

WHAT IS THE **SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE**

and how does it affect our children and youth?

Children and youth in America face the threat of the school-to-prison pipeline EVERY DAY.

This pipeline criminalizes students through excessive and exclusionary school discipline policies, juvenile justice involvement, and the push of children and youth out of classrooms and into the criminal justice system.

For Black children, the school-to-prison pipeline begins the moment they start PRESCHOOL.

The Department of Education reported that Black students are disproportionately suspended from school when they're as young as 3 years old (GAO 2018). There are often fewer Black children enrolled in preschool programs, meaning they are almost 4x more likely to be suspended from school than their white counterparts (ACLU 2019).

LGBTQ students, especially gender-nonconforming students, are up to 3x more likely to receive HARSH PUNITIVE ACTION than cisgender, heterosexual students.

On top of disproportionate bullying and harassment in schools, LGBTQ youth face a similar bias in disciplinary proceedings, whereby school officials and police target and take harsher actions against them than heterosexual youth (GLSEN 2016).

Zero-tolerance discipline policies greatly contribute to the PUSHING OUT of youth.

Minor infractions of school rules are hyper-criminalized and disciplinary actions are disproportionately applied to students of color. Additionally, the reliance on school resource officers to maintain order or discipline children leads to more school-based arrests - the quickest way to take a student from the classroom to a jailhouse.

There is **racial disparity** in the percentage of LGBTQ students who have been disciplined in schools



HOW DO POLICE OPERATE IN SCHOOLS

and how can we change this relationship?

School resource officers (SRO) or school-employed police have been in U.S. schools since the 1950s. Their original purpose was to foster positive relationships between youth and police, insofar as SROs taking on mentorship roles within these schools (i.e. counselors, tutors, coaches). In the '90s, the Justice Department's COPS in Schools grant program bred new policies for the SROs that further distanced them from their initial mission as community liaisons. (Atlantic 2015)

SROs disproportionately target BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and LGBTQ+ students. In the United States, Black and Latinx girls are punished, criminalized, and even physically assaulted more than their white peers in schools by their teachers, admin, and school police. Additionally, "LGBTQ youth are at a higher risk for sanctions, such as being stopped by the police, expelled from school, arrested, or convicted." (Himmelstein & Bruckner 2011)

A survey found that 25% of school police had no experience with youth before working in schools. Having police on school campuses gives officers the power to discipline students instead of allowing school personnel and counselors to find constructive alternatives. (ACLU 2019, Education Week Research Center 2018)

Within our own community -- On June 24, 2020 an Oakland-based advocacy group, the Black Organizing Project (BOP), was successful in advocating for the divestment from school police officers. The George Floyd Resolution was approved by the Oakland Unified School District which eliminates the district's police force of 10 sworn officers and 50 campus safety officers (unarmed) <http://blackorganizingproject.org/>.

Call to Action

In Phase 2 of the George Floyd Resolution, BOP encourages community members to participate in work to secure community-based security/safety or violence prevention measures, funding for social work-related positions on campus such as counseling and social workers, and general boost in educational substance.



WHY SHOULD WE **DIVEST FROM POLICE**

and how can this help our community?

To divest the police means to redirect funds (both taxpayer money and government allotted funds) from the police and reallocate them to uplift the community, reduce police violence, and minimize other instances of crime.

Did you know that the police force in the United States developed out of **slave patrol systems**?

The police have historically been utilized to “protect and serve” the American public but at the time of the nation’s birth, their protection and service only applied to a specific group of people. In 1838, Boston was the first city to have a publicly funded, full-time police force. (TIME 2017)

According to the Urban Institute (2020), state and local governments spent \$115 billion on police in 2017. By shifting funding to social services, we are able to improve resources for mental health, substance abuse, homelessness, education, etc.

In 2013, the Anti-Violence Project reported that trans people, “were 3.7 times more likely to experience police violence and 7 times more likely to experience physical violence when interacting with police than cisgender victims and survivors” (VOX 2020). Black trans women, specifically, are targeted at significantly higher rates than the rest of the general population (Amnesty International 2006).

In San Francisco, a city with a lengthy history of police enacting violence on trans people (see Compton’s Cafeteria Riot), the annual police budget rose by \$170 million from 2019 to 2020 (SF Chronicle 2020). Increasing funds to systems that actively harm marginalized groups furthers their ability to exert their power over marginalized people.

In America, policing as an institution has never been a neutral force. Their roots are based in white supremacy and thus divesting from the police is an essential step towards liberation.

- Consult #8toAbolition for information about different facets of divesting from the police at <https://www.8toabolition.com/>



WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

and how can we build and maintain community?

Restorative justice offers an alternate approach to persecution or traditional punitive action.

It incorporates three main themes into the process: victim reparation, community interests, and individual accountability. Restorative justice practices create more accommodating and community-oriented codes of conduct such that real behavioral change and healing can exist.

On June 18th, the American Federation of Teachers called for the separation of school safety and policing.

They passed a resolution that lays out 19 different commitments they are making to combat systemic racism and violence against Black people including hiring and training nonviolent wellness and security personnel to help achieve a safe and welcoming environment for Black and brown students.

Another alternative to school resource officers is Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) programs.

PBIS is a framework that improves social behavior and academic achievement by integrating meaningful student outcomes, data, problem solving processes, and support systems into long-term school practices. These programs have proven to decrease problems in disciplinary courses of action, school climate, and bullying behavior/peer victimization (Center on PBIS 2019).

