

Aquil Naji
Chief Operations Officer

Aquil Naji is co-founder and COO of Roots Community Health Center (Roots), a 501 (c) community health center licensed by the State of California Department of Health Services sec. 1204(a). Mr. Naji is also an active member of Roots Board of Directors. He has occupied both positions since Roots inception in 2008. Mr. Naji is an experienced businessman, a compelling and inspirational leader, and passionate community advocate dedicated to empowering marginalized people and eliminating health disparities in East Oakland and surrounding communities. As COO of Roots, Mr. Naji is responsible for the maintenance and flow of clinic operations, including staffing of the administrative personnel at all locations. He ensures that operations comply with applicable laws and regulations, such as HIPPA, OSHA, OIG, and performs all duties associated with operational security, licensing, and facilities management.

Before founding Roots, Mr. Naji worked in the private sector where he honed the wide-ranging skills in management and business administration that make him the effective and highly regarded organizational leader he is today. Mr. Naji brings with him 16 years of experience in business management in the private sector and 9 years of health care operations and management. In addition to his expertise in management and operations, Mr. Naji possesses the intuitive ability motivate, inspire, and build cohesive, mission-driven organizational cultures to perform his duties as Roots' COO.

From 2002-2006, Mr. Naji operated a successful bail bonds franchise with three locations in the East Bay and employed twenty-two bondsmen. As a bail bondsmen and franchise owner, Mr. Naji underwent a rigorous licensure process and was held accountable to strict regulations by the California Department of Insurance. During the five years in which Mr. Naji operated his franchise, he not only acquired the specific management and organizational skills required for this profession, he also recognized the racial disparities in the criminal justice system and began advocating for his clients within his capacity as a bail bondsman. Eventually, Mr. Naji decided to sell his prosperous franchise in order to pursue endeavors that would allow him to work directly as an advocate for African American men and to apply his knowledge about the criminal justice system to eliminating disparities within the complex culture it fosters.

As co-founder and COO of Roots Community Health Center, Mr. Naji's talents as an operations manager and devotion to understanding and passionately advocating for the needs of African American men eventually manifested in 2013 in the Roots Emancipators Initiative (Emancipators), a workforce program for men reentering society after incarceration. This program was created as a pilot in partnership with Alameda County Social Services Agency. As Program Director, Mr. Naji designed Emancipators to incorporate on the job training with curriculum that provides rudimentary education in basic chemistry and math, weights and measurements, metric conversion, manufacturing industry standards, and quality control. Importantly, Mr. Naji's program also utilizes innovative methodology to address the many barriers to long-term stability many reentry individual face, such as psycho-social factors as well as arrears child support, DMV and IRS issues, outstanding warrants, and restitution. Drawing on his years of experience working within the criminal justice system, and applying his ability to

advocate to securing relationships with key agencies, businesses, and community members, Mr. Naji created an effective system by which these barriers can be removed. Mr. Naji's remarkable ability to motivate, inspire, and mentor those with whom he works contributes to a program that improves the quality of its participants' lives by helping them to cultivate their individual strengths and navigate the world with a sense of empowerment, self-respect, and pride. Due to the success of Emancipators, Alameda County Social Services Agency approved the expansion of the program, and invited Mr. Naji to present his innovative methodology to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors for consideration of County-wide application of his barrier removal services.

Mr. Naji's broad professional experience coupled with his dedication to compassionate and effective management make him a dynamic and well-respected leader within the Oakland communities in which he affects powerful change.

Mr. Naji received his AA from De Anza Community College (1979), his degree in Dental Prosthodontics from University of the Pacific (1981), and his degree in Mortuary Science from the Institute of Mortuary Science in San Francisco, CA (1989).

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