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What Community Empowerment Looks Like: A Conversation with Jocelyn Medina

By James K Miller Jr.

Jocelyn Medina's journey began in the heart of Los Angeles, within the vibrant neighborhood of Koreatown. With a passion for social justice and a commitment to underserved communities, Jocelyn beams with joy when talking about her community, her work at Children's Institute, and Community Public Health Teams (CPHT).

Jocelyn first joined Children's Institute in February 2020 as a Transitional Development Specialist. She guided foster youth aged 16 through 21 into adulthood, aiding their transition out of foster care. She assisted with employment, housing, and vital document procurement, all vital steps towards independence. Becoming a Community Health Worker for CPHT was a natural progression. Her deep-rooted desire to continue supporting families and individuals aligned perfectly with the household and community-level activities that CPHT implements. Jocelyn immerses herself in the Watts community, leveraging her prior experiences and familial connections to bridge gaps and foster relationships.

Home visits are a pivotal aspect of Jocelyn's work, offering an eyewitness perspective of community dynamics. Despite the stigma often associated with Watts, Jocelyn only found warmth and hospitality. Whether talking with clients or neighbors, she experiences respect and camaraderie, which allows her to dispel misconceptions and foster trust. Jocelyn actively engages with the community through initiatives like the Watts Community Chat. These are opportunities to connect with residents, understand their concerns, and identify areas for collective improvement. Reflecting on the challenges facing Watts and Lynwood neighborhoods, Jocelyn names two major obstacles: limited awareness of available resources and transportation barriers. She believes engaging community to connect them to resources is critical, emphasizing the importance of building trust and accessibility.

Jocelyn's motivation stems from her upbringing in an underserved community, where language barriers and limited access to resources posed significant hurdles for her own family. Jocelyn knew that if her community had a person who could help them understand the health system and the process, it would have made a difference and she's determined to be that kind of person, "I saw my family face all these challenges that I see some of the community members struggle with as well." She knows people may hesitate or feel intimidated, but she remains undeterred, "Sometimes we just need someone to push us, to motivate us, to support us, so that we don't feel alone... We want to make sure that our community members do not feel alone and know they have someone there to help them no matter what they are struggling with." Jocelyn's drive to empower communities embodies the values of CPHT and serves as a beacon of hope for Watts and beyond.

Listen to their full conversation [here](#).



James K Miller (left) Jr. sits down to learn about Jocelyn Medina's (right) journey to becoming a Community Health Worker.

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