

## Take Five

**Ivory Rose Parnell**

UC Riverside, Bachelor of Arts degree in Ethnic Studies, 2005

*As volunteer/internship program director at Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WCLAC), Parnell oversees the recruitment, orientation, training, placement and recognition of volunteers throughout the organization, and has developed a corps of more than 300 volunteers and interns who give their time.*

**1. What's the most fun thing about being a volunteer/internship program director?**

Helping people realize the skills, value and potential they possess is incredibly rewarding. It is so inspiring and motivating to help people awaken skills and talents they did not know they had.

**2. Who was the most unusual/interesting volunteer who has worked for WCLAC?**

I've worked with a group of young boys ages 10 to 14. Devonte, DeJohn, Lenard and Demeterius volunteer for the events and activities we sponsor. They've helped greet guests at our monthly blues and jazz event, conduct data entry tasks and brainstorm ideas for our youth leadership volunteer component. They have faced some of the most challenging circumstances but have persevered. They are an inspiration.

**3. You traveled to South Africa during your time at UCR, helping out at an HIV/AIDS center. What about that experience contributes to who you are today?**

My experiences in South Africa, combined with my overall experiences as a community organizer and scholar, really illuminated and solidified my life's purpose of helping correct the pervasive damage and suffering caused by social injustice manifested through racism and global poverty. South Africa was my first experience out of the United States and it really inspired a strong desire to continue to travel and live my life as a global citizen.

**4. Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

This year, I will be switching career gears working with FORGE, an international non-governmental organization (NGO) and implementing partner of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) that empowers and enriches the lives of refugees. Serving as a project facilitator with FORGE, in July, I will be traveling to Zambia, Southern Africa, and working in a refugee camp implementing a resource and education initiative that will support Congolese refugees in their transition back to the Democratic Republic of Congo. So, I imagine in the next 10 years I'll be involved in similar community-driven development work that supports disenfranchised and vulnerable people.

**5. When you spoke at UCR a few months ago, you mentioned that UCR was a life-changing experience. How?**

Because of the myriad opportunities I took advantage of – to learn, discover, think, lead and grow. At UCR, I gained an academic and real-world knowledge about society and its triumphs and challenges, and I learned about the responsibility I have to make a meaningful contribution to correcting social ills. Beyond that, UCR afforded me the opportunity to meet incredible people and also travel to South Africa, where I discovered so much about myself and my purpose.