

WE CAME TO LEARN



A Call to Action for Police-Free Schools



Alliance for
Educational
Justice



Executive Summary



Safety does not exist when Black and Brown young people are forced to interact with a system of policing that views them as a threat and not as students. For many Black and Brown youth, the presence of police in their schools disrupts their learning environments. There is a culture clash that exists between law enforcement and the learning environment: police enforce criminal laws, while schools are supposed to nurture students. This report addresses the stark reality that police in schools is an issue of American racial disparity that requires deep structural change. We will explore the question of why police are in schools at all and conclude that police are incongruent with the educational environment we envision for our children.

First, this report examines the advent of policing practices in America's public schools and their historical roots in suppressing Black and Latino student movement and the criminalization of Black childhood. We discuss the documented harms of school policing, including the disparate impact that policing has on students of color, students with disabilities, and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA).

The report centers the voices of young people from around the country who describe the everyday indignities that they experience at the hands of school police. It also, for the first time, catalogues known assaults of young people by school police officers. The report shines a spotlight on three particular cases where young people were assaulted by school police and how their communities responded. These

case studies – in Oakland, CA, in Philadelphia, PA, and in Spring Valley, SC, serve as models in the fight to end school policing. The report chronicles how Black and Brown youth have used organizing and advocacy to advance a vision of school safety that is not reliant on policing.

This report then documents the school policing model and discusses how school police became institutionalized in America's public education system through funding and policy at both the federal and local level. This report exposes the broad lack of accountability that school police benefit from. By illustrating how different school police operations are structured and function, this report provides readers with a clearer understanding of how pervasive and negative the impact on educational outcomes for students of color truly is.

Finally, the report calls for the removal of police from schools and envisions schools where Black and Brown students are afforded the presumption of childhood that they deserve. Policing in our schools must be supplanted by divesting from militarization and investing in community-building strategies that not only improve the quality of safety for students of color, but the quality of their educational experience.

Judith Browne Dianis
Executive Director
Advancement Project, National Office



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Alliance for Educational Justice



About Us

Advancement Project's national office is a next generation, multi-racial civil rights organization. Rooted in the great human rights struggles for equality and justice, we exist to fulfill America's promise of a caring, inclusive and just democracy. We use innovative tools and strategies to strengthen social movements and achieve high impact policy change. Founded by a team of veteran civil rights lawyers in 1999, Advancement Project's national office uses the same high quality legal analysis and public education campaigns that produced the landmark civil rights victories of earlier eras. Advancement Project's national office works in deep partnership with organized communities of color to dismantle and reform the unjust and inequitable policies that undermine the promise of democracy through the development of community-based solutions to racial justice issues.

The national office's Opportunity to Learn Program has been building and supporting the movement to end the school-to-prison pipeline for almost twenty years. We have published groundbreaking reports and secured cutting-edge wins in school districts throughout the country. Working with youth and parents of color, we have won victories that have changed the way discipline is done, limited the role of law enforcement, developed alternatives to harsh discipline, and reformed laws. We have supported local groups by building their organizing capacity and strengthening their campaigns by

analyzing data, policy and laws, and amplifying their voices in the media. To create openings for breakthroughs, Advancement Project's national office has provided substantial communications support to the movement commissioning public opinion research, developing messaging and moving new narratives through national strategic communications. In an effort to accelerate change, Advancement Project's national office has trained more than 1,000 youth and parents from groups across the country on how to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline through its ActionCamp organizing trainings.

The Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ)

a national network of 30 youth-led and intergenerational group across 12 states and 14 cities dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline. Formed by its members, the Alliance bring two decades' experience of building powerful campaigns for systemic change at the local, state and federal level. Core to us is a belief in youth organizing as an approach and proven methodology to develop youth leadership, facilitate personal transformation and create community change. In the Alliance, youth are decision-makers in campaigns and organizational development through national meetings and regional convenings. Our national youth organizing program, the Youth Justice Corps, engages nearly 300 youth leaders from membership organizations in political education movement building. As a movement building

and training in transformative organizing and alliance, AEJ has served as an catalyst in the creation of other national education justice formations.

The Alliance formed in 2008 during the Obama administration and the pending reauthorization of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, then titled No Child Left Behind. The nineteen organizations formed the Alliance based on their experience of zero tolerance laws and the policies of No Child Left Behind being used to defend discriminatory school discipline and shield other education inequities in local schools.

By 2014 the national movement led by the Alliance against the school-to-prison pipeline grew to be so powerful that ending the school-to-prison pipeline became a top priority of the U.S. Department of Education. The Alliance was a leading force influencing the Department of Education to disavow zero tolerance discipline as federal education policy, require reporting of discipline data, and shift federal resources away from punitive discipline towards restorative justice.



Youth of color participate in Advancement Project's 2018 ActionCamp: Policing Race

Acknowledgements

***“We Came To Learn: A Call to Action For Police-Free Schools”* is the result of years of shared work, conversations, and strategy. We dedicate this to the named and unnamed youth and families that have been hurt or harmed by police violence in school. We lift up the names of Niya, Shakara, Brian, Que’Chawn, and Raheim, whose stories are featured. We are especially thankful to all those who made this report possible:**

The youth who are building power in their communities and doing bold and courageous work to organize their peers.

The organizations and individuals who are resisting the movement to police and criminalize our schools and who are fighting for Black and Brown futures.

School policymakers who are working hard to transform the very definition of safety at a time of national tragedy.

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Organizing Partners

Who shared their school
police experiences

Voices of the Unheard
Urban Youth Collaborative
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Puente Arizona
Power U Center for Social Change
Philadelphia Student Union
Padres y Jóvenes Unidos
Make the Road New York
Leaders Ignited Transformation
Brighton Park Neighborhood Council

Organizing Partners

Highlighted in case studies

Philadelphia Student Union
Black Organizing Project
Alliance for Education Justice

Our Funders

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work

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Advancement Project Staff & Opportunity To Learn Team

For their vision, leadership & writing this
report

MILITIA Design

For turning our words into works of art



A photograph of a diverse group of people, likely students, looking towards the camera. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered over the image.

We Came To Learn

Introduction

Introduction

In the aftermath of the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, in which 17 people were killed, state legislatures and school districts have rushed to attempt to secure our school buildings by adding more police and arming school staff. These steps will not make students safer; in fact, they will jeopardize healthy learning climates and put students in danger. Students, particularly students of color, already attend schools that look and feel like prison. Students must step through metal detectors, live under the constant view of surveillance cameras, and encounter police in their school hallways. In buildings where they should feel safe and cared for, many students of color are forced to interact with the cops from the same police departments that they, their families, and their communities do not trust. The police force that patrols hallways is the same police force that aggressively stops and frisks people of color at alarmingly high rates and employs excessive, often deadly force against Black people for any reason and no reason at all. Young people have vivid memories of highly televised killings and assaults of Black and Brown people by police, yet they are being told that law enforcement will keep them safe. For far too many students, this is not their experience. In fact, they fear for their safety because police are patrolling their schools.

