



### **MICHAEL TOWLER**

Mr. Towler was an eight-year-old kid from a small town in Ohio, vacationing in South Los Angeles, when the Watts Uprising began. This six-day protest against police brutality and the government's paramilitary response would forever change the trajectory of Watts and the nation. Lives were lost, property destroyed, and unemployment rates skyrocketed. Mr. Towler's grandfather had been a firefighter, but when the Uprising broke out, the National Guard refused to let his grandfather and family to return to his home, so they drove to San Diego for six days.

With six children, his parents worked multiple jobs to make ends meet. They moved to Carson, California, where Mr. Towler completed his elementary and secondary education. He ended up studying accounting at California State University, Los Angeles.

During the late 1980s, Mr. Towler became a casualty of the crack epidemic that consumed the Black neighborhoods of Los Angeles. After going through treatment in 1990, he became passionate about the recovery community. He has worked with and taken leadership positions with multiple 12 step programs since 1995.

After working in the finance industry for over 15 years, Mr. Towler struggled to find meaningful work after the financial market crashed in 2008. A colleague referred him to Ms. Burton, and Mr. Towler was hired as a part-time bookkeeper for A New Way of Life. His diligence and commitment to ANWOL was rewarded, as Mr. Towler became our co-director in 2018.

The experiences of racial discrimination, the Watts Uprising, and his background in finance have all prepared Mr. Towler to lead A New Way of Life. As Mr. Towler says, he “was built to serve.” As the Co-Director of ANWOL, Mr. Towler is committed to building out the infrastructure required to end mass incarceration.