Amhurst

Na’Caira Amhurst embodies a creative and innovative spirit unique to YES. Na’Caira was first introduced to YES through its Virtual Mentor Initiative designed to help students with their virtual pandemic learning experiences. After the program concluded, Na’Caira continued working in various cosmetology settings to refine her hair design skills.

Because of her hard work, she is graduating early and preparing to attend college. In preparation for her post-secondary journey, she reconnected with YES for program opportunities. In doing so, she recently joined YES' Business Education Partnership Program where she will design a cosmetology program for youth during YES' afterschool “Power Hours.” She will facilitate her curriculum, assume a mentorship role, and pursue her licensure as a Temporary Nursing Aide before she continues her education at IUP or CCAC. Way to go, Na’Caira.

[Read more on our website. »](#)

#### Jason Lewis

Jason Lewis similarly embodies what YES hopes its students achieve. Jason was first introduced to YES through its Diversion 2000 Program. After successfully completing the program, he became an active member of YES' Voices 2 Men Program.

After some time away to focus on sports, Jason has returned to YES as a Junior Mentor! He is currently designing and leading Voices 2 Men sessions, developing 1-hour workouts for his peers to participate in during the summer, and offering wise words of advice to his peers. Jason recently committed to Lackawanna Junior College to play football and study engineering.

He is currently a Senior at Woodland Hills High School where he is a Varsity wrestler, football player, and student leader. Welcome back — and way to go, Jason!

[Read more on our website. »](#)

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT

### YES Welcomes Ricky Richburg

YES Welcome Ricky Richburg to its staff. Mr. Richburg, a Pittsburgh Native, has returned to serve his community and to empower young people to live beyond their known worlds and limitations. As demonstrated by his own life, he inspires young people to live a life of purpose, service, and meaning.



In his role as an Intervention Specialist at YES, Mr. Richburg will work with youth through YES' Diversion Program as they learn to navigate their daily stressors, questions, goals, and aspirations.



## YES Creates RMU Internship Pipeline



**Abby Zeisloft**



**Makiyah Palmer**

Recently appointed YES Board Member Donald Seaton, J.D. is an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at Robert Morris University. In his first few months as a Board Member at YES, Mr. Seaton has already created a pipeline from RMU to YES for students who are eager to immerse themselves in the daily work of YES.

For the Spring 2022 semester, YES welcomes two RMU criminal justice students, Abby Zeisloft and Makiyah Palmer, onto our team. Abby and Kiyah will support YES in formalizing a report on the organization's diversionary efforts. They will also collaborate on Learn and Earn summer recruitment and work directly with youth as time allows. YES is excited for Abby and Kiyah to begin their work experience and to head this exciting pipeline from RMU to YES.

[More information on YES volunteerism and internship opportunities can be found here. »](#)

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