Safety does not exist when Black and Brown

young people are forced to interact with a system of policing that views them as a threat and not as students. The policing of students of color and their communities is tied to a long history of American racism, and is a continuation of a centuries-long attempt to oppress Black and Brown communities. Communities of color across the United States are under siege by an unforgiving criminal justice system infected with structural and individual racism. It starts with unfair laws that criminalize even the most minor actions, contact with biased law enforcement that operate under policies that breed a culture of violence, discretionary decisions of strict prosecutors and judges, and a correctional system designed to nullify the 13th Amendment. School police, and our educational system at large, operate as an extension of this same racist and unforgiving system. Instead of officers who see it as their job to protect and serve the students in a school building, officers employ a “law and order” approach in which students of color are subjects to be policed, not people who need protection.

Police in schools mean more than just occasional visits by local patrolmen. Policing students in school has become a pervasive practice—at least in schools with substantial Black and Brown populations in both inner cities and small towns. School boards have entered into formal agreements with police departments to patrol

“To me, safety is walking into my school campus and not being watched by a police officer, waiting for me to make a mistake. Safety means having better counselors, having better supports to advance in my education. Safety means being welcomed and trusted. Safety means having input to decide what our schools can look like and feel like.” Michelle Ruiz, 18, Puente Arizona, Phoenix

schools and some have even formed separate police departments that are dedicated to policing students in schools. Students regularly interact with metal detectors, school resource officers, handcuffs, sweeps, and drug sniffing dogs as part of their school day. The presence of police in schools also conditions students of color to accept the constant presence of police as a part of their everyday existence. Placing officers in schools makes them agents of socialization, teaching impressionable Black and Brown children that compliance is of utmost importance.¹

Young people of color are systematically denied the right to be safe in school when police officers are deployed in hallways and classrooms. The presence of police in schools threatens student safety and denies students the opportunity to learn because it leads to criminalization for age-appropriate behaviors. This is especially true for children of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA students who are disproportionately funneled through the school-to-prison pipeline.

This report exposes the stark reality that policing in schools is an issue of American racial domination, not of school safety. In fact, in the

stories recounted, student safety was risked at the hands of school police. The report examines the advent of policing practices in America’s public schools, the institutionalization of the police model through funding and policy, and the devastating impact school policing has on young people of color. The report chronicles how Black and Brown youth have used organizing and advocacy to advance a vision of school safety that is not reliant on policing. Finally, the report calls for the removal of police from schools.



A crowd of people at a protest, overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. The text is centered in white.

We Came To Learn
America's History of
Policing Students of
Color



Youth of color participate in Advancement Project's 2018 ActionCamp: Policing Race



America's History of Policing Students of Color

School policing is inextricably linked to this country's long history of oppressing and criminalizing Black and Brown people and represents a belief that people of color need to be controlled and intimidated. Historically, school police have acted as agents of the state to suppress student organizing and movement building, and to maintain the status quo. Local, state and federal government agencies, designed to protect dominant White power institutions, made the intentional decision to police schools in order to exercise control of growing power in Black and Brown social movements. In this, the police have been remarkably successful: despite the over 60 years that have passed since schools were integrated, Black and Brown students are denied the opportunity to fully participate in and benefit from public education.

The School Policing Origin Story

Suppressing Youth-Led Movements for Racial Justice

The introduction of police to school districts serving Black and Latino students would set the stage for today's school policing infrastructure. Law enforcement was embedded in schools beginning as early as the 1940s. Indianapolis Public Schools hired a "special investigator" to serve the school district from 1939 to 1952, when the position was renamed "supervisor of special watchmen."² In 1970, the watchmen would become the Indianapolis Public School Police.³ Similarly, the Los Angeles School Police Department traces its origins to 1948, when a

security unit was created to patrol schools under the pretense of protecting school property after integration.⁴

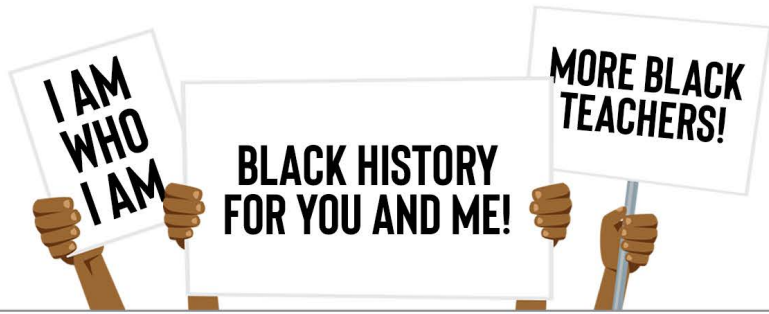
In 1953, the first School Resource Officer positions were created in schools in Flint, Michigan.⁵ The School Resource Officer Program in Flint was branded as an attempt to "improve community relations between the city's youth and the local police department."⁶ After receiving favorable media attention, cities across the country slowly began importing similar programs into their schools. In 1966, the Tucson Police Department stationed police in six junior high campuses. That same year, in Florida, Dade County Education Commission authorized the creation of a Security Services Department in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.⁷ A year later, Baltimore City effectively created a school security division by requesting that 25 police officers patrol the schools. In 1969, the expansion of school policing as a strategy to control youth of color continued with the creation of the School Safety Division in New York City. In Chicago, the police department used plainclothes officers to police school settings, patrolling schools in the South Side and their surrounding neighborhoods as a "preventive" measure. By 1972, urban school districts in 40 states had some form of school-policing infrastructure in their schools. Police presence was almost immediately accompanied by policy changes that criminalized students. For example, shortly after establishing its school security force, Maryland's state legislature passed a law making it a crime to disturb school activities.⁸

The expansion and increased reliance on school policing coincides with the state's desire to suppress growing social movement against

inequality. Sparked by Black youth in the South demanding an end to Jim Crow segregation and racial violence, the 1950s ushered in new social, political and legal possibilities for racial justice in the United States. Young people from Greensboro, North Carolina to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, participated in direct actions to confront segregation head on and bring national attention to the race-based caste system of Jim Crow.⁹ Black and Latino high school students, grounded in Black and Chicano freedom movements, organized against racial discrimination in schools and demanded culturally-relevant curriculums and schools that supported them.

The movement was supported by legal decisions dismantling legalized discrimination. In 1954, the Supreme Court held in *Brown v. Board of Education* that school segregation was unconstitutional, overturning the "separate but equal" doctrine established by *Plessy v. Ferguson* and mandating public school desegregation.¹⁰ However, many school districts refused to desegregate, requiring federal military intervention to force states to end school segregation.

