

PURSUING ANTI-RACIST YOUTH JUSTICE


WHAT IT MEANS TO "DEFUND POLICE" AND INVEST IN YOUTH



As a network of organizations and individuals committed to anti-racism, the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) has long recognized that our systems of policing and justice are rooted in and have grown out of white supremacy. In the wake of recent incidents of police brutality and current uprisings, it is clear that calls for reform are not enough. NJJN stands with the call from our members for wide-scale defunding of police and reinvestment in communities of color. Now is the time to confront the racist roots of the youth justice system and push for a new vision of justice that supports Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities.


NJJN is in the process of engaging with our members to put forth a new vision of justice. As we begin this work, we want to uplift some of the core demands that our members and allies have called for in the wake of recent uprising:

REINVEST IN YOUTH




To keep communities safe, we must shift money from police forces around the country collectively receiving over \$100 billion annually. Public safety would be better served by investing in health care, education, housing, and other resources needed for positive youth development. Investing in culturally relevant community-based services that prioritize accountability and harm restoration -- such as restorative justice, credible messengers, and other mentoring and health services, is proven to support young people, reduce crime, and increase savings. It is not enough to simply provide "services;" we need to focus on measurable outcomes that show improvement in the quality of life for communities that have been purposely disinvested by those in power.

NO POLICE IN SCHOOLS



The number of police in schools has skyrocketed while the number of school counselors has dropped, leaving Black and Brown youth feeling targeted and unsafe in their own schools. We have seen school closures in communities of color across the nation, while simultaneously seeing multi-million dollar contracts go to police departments in those same school districts. Prioritizing student safety requires schools to end contracts with police and invest in social and emotional learning, restorative justice, school counselors and social workers, community intervention workers, and mentoring.

STOP YOUTH ARRESTS



Arresting youth and subjecting them to the justice system does not work for our young people or for public safety. Ending youth arrests requires divestment from police and a shift to a community-centered approach that emphasizes positive youth development and public health for youth and families. The focus must be on limiting the role of police and adopting supportive strategies that include: limiting arrest and suspensions, decriminalizing resisting arrest; funding and referring youth to community-based programs that center the voices of youth of color and their families; and raising the age of juvenile court jurisdiction. No longer can we allow arrest of primarily Black and Brown youth under the thin veil of services; rather, we need to support youth and their families and afford them the same opportunities at success regardless of their zip code.

REPEAL AND PREVENT RACIST POLICIES



We must repeal all policies that target Black and Brown communities such as gang databases, drug sentencing laws, and youth transfer laws. At the same time, we must pass federal, state, and local laws that eliminate racial profiling by law enforcement, mandate data collection, impose accountability for violations, and allow individuals to seek relief through the courts. State legislatures should also enact racial impact statements to prevent the passage of laws that harm Black and Brown youth. All decision makers must also analyze policies for their impact on youth of color and act to repeal or prevent those that target communities of color.

CLOSE YOUTH PRISONS AND REINVEST IN COMMUNITIES



While we must stop the pipeline of youth into the justice system, we cannot leave behind youth in prison. Youth prisons harm our youth physically and mentally and take precious resources out of our communities that should be used to help youth and families to thrive. Keeping youth incarcerated costs states anywhere from \$240 to \$667 per day, while community based programs, average only \$75 per day and yield better results for youth. The money divested from youth prisons should be redirected to provide healthy living environments for children and families, including adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, and jobs.

DISMANTLE RACISM



At the end of the day, we must acknowledge that racism permeates our society, organizations, and systems because racism is the foundation on which this country was built. While we believe the above are steps that can be taken to uproot racist policies that effect youth of color, we acknowledge the real work is deeper, requiring individuals and organizations to actively work to become anti-racist. We must analyze our role in white supremacy culture, challenge systems that harm communities of color, and actively work to dismantle policies that harm youth.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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