



Songhai Armstead

Executive Director

Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative/County of Los Angeles

Songhai Armstead, a longtime advocate for the underserved and an innovator within Los Angeles County's justice system, was selected to head Los Angeles County's groundbreaking Alternatives to Incarceration Initiative (ATI) beginning in September 2020.

As the office's first executive director, she oversees implementation of recommendations to make "care first, jails last" a reality in Los Angeles County, coordinating among multiple departments and community stakeholders.

Armstead was appointed to the Superior Court by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2015 and retired in 2020 to assume her new role as ATI Executive Director. As a judge, she was instrumental in creating innovative programs to assist justice-involved veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and those with mental health and substance abuse disorders—all with a focus on getting people the treatment and housing resources they need to improve their lives and break the cycle of incarceration.

A graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, Armstead earned her law degree at UCLA School of Law, where she was the first-ever African American female student body president. In her personal life, she overcame a tumultuous childhood that included stints in the foster care system and the now-closed MacLaren Hall Children's Center.

A gifted educator on the topic of implicit bias, she has trained hundreds of justice system participants, including justices of the California Supreme Court, on how powerful unseen biases shape lives and actions, and contribute to the perpetuation of systemic racism.