Schools were often an epicenter of the fight for racial justice. Attempts to dismantle systemic discrimination, like student protests, were often responded to with displays of police power intended to suppress and delegitimize the movement. Local, state, and federal governments coordinated policing strategies to suppress Black and Latino student organizing across the country. These communities participated in acts of civil disobedience to demand dignity and human rights. However, their bravery and righteous indignation were met with fire hoses, police dogs,

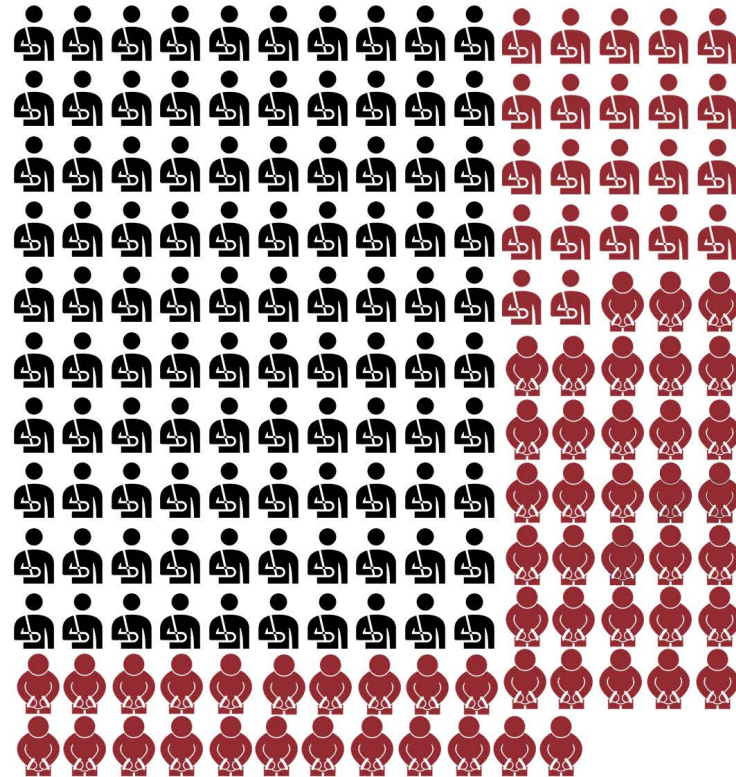


On November 17, 1967, 3,500 Philadelphia students walked out of school and marched to the Board of Education, demanding Black history courses, more Black educators and the freedom to express their culture.

By order of Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo, students were confronted by 100 police officers in full riot gear.



According to personal accounts, hundreds of students were beat, 22 people were seriously injured and 57 were arrested.



source: Whitehorne, Ron. "1967: African American Students Strike, Survive Police Riot to Force Change." The Notebook (September 25, 2002).



Bob Mooney - Philadelphia student protests during at Philadelphia Board of Education on Nov. 17, 1976



Youth of color participate in Advancement Project's 2018 ActionCamp: Policing Race



and the National Guard, while television and newspapers depicted the protests as criminal acts instead of political demonstrations for social progress. The rhetoric of “law and order” emerged in the 1950s as southern officials and law enforcement generated opposition to the civil rights movement.¹¹ For over a decade, law enforcement agencies made a concerted effort to link crime to civil disobedience, direct action tactics, and organizing.

Law enforcement was also used to uphold school segregation. In 1957, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus ordered the state’s National Guard to block the Little Rock Nine – nine Black students who enrolled in a formally White-only high school – from entering Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. But school police responded to student demands for equal schools in other ways too.

On November 17, 1967, 3,500 Philadelphia students walked out of school and marched to the Board of Education, demanding Black history courses, more Black educators and the freedom to express their culture. By order of Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo, students were confronted by 100 police officers in full riot gear. According to personal accounts, hundreds of students were beat, 22 people were seriously injured and 57 were arrested.¹²

Months later in Los Angeles, approximately 15,000 Chicano students walked out of class, demanding a curriculum reflective of their Mexican-American history and culture, bilingual education, and educators of Mexican descent. Students were met with blocked doors and armed police. After the walkouts, multiple student beatings were reported and 13 of the

organizers were arrested on felony conspiracy charges for disturbing the peace, facing up to 66 years in prison each.¹³ In 1971, the Black Student Federation led over half of Boston Public Schools’ Black students in a boycott to protest segregation and poor educational conditions. Boston students also demanded Black community control of schools, culturally relevant curriculum, more Black educators, and the removal of police from schools.¹⁴



Criminalization of Black Communities

The “War on Drugs,” Broken Windows Policing and the Myth of “Superpredators”

Despite courtroom victories and groundbreaking civil rights legislation, people of color saw little change in their everyday lives. Black and Brown communities continued to be plagued by employment and housing discrimination, underfunded schools and widespread police violence. In 1969, President Richard Nixon declared a “War on Drugs” that rapidly increased the over-policing of Black and Brown people. The “War on Drugs” was more accurately described by Nixon’s former aide as a war to criminalize anti-war activists and Black people.¹⁵ Biased enforcement of drug laws and mandatory minimums resulted in the incarceration of individuals for decades for victimless drug offenses. These policies helped tear apart Black and Brown communities. Adults and children alike were caught in the crossfire of this war. Parents and other community members were victims of increased policing in their communities, biased stop-and-frisk policies, and harsh sentences for low-level drug offenses. School suspensions also started to increase exponentially during this time period.¹⁶ In the 1990s, communities experienced the proliferation of school policing as a coordinated strategy between the federal

government, local municipalities and school districts to control Black and Brown youth under the guise of public safety. Under the leadership of New York’s “Tough on Crime” Mayor, Rudy Giuliani, the NYC Board of Education voted to transfer school safety from educators to the New York Police Department.¹⁷ Today, the School Safety Division of the NYPD is the largest school police force in the country with over 5,200 school police officers. Ultimately, the “War on Drugs” was a war on people of color, with traumatizing ramifications that continue to negatively impact both neighborhoods and classrooms.

Students experienced an overpolicing of classrooms, harsh, zero-tolerance school disciplinary policies, and a systematic underinvestment in their schools. Dangerous philosophies like the Broken Windows Theory helped spread a culture of over-criminalization and zero-tolerance practices into school buildings. The broken windows theories held that if authorities responded harshly to small infractions (like broken windows in a neighborhood) then they would see a drop in more serious crimes.

In schools, this manifested itself in codes of conduct that suspended students for minor and non-violent behavior like dress code violations, being in the hallways, or talking back.¹⁸ Zero-tolerance discipline flourished and in 1994, Congress passed the Gun Free Schools Act,¹⁹ requiring school districts to adopt zero-tolerance policies for weapon offenses. In drafting their own statutes and laws, states dramatically expanded zero-tolerance discipline to include harsh responses for trivial matters and normal student behavior.²⁰

President Bill Clinton's Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act also passed in 1994, creating the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS).²¹ The largest crime bill to date, the act radically increased federal funding for policing in schools and communities. Over the last twenty years, COPS has spent nearly \$300 million on school policing and its infrastructure.²² While referencing a soon-to-be debunked theory on youth violence, then First Lady, Hillary Clinton, rallied support for the bill by stating: "They are often the kinds of kids that are called 'superpredators' —no conscience, no empathy. We can talk about why they ended up that way, but first, we have to bring them to heel."²³ Her racially charged and coded words reverberated in state houses, city halls, and classrooms across the country. Black youth were dangerous predators that needed to be dealt with as such.

