



The Black Track

Office of African American Affairs

CFA SUMMIT: EXPUNGING A PAST FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

The Code for American Summit in Washington D.C.

I was invited to attend the Code for American Summit in Washington D.C. held on May 16th and 17th by the Albuquerque Office of Black Community Engagement in partnership with the Opportunity Accelerator. The Albuquerque team traveling to Washington DC also included Dr. Nina Cooper and Dr. Billystrom Jivetti of CABQ's Office of Equity & Inclusion.

As you know the Opportunity Accelerator (OA) is a partnership of five national partners. One of the partners, Code for America (CFA), hosted the annual Summit. The 2023 CFA Summit was a two-day immersive experience. The goal was to bring together public servants, technologists, organizers, and civic tech enthusiasts. This in-person time featured keynote speakers, breakout sessions, lightning talk sessions and networking opportunities that will allowed the Office of African American Affairs to think through some of the biggest challenges facing our state/federal government and to collaborate on solutions that work well for everyone.



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The key takeaway from this 2023 Summit, was to show government what is possible, leaning into the immersive experience of Code for America's Summit to help them to understand why they should adopt new practices, policies, solutions and invest in building both technical and adaptive capacity to shift population-level economic mobility outcomes and become a more effective actor in place-based partnerships. The Summit provided our team an opportunity to convene and share the Opportunity Accelerator community's plan to build on their work of addressing structural racism and investing in the well-being of New Mexico's Black/African American residents through collaboration, partnership, and positivity.

During the opening panel discussion Jay Jordan, CEO of Alliance for Safety and Justice and National Director of TimeDone Program, presented California's recently completed expungement legislation:

Governor Newsome signed bold expungement legislation to create automatic expungement for eligible offenders starting January 1, 2021. Not to be outdone by the efforts of Pennsylvania with its clean slate law or by Utah, who starts automatic expungement next May, the Golden State passed AB 1076 that will make it so those who receive a conviction or arrest on or after January 1, 2021 will have their record automatically expunged once they meet the eligibility requirements.

"The mood across the country is becoming increasingly open to expanded expungement opportunities and automatic expungement is the next evolution of that policy. Many eligible people do not seek expungement because they cannot afford another round with the legal system or they are simply unaware of the availability of relief. Either way, our communities are left with people who have done their time to society and are still left to suffer the stigma of a criminal conviction. And the collateral consequences are not just harmful to the record holder, but to their families and the community at large. Someone with a criminal record sees their economic opportunity hampered and that impact is felt by others too.

California's automatic expungement law steps in to solve that for future people who may find themselves entangled in the criminal justice system with a receipt of their journey. Instead of an eligible person having to file a petition with the court for something they are already eligible to receive, the court agencies will now actively seek out eligible records and submit them for expungement without the applicant having to file for relief. This should help alleviate the challenge people sometimes have when pursuing expungement of their record." -Mark Jolissant
www.continuingjustice.org



The last portion of the legislation was signed by governor Newsome in 2022. This was great news for CEO Jay Jordan. He was convicted of robbery 20 years ago. His expungement became final on last Friday May 12, 2023. Could this be an exception to the rule? Perhaps, but there is no data to support that this law will be ineffective either. Only time, and qualitative data, that tracks the outcomes of those who participate in the expungement will be able to define its effectiveness and/or impact on individuals with criminal backgrounds. New Mexico's Black/African American communities could benefit from this type of Legislation. We need to disrupt the New Mexico public school to prison pipeline, period.

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