

PLES W. FELIX, JR.

San Diego, California

Ples W. Felix, Jr. grew up in Louisiana, later moving to Southeast Los Angeles. After high school he joined the Army Special Forces for two 12-month tours in Vietnam. His first job after graduate school was with Operation Open City in New York City's five boroughs, where he helped residents organize themselves to protect their buildings and livelihood from the blight of drugs and violence. From there, Mr. Felix Ples moved to Arizona, where he plied his problem solving skills at an alcoholism treatment facility. Six years later, Mr. Felix returned to San Diego to work for the City of San Diego Community and Economic Development Department.

Mr. Felix met Azim Khamisa for the first time in 1995. Nine months earlier, Mr. Felix's grandson, Tony Hicks, murdered Azim's son, Tariq, over a pizza in a gang-inspired shooting. Mr. Felix wanted to express his condolences to the Khamisa family. He later learned that Azim Khamisa wanted to meet with him. "I shook his hand and expressed my deepest sympathy. I committed to do anything to help his family." Together, Mr. Felix and Mr. Khamisa launched the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF) and channeled their pain into positive action. Since November, 1995, they have delivered their message about the realities of violence, forgiveness, gangs and the importance of making positive choices to over one million students.

Mr. Felix is a graduate of San Diego State University (BA, Political Science), and New School for Social Research (MA, Urban Affairs, 1977).