The call for more policing and law enforcement strategies in schools reached a critical juncture after the 1999 Columbine High School shooting in Colorado. During this attack, two high school seniors shot and killed 12 students and a teacher, and injured 24 additional students.²⁴

The massacre was caught on the high school's security cameras, forever altering society's view of school policing. Immediately after the school shooting, the Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services created the COPS in Schools grant, awarding more than \$750 million in grants and hiring more than 6,500 school police officers.²⁵ While this attack happened at a primarily White, suburban school, Black and Latino students suffered from the aftermath of expanded school policing policies and practices.²⁶

There have been similar investments in the COPS program and law enforcement structures at the federal level following the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School and the 2018 shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Federal school policing proposals tend to spur state and local investments in school policing as well. Most recently, these proposals have included stationing an armed officer at every school, increasing law enforcement in schools, deploying the National Guard or state troopers, and even arming teachers. These national tragedies continue to be used as justifications to enact policies that increase the number of police and weapons in schools and that make schools less safe for Black and Brown students.

Young people in school today are interacting with a larger police presence than ever before. From 1999-2015, a higher percentage of students reported the presence of metal detectors and police or security guards in school.²⁷ The National Association of School Resource Officers estimates that there are between 14,000 and 20,000 school resource officers nationwide. This estimate does not account for street cops,

security guards, and other law enforcement personnel who may patrol school hallways and classrooms. In addition to the intensified presence of police officers, metal detectors, K-9 units, and military-grade weapons are also common features in schools with large numbers of students of color. The increased police presence and militarization of schools has led to a rise in school-based arrests and to Black students being arrested at more than twice the rate of White students.²⁸

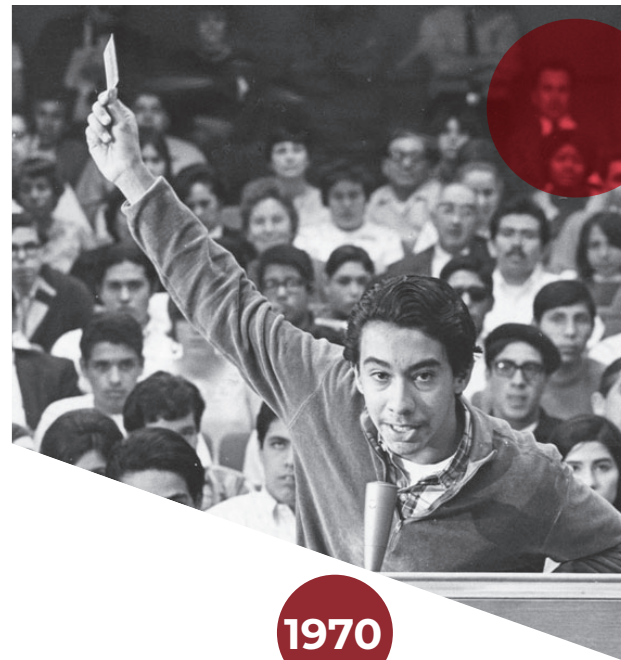
If this history teaches us anything, it is that the presence of police in schools serving primarily students of color reflect a continued effort to control and criminalize Black and Brown youth and deny their opportunity to learn in safe supportive schools.



1967

1967-68: Student Resistance

Rise of Black and Chicano student walkouts from Philadelphia to Los Angeles, demanding culturally-relevant education, educators of color, and quality education. Students were confronted by buses or armed police officers, police violence, and arrests. 13 organizers of the L.A. Blowouts were arrested on felony conspiracy charges for “disturbing the peace” after the LAPD infiltrated their organizing efforts.



1970

1970-80s: War on Drugs

President Richard Nixon later President Ronald Reagan, declares the War On Drugs, funneling \$1.7 billion to police departments. The War on Drugs mandated minimum sentencing, even for low-level drug law violations, resulting in drastic racial disparities in the prison system.



1953

1953: First School Resource Officers

The first time law enforcement officers, known as School Resource Officers (SROs), were permanently assigned to schools was 1953 in Flint, Michigan. The SRO Program rapidly expanded throughout the 1960s and 1970s to other school districts, including Los Angeles, California, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Local police departments in Tucson, Chicago, Miami, Baltimore, New York and Washington, D.C. began placing police officers on school grounds, patrolling hallways, and performing random check-ins.

1994

1975 - 2014: Rise of School Policing

1975 - 1% of U.S. schools report having police stationed on campus to 2014 – 24% of elementary schools and 42% of secondary schools report having sworn law enforcement on campus.

1990: Federal 1033 Program

Through the National Defense Authorization Act, Congress authorized the transfer of excess Department of Defense personal property to federal and state agencies for use in counter-drug activities, creating the Federal 1033 Program. Congress later passed the National Defense Authorization Act of 1997, allowing all law enforcement agencies to acquire property for bona fide law enforcement purposes that assist in their arrest and apprehension mission.

1991: NASRO

The National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) is founded. NASRO developed the “triad” concept, messaging school police as teachers, informal counselors and law enforcement officers.

1994: Gun Free Schools Act

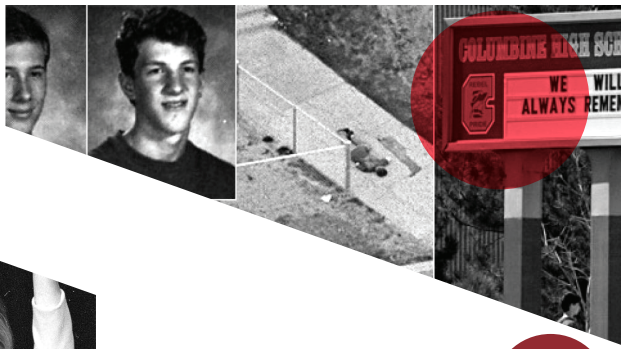
Congress passes the Gun Free Schools Act, imposing a federal requirement on school districts to adopt zero-tolerance policies for weapons, and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, allocating over \$15 billion to prisons and prevention programs, creating 100,000 new police officers, and establishing the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants. It is the largest crime bill to date.

1990



1991





1999



2010

1996

April 1999: Columbine School Shooting

Two high school seniors murder 12 students and a teacher, and injure 24 additional students. The massacre was caught on the high school's security cameras in the cafeteria, forever altering societal views of law-enforcement in ensuring the safety of staff and students. The Federal Department of Education responds with a cry to push for zero-tolerance policies across the country. The Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) program creates the 'COPS in Schools' (CIS) grant, awarding more than \$750 million in grants to more than 3,000 law-enforcement agencies, resulting in more than 6,500 newly hired school police officers. From 2010-2016 Department of Justice grants more than \$143 million through the COPS office for hiring school police officers.