We need to implement diverse and anti-racist texts written by BIPOC into the curriculum.

By including the narratives of marginalized groups in our teaching material, we uplift and center those voices that have been historically underrepresented and frankly, suppressed. Sign the #diversifyournarrative petition at: <https://tinyurl.com/y9kmvrsn>

In contrast to the traditional justice system, restorative justice focuses on these **three questions**:

1. What law was broken? → Who has been harmed
2. Who broke it? → What are their needs?
3. How should they be punished? → Whose obligation is it to meet those needs?



HOW DO WE TALK TO KIDS ABOUT RACE

and how does this intersect with LGBTQ+ identity?

Breaching the subject of race can be tricky when talking to your kids. Understanding race in America is complex and can seem too intense for your young child to comprehend. However, it is important to teach children about race early on.

According to Jacqueline Dougé, Maryland pediatrician and child health advocate, children can begin internalizing racial bias as early as age 2. By age 12, children can become set in their beliefs, dwindling the potential to challenge or mold those views otherwise. What you say and/or do is highly monitored by the young people around you, so regardless of your intentions, you teach kids about race and beliefs every day. (American Academy of Pediatrics 2019)

In a time as tumultuous and frightening as this one, holding space for your children and students' feelings and/or questions is essential. Having open conversations with young people about race allows you to provide them with accurate information so that they may have a foundational knowledge and understanding from which to draw in situations where they witness discrimination, stereotyping, or the spread of misinformation.



When faced with questions, dig deeper into their assumptions or current understandings of race so that you can understand their positionality. If you aren't sure how to answer a specific question, acknowledge that you aren't sure and commit to finding an answer. Sometimes, we might understand how to explain certain things to other adults but not to children; utilizing language that is age-appropriate for kids will allow them to grasp the concepts we introduce more easily.

Finally, remember to actively affirm and empower Black children and children of color when discussing racism or anti-Blackness. The Human Rights Campaign (2019) found that in school and community settings, Black LGBTQ+ youth struggle to find relatable role models. We must address the inequities in education (systemically and at home) that reinforce negative representations of BIPOC LGBTQ people, history, or events (GLSEN 2020). Dissect whether or not your values and actions uphold or disrupt racism and commit to creating safe, inclusive environments for the children.

RESOURCE PAGE #1

by Chanté Cottman and Elias Shaffer

While giving children context to the struggles and continued oppression of Black people in America, the way we teach and learn about Black lives cannot stop there.

Here is a compiled list of a resources to materials that address topics critical to the Black and LGBTQ+ experience:

Books (sorted by recommended age group):

Ages 4-9:

- Hair Love by Matthew A. Cherry
- Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o
- Little Leaders: Bold Black Women in History by Vashti Harrison
 - PBS Books for Kids on Race/Diversity: <https://tinyurl.com/y5kvl54q>

Ages 9-14:

- Resist: 35 Profiles of Ordinary People Who Rose Up against Tyranny and Injustice by Vanessa Chambers
- All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

YA Novels:

- Pet by Akwaeke Emezi
- Clap When You Land by Elizabeth Acevedo
- The Black Flamingo by Dean Atta
- Anger is a Gift by Mark Oshiro
 - Expansive spreadsheet on YA queer novels by Black authors <https://tinyurl.com/yaqueerbooks>



Kid Friendly Language Guides

- NPR instruction of how to talk to white children about race in America
 - <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/03/869071246/how-white-parents-can-talk-to-their-kids-about-race>
- Teaching Tolerance provides helpful resources on talking with kids about identity
 - <https://www.tolerance.org/topics/race-ethnicity>
- How to talk to kids specifically about police brutality deaths
 - <https://www.today.com/video/sheinelle-jones-on-talking-to-her-kids-about-death-of-george-floyd-84175429628>



OFC Led/Hosted Informational Sessions:

- San Francisco Public Library annual "Dialogue: Talking with Kids about Race and Racism" supported by OFC and other Bay Area orgs: <https://tinyurl.com/y2dqg7oo>
- Election Year Discussion Resources
 - <https://sharid1.sg-host.com/blog/news/resources-for-talking-to-our-kids-and-students-about-the-election/>

RESOURCE PAGE #2

by Chanté Cottman and Elias Shaffer



Get Involved with Local Organizations Fighting for **Educational Equity**

More information from the ACLU on school to prison pipeline including link to sign up for recurring donations to their efforts to end police brutality and address the systemic anti-Blackness in our civil systems can be found using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yc6bnwd>

Watch this video from Impact Justice's director on alternative solutions to the mass incarceration problem in this country (i.e. restorative justice and other non-punitive youth diversion programs) (<https://youtu.be/NwonS2YTXBQ>) Additionally, please visit Impact Justice's website to donate to their cause if you are able.

Community Works West is an Oakland non-profit that seeks to engage youth and adults in restorative programs empowering individuals to interrogate and heal from the impacts of systemic anti-Blackness and violence. In the long-term, they want to radically reduce incarceration rates, eliminate youth criminalization, and uplift communities. Learn more about their restorative youth diversion programs here: <https://tinyurl.com/y642kdu5>

Our Family Coalition's partner, the Coleman Advocates, is a grassroots community-led organization that strives to create more effective, safe, equitable, and supportive public schools in San Francisco.

- Sign up for their e-newsletter to stay informed or get involved in their work. Alternatively, becoming a Coleman Champion allows for you to monetarily support the team on a personal level (see benefits here: <https://colemanadvocates.org/colemanchampions/>)