1996: Emergence of "Superpredator" Rhetoric

Hillary Clinton, at the time, the First Lady, used the term "superpredator" in a 1996 New Hampshire speech to build support for then-President Bill Clinton's 1994 crime bill.

December 2010: New York Student Safety Act

After nearly four years of organizing from the Urban Youth Collaborative, the Student Safety Act is passed in December 2010 and signed into law by Mayor Bloomberg in January 2011. The law mandates quarterly reporting of suspensions, arrests and summons by demographics.



Summer 2011: Federal Supportive School Discipline Initiative
Obama Administration launches the Supportive School Discipline Initiative and School Discipline Guidance. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Attorney General Eric Holder publically recognize the school-to-prison pipeline.

June 2012: Accountability for Oakland School Police
Black Organizing Project wins Oakland's Complaint Policy. The only one in the country, the policy is designed for parents and students to be able to file formal complaints on school police and security officers. The victory comes a year after the murder of 20-year old Raheim Brown by Oakland School Police Sgt. Barhin Bhatt.

December 2012: Sandy Hook School Shooting / "You Can't Build Peace with a Piece"
Twenty elementary school students and six school staff are shot and killed by a gunman who attacked the school. In response, state and federal government called for increased investments in school policing; the National Rifle Association and allies call for arming teachers and school staff. In response, young people of color from around the country demand investments in real solutions for school safety and declare that "You Can't Build Peace with a Piece".

2013

2013: More School Police than Ever Before
Rapid increase of School Resource Officers on school campus across the country. The estimated number grows from 9,400 in 1997 to 20,000 SROs in 2013.

February 2013: Denver Schools & Police Intergovernmental Agreement
After years of organizing, Padres Y Jóvenes Unidos win the Denver Public Schools and Denver Police Department Intergovernmental Agreement significantly altering the roles of police officers in schools. The new contract redefines student offenses, separating behaviors suited for in-school discipline from those requiring police actions. The new model also urged de-escalation of conflict on campus, as well as a greater focus on restorative justice policies.

2011



2012

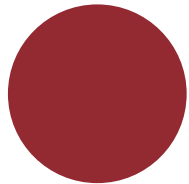


2013





2015



July 2015: Movement for Black Lives Education Justice Platform

Young people from the Alliance for Educational Justice gather at the Movement for Black Lives convening in Cleveland, OH. A year later, the Alliance and its member organizations drafted the education justice platform for M4BL, calling for the removal of police from schools and the end to the school privatization movement.

October 2015 – #AssaultAtSpringValley

A Columbia, South Carolina Black female student, Shakara, is flipped from her desk and assaulted by a school police officer. Students, including Niya Kenny, who intervened, recorded the assault. Both Niya and Shakara were arrested and charged. The video went viral, causing national outcry and moving the Alliance for Educational Justice to take action, including leading #DropTheCharges work in support of Niya, coordinating actions, and shifting national narrative on school police. AEJ began tracking school police assaults and building an infrastructure for rapid response.



2016

2015

March 2015: Ferguson Report

After investigating on the Ferguson Police Department after the murder of young Michael Brown, the Department of Justice releases its findings in a 102-page report on the patterns and practices of the Ferguson Police Department. The DOJ found that school police officers have a pattern of resorting to force when interacting with students of color and are routinely used to handle school discipline issues like 'disorderly conduct'. The subsequent DOJ reports in Baltimore and Chicago reported the use of excessive force by police on children of color in Baltimore and Chicago Public schools for non-criminal conduct and minor violations.

2018

April 2016: Victory against Military Grade Weapons in Schools

After two years, the Labor Community Strategy Center wins the campaign to end the 1033 Program in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The campaign took root after the Ferguson Uprisings, when students learned that the same military grade weapons used to suppress protests in Ferguson were the same weapons in the hands of the LAUSD Police Department. Through student organizing, LAUSD returned their military weapons, the tanks, grenade launchers, and m-16s, and issued an apology. As of September 2014, more than twenty school district police agencies received military-grade equipment through the program.

February 2018: Parkland Shooting

Seventeen people are killed by a former student at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Florida. Across the country, students say #NeverAgain and demand better gun safety laws from federal, state, and local legislators. Legislators respond by calling for increased militarization of schools through arming teachers and funding more school police.





We Came To Learn
School Police Deny
Students of Color
Opportunity to Learn

School Police Deny Students of Color Opportunity to Learn

For many Black and Brown youth, the presence of police in their schools disrupts their learning environments. There is a culture clash that exists between law enforcement and the learning environment: police enforce criminal laws, while schools are supposed to nurture students.

Additionally, there is an antagonistic relationship between communities of color and law enforcement which negatively impacts the school environment. As a result, students of color often do not feel “safe” with police patrolling their schools. While the general public may feel that stationing police in schools ensures the safety of children and youth, it may in fact destabilize that sense of security for Black and Brown youth. Students of color in policed schools must try to learn in hostile school climates where they face daily macroaggressions, risk police brutality, and suffer from an overinvestment in law enforcement infrastructure and an underinvestment in

education. Like the many incidents of violence Black and Brown people have experienced at the hands of police that have been caught on video, videos of verbal and physical abuse of students of color by police provide a window into the everyday experiences of students. Police create a safety risk for Black and Brown students that should be addressed with the same seriousness as concerns about police in communities of color.

In Birmingham, Alabama, a Black high school student was assaulted by a school resource officer in a locked cafeteria as punishment for wearing a hat indoors. “I thought we were going to have a normal conversation about the hat but it turned out to be something else,” said the high school junior. “When I turned my back, he punched me in the head and he grabbed me and then start choking me. He threw me on the floor and started kicking me in my back.”²⁹

“Everyday, my first contact with school is a metal detector. We have to line up, take our belts off, sometimes our shoes, and put our bags through the scanner. School police officers yell at us to hurry up and throw our belongings in, with no regard for what’s inside. The metal detectors are often a place where we see a lot of confrontations from police. When we buzz, we are padded down and wanded. It doesn’t make us feel welcomed and instead makes us late for class. It’s frustrating that we have to go through all of this just to get into my own school. What is worse is that only students have to go through the metal detectors. What message does that send: that we are the problem; that we are what make schools unsafe. It’s dehumanizing.” – Coldayne Hayden, 18, Sistas & Brothas United & Urban Youth Collaborative, New York City

#AssaultAtWoodlandHills- Allegheny County, PA

Outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a Churchill police officer stationed at Woodland Hills High School assaulted and injured Que'Chawn Wade, a 14-year-old student, after the officer publicly used expletives and derogatory slurs towards Que'Chawn. The offending officer body slammed and repeatedly punched Wade in the head, causing him to lose two teeth and sustain bruises and multiple lacerations to his face and neck.

#AssaultAtHuffmanHigh- Birmingham, AL

A court in Alabama ruled that a school police officer used excessive force when he sprayed a 15-year-old female student with a debilitating chemical called Freeze +P even though she was handcuffed, standing still and posed no threat to the officer.³⁰

The over-policed atmosphere can initiate, rather than mitigate, misbehavior by increasing anxiety, alienating students, creating a sense of mistrust between peers, and forming adversarial relationships with school officials.³¹ Instead of ensuring safety and improving behavior, police presence often heightens disorder among students by diminishing the authority of school staff.³² When students perceive a negative school

climate, they are less likely to be engaged, more likely to be truant or dropout and more likely to have issues with bullying.³³ School staff are tasked with supporting children and youth who take risks and push boundaries because they are still in the process of learning to regulate their thoughts, actions, and emotions.³⁴ However, in heavily policed schools serving youth of color, students' appropriate developmental needs and typical youthful angst are met with the heavy hand of the law instead of the support of a caring adult.

“In Chicago, there is a lot of trauma connected to police. Having police in our school buildings reinforces the criminalization of Black and Brown youth. Walking into these schools makes us feel unwanted, like the police are protecting the school from us. We get yelled at, watched, arrested, harassed, put into gang databases, and in danger of deportation.” – Citlali Perez, 16, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Chicago

“The color of my skin already qualifies me as a person of interest outside of school, so I don't need it in school too. When an officer is present, I lose my peace of mind. I automatically start watching my back and making sure that I don't stick out for any reason. All of this arises from the fear that many other Black youth and I share: a fear of being harassed, a fear of being targeted, of being shot and killed. There exists a legitimate fear of losing our lives. White students don't experience the same issues with police that we do. The distrust in police has reached a stage where it is now irreparable.” – Jonathan “JaJa” Janvier, 17, Power U Center for Social Change, Miami

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Case Study:

The Murder of Raheim Brown by Oakland School Police The Black Organizing Project

“It is possible. It is possible to change these systems and structures. But what is deeper for me is that these are our members. Our members are the strategists, the researchers, they are the people that imagine something different. That’s in our people. That is an important story to be told. We see the protests and the mobilizations, but what people don’t see are the many hours behind the scenes; the many hours members spend in between jobs, and school, and family obligations going to meetings, bringing ideas together and proposing plans that the District, whose job it is, couldn’t come up with. It affirms the belief and the faith I have in our communities.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director, Black Organizing Project

The Black Organizing Project, an explicitly Black-led organization, was birthed out of the Center for Third World Organizing, a racial justice movement training and resource center in Oakland, California. The Black Organizing Project’s work to end the criminalization and policing of Black youth in schools is grounded in, and tied to the development of Black organizing infrastructure in Oakland. Oakland has witnessed a series of high profile police killings of Black people. The murders of Oscar Grant by transit police, Derrick Jones by city police, and Raheim Brown by school police, exposed the complexities and interconnectedness of Oakland’s multiple policing agencies and the need for radical change.

“WE DIDN’T EVEN KNOW OAKLAND SCHOOLS HAD POLICE.”

On the evening of January 22, 2011, Raheim Brown, a 20-year-old Black man, was shot and killed by Oakland School Police Sergeant Barhin Bhatt outside a Skyline High School dance. His crime: attempting to start a car with a screwdriver.³⁵ Raheim and Tamisha Stewart were parked near the school campus with the car’s hazard lights on. Sergeant Bhatt and his partner Jonathan Bellusa, who were patrolling the school surroundings during the dance, came across Raheim’s vehicle, and engaged in a verbal, then deadly altercation. Sergeant Bhatt shot 7 bullets into the car, killing Raheim. Bhatt claimed that Raheim, who was still in his seat inside of the car, had attempted to stab Officer Bellusa.³⁶

“My son was a very beautiful, loving, bright, respectful human being. He loved his brothers and his family very much. He was an unarmed passenger in a car. They shot over the driver and her up while they were in the car. They shot over her seven times. They murdered my son.”³⁷ – Lori Davis, Raheim Brown’s Mother

What followed was a whirlwind of police cover-ups, a school district’s blind following of the police, and school board neglect. For months, Raheim’s family rallied in front of the Oakland Unified School District headquarters demanding answers to Raheim’s murder.

“One of our supporters called to tell us about the murder. At that point, we didn’t even know that Oakland schools had police in them. There was also a lot of street talk about the young woman that was in the car; that she was assaulted and

taken to Santa Rita [Jail] so she couldn’t talk. We decided to attend the school board meeting after the murder, to figure out what was actually going on. We saw Raheim’s mother, distraught, hurt, and in shock. The school board just closed ranks, read a statement written by a lawyer, and refused to answer questions. It was so disrespectful.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

BOSS - THE BETTERING OUR SCHOOLS SYSTEM CAMPAIGN

“Raheim’s mother came to BOP looking for support from the community when the school district turned their backs. Our members wanted justice for Raheim and also knew that it was important to look at police violence and the school policing issue beyond Raheim’s murder. That it was an institutional problem. It was a dangerous combination, to have this police force with unlimited access to young people, and no accountability.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

BOP members recognized that policing in schools was intricately connected to the policing of Black communities, to the policing in housing complexes, and the policing that Black people were experiencing in the city’s public transit system. Because of this, BOP envisioned the complete removal of police offices from Oakland schools. This position was radical; at the time, traditional allies in the education advocacy field were focused on addressing the harms of school policing through trainings and policy change.

“We knew that the school police issue was far too difficult, far too dangerous to take head on. Sergeant Barhin Bhatt, who murdered Raheim, was promoted as Interim Chief of the Oakland School Police Department (OPD), after the previous school police chief was recorded saying ‘the only good n- is a dead n- and they should hang you in the town square to prevent any other n- from coming in the area.’³⁸ He got an early retirement. This was the police force we were coming up against. There is a normalization that happens with police. But if we could tackle that, challenge the role of police, and remove them from our schools, then we could begin to remove them from our communities.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

In October 2011, after months of research, outreach in Oakland’s Black communities, and membership strategy sessions, BOP launched the Bettering Our School System (BOSS) Campaign. At the intersection of policing, police violence, and education, the BOSS Campaign goals are to end the criminalization and policing of Black and Brown students in Oakland schools, build models of school safety that do not rely on the police, and transform Oakland Unified School District’s punitive policies and practices. BOP’s first step was to get access to data on all school police interactions with students.

The BOSS campaign engaged the community and built power because it responded to an individual harm – the murder of Raheim – with demands for systemic change and an accountability structure. While Raheim’s family moved forward with legal action,³⁹ BOP engaged in a multi-year fight with the school district and the police department. BOP intentionally kept its campaign separate from the legal action,

which allowed BOP to get access to data and information without the barrier of an investigation. Members and staff knew that if they engaged in the lawsuit, the school board and school police department would hide behind it and refuse to engage during an “active investigation.” OUSD had no mechanism to report and track police interactions with students and did a poor job at collecting data on school-based arrests. BOP developed and won a district-wide school police complaint system for students and parents, the first of its kind in the country. The complaints filed and the actions taken as a result of those complaints are supposed to be reported twice a year at School Board meetings.

“We fought for the complaint system, not because we thought it would be a fix to the policing and criminalization of our students, but because we wanted to force the district to report data back to the community. We initially were pushing for an oversight committee, but the Black school board member at the time, was trying to appoint law enforcement to head the committee, including the officer who murdered Raheim. We decided to move without an external oversight mechanism and use the complaint system as an organizing tool.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

BOP members used the complaint system to educate students and parents of their rights and build momentum and power to demand significant changes to school policing policies. The second stage of BOP’s work was to force the school district to intervene and regulate the multiple policing forces in Oakland schools. In 2014, BOP pushed the school district to adopt an internal school board policy that limits the role of the Oakland school police and states that school administration and staff should not be rely

on police for disciplinary issues.⁴⁰ The police also forced law enforcement to contact parents or guardians before questioning any students. BOP also organized to pressure OUSD to create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Oakland City Police Department, who was receiving federal money to pay for officers to patrol the schools.⁴¹ The MOU mirrored the school board policy. It limited Oakland Police Department’s (OPD) role in schools and mandated the regular reporting of referrals to law enforcement, citations, and arrests.

“What was interesting with the fight around the MOU with OPD is that part of why they were scared about giving into some of our demands was because they feared we would come back and demand the same for the police outside of the schools. That’s when we knew we could win at a community level too.” – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

CHALLENGES & LESSONS: CRITIQUING VICTORIES TO ADVANCE A LARGER STRUGGLE

The murder of Raheim Brown catapulted the Black Organizing Project into an almost decade long fight to transform Oakland public schools and dismantle the policing structures that criminalize students of color. Moving with community who were ready to demand a radical shift in policing, even when advocates and organizations did not want to, allowed BOP to have a strong, powerful base supporting the campaign. But working within communities deeply entrenched with police also has its challenges.

“There’s this assumption that Oakland schools, that schools with Black kids are unsafe. Even



BOP youth testify before the Oakland school board

within our own communities. Some people feel like they need police. That in our schools, it's a necessary evil. And when we began to challenge that, we got a lot of pushback. Folks were asking for alternatives. They wanted us to guarantee one hundred percent that we would keep all children safe without police. We have to figure out how to shift the narrative that police keep Black children safe. That is still a struggle." – Jackie Byers, Executive Director

BOP had to shift the narrative that school police equaled safety. It was important to connect the tensions and violence from Oakland City police to the everyday interactions students in OUSD were having with the school police force. The verbal harassment, the controlling of students' movements in classrooms and hallways, the questioning and detainment, the arrests, these were the experiences of students of color in Oakland schools. These were also the experiences of Black communities across the city. Making these connections to challenge myths around police and safety continues to be hard and looks differently in community with parents, and with policymakers, school board members, and the various police departments.

BOP also came up against the erasure of the organizing work when the school district and the school police department adopted the policy changes. The district and the school police began to claim BOP's victories as their own, that they had decided to shift the culture of Oakland schools on their own, and that in fact, the Oakland School Police force was the better police: they followed the policy, they talked to students, and they reduced arrests. In negotiations with both institutions, the Oakland School Police put forth the narrative that if they

were removed from Oakland schools, Oakland City police would be called in, and they did not follow the school board policy. It positioned them as the better option, the 'better police force'.

The greatest lesson for BOP has been wrestling with the impact of reform strategies and whether reforming, rather than transforming the system, ultimately undermines the larger vision for safe public schools without police. The school board policy win, the MOU victory, and the district-wide complaint system implementation were all significant reforms but they did not lead to the complete removal of police from schools. Currently, one of the biggest challenges with the policy reforms has been the increase of calls to school police from teachers and school staff. The school's reliance on policing to handle school discipline issues has created a dependency on police as part of the school staff. Even when the school police's roles have been defined and restricted, teachers and administrators have not shifted or transformed the school culture to meet the needs of students and keep them in the classroom.

BOP members struggle with whether policy changes have lessened the intensity and urgency of the school policing issue and numbed the severity of the harms caused by police in schools. In fact, the district claimed that the Oakland School Police were "good" police – they follow the policy, they talk to students, they are reducing arrests – without addressing the everyday conditioning and trauma that results from police in schools.

These questions were and continue to be difficult, for BOP. BOP continues to fight to change the material conditions of Black and Brown youth

in Oakland schools, and continues to fight for a vision of school safety without police.

"You can't get so romantically attached to a win, that you can't critique it. We have to demand more. We have to be able to always fight for more. For us, that more is removing police from our schools by 2020." - Jackie Byers, Executive Director

School Police Deny Students of Color Opportunity to Learn...

Continued

There are real consequences for the “law and order” approach to school safety. When police are called into a situation in a school they often rush to criminalize youthful behavior. Arrest rates for low-level offenses substantially increase when police are assigned to schools.⁴² Police departments and school districts throughout the country have been scrutinized for responding to routine school discipline matters with unwarranted arrests and excessive force. For example, in Denver, Colorado, serious conduct, like carrying a dangerous weapon to school, accounted for only seven percent of the school-based referrals to law enforcement.⁴³ Between 2007 and 2012, most of the referrals to law enforcement were for detrimental behavior, drug violations, “other” violations of code of conduct, and disobedience/defiance – not for serious weapons or other school safety concerns.⁴⁴ The majority of referrals were for minor behaviors like use of obscenities, disruptive appearance, and destruction of non-school property.

After Michael Brown was killed by Officer Darren Wilson, the U.S. Department of Justice launched an investigation into potential civil rights violations by the Ferguson Police Department in Missouri. The Department of Justice included

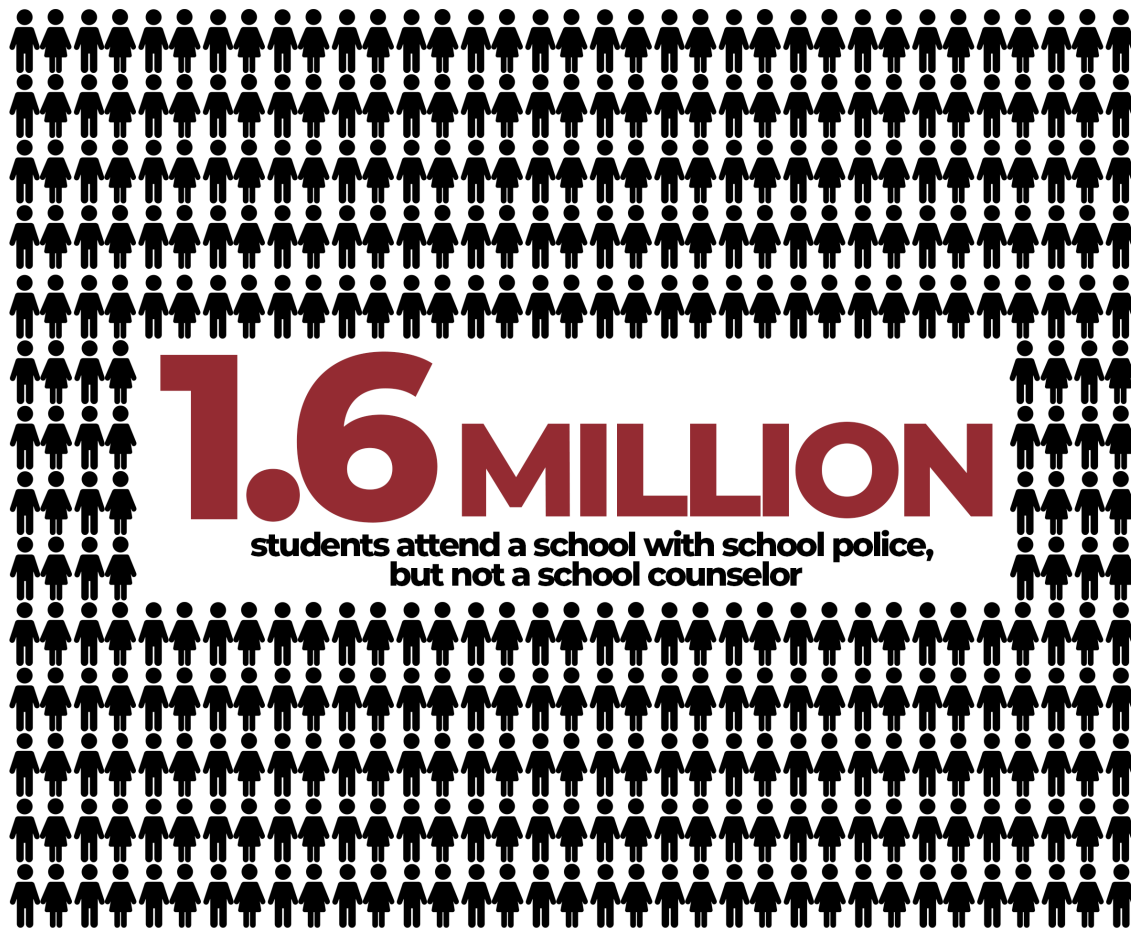
Ferguson-Florissant School District police officers in this investigation because the school police are part of the city police force. This investigation found that the actions of school police officers were unreasonable for a school environment because the officers often arrested and used force against students for minor offenses like “peace disturbance” and “failure to comply with instructions.”⁴⁵ In one instance, a 15-year-old girl was slammed against a locker and placed under arrest for “Failure to Comply” for not following the officer’s orders to go to the principal’s office.⁴⁶

After being arrested by school police officers, students face a myriad of collateral consequences that harm their future, their families and their communities including: loss of instructional time and course credits; legal costs and court fees; separation from family; emotional trauma; challenges to their immigration status; loss of housing or housing assistance; and loss of employment.⁴⁷ These consequences only exacerbate racial and ethnic disparities already entrenched in a justice system where Black youth are five times as likely to be incarcerated as their White peers.⁴⁸

A closer examination of how school police operate reveals both explicit and implicit racism on the part of law enforcement and school staff. Students of color are hardest hit by the negative impact of having police in schools. On a structural level, students of color are more likely to be policed in schools. National data from the 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 school year demonstrates this. Students of color are more likely to attend schools that employed school police officers, but no school counselors.⁴⁹ Black students are three times more likely to attend a school with more security staff than mental health personnel.⁵⁰

On an individual level, Black and Brown students are more likely to be arrested by school police. There is no evidence that students of color exhibit higher rates of misbehavior.⁵² However, Black and Latino youth make up over 58% of school-based arrests while representing only 40% of public school enrollment.⁵³ During the 2015-2016 school year, Black students made up 15% of the school population but 31% of the students arrested or referred to law enforcement.⁵⁴ While constituting only 17% of public school enrollment, Black girls represent 43% of girls arrested at school.⁵⁵ Police officers have been found to misperceive Black boys as older and view them as less childlike and less innocent than White boys of the same age suspected of committing the same crimes.⁵⁶ Similarly, research has shown that adults view Black girls as less innocent and in need of less support and protection than their white peers.⁵⁷

Special needs students are especially at risk when interacting with police in schools. Students with disabilities represent only 12% of student enrollment, but 28% of students referred to law



Source: 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection, "A First Look: Key Data Highlights on Equity and Opportunity Gaps in Our Nation's Public Schools." U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (June 7, 2016).

enforcement or arrested at school.⁵⁸ Officers cannot be aware of each students' special education needs and do not have the professional training needed to support students with disabilities. For example, a school police officer in Kentucky responded to a disgruntled, 54-pound, 8- year-old with post-traumatic stress disorder by handcuffing the student behind his back and above his elbow for 15 minutes while ignoring his screams of pain.⁵⁹ The officer subsequently handcuffed a 56-pound, 9-year-old student with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in the same manner.⁶⁰ In Dallas, Texas, a police officer tazed and handcuffed a 7-year-old special needs student with ADHD and a mood disorder after responding to a report that the student was banging his head against the wall.

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) students are also disproportionately affected by overpolicing. Schools can already be hostile environments for LGBTQIA and gender nonconforming students of color. School policing further funnels them into a youth justice system where they are twice as likely to be arrested and detained for a nonviolent offense.⁶¹ LGBTQIA youth have reported feeling targeted and "watched" by increased surveillance and school policing, as well as being cited for expressions of their gender identity.⁶² Additionally, rather than responding to bullying from their peers with support and restorative practices, LGBTQIA students have shared that school staff often blame them for their victimization.⁶³

Immigrant students are particularly vulnerable to school policing. The school-to-deportation pipeline is part of a larger school-to-prison pipeline. Immigrants and undocumented

students pushed out of school and into the criminal justice system are at risk of detention and potentially deportation proceedings because of school policing and heightened surveillance. Any interaction that results in police collecting a student's information, including tickets, citations, and arrests can put a student at risk. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has used information about immigrant youth and alleged "gang affiliation" to detain young people. Often people are included in a gang database because they live in an area that allegedly has a lot of gang activity, live in the same house as someone who is in a gang, wear a certain type of sneaker, or draw certain symbols.⁶⁴ Information about alleged gang affiliation comes from local law enforcement who are often interacting with young people because they are stationed in schools.

There are obvious, less discriminatory and less punitive methods of dealing with school safety than policing. Yet these methods, including restorative justice and holistic support of students and families, do not receive comparable or adequate funding – ultimately undermining the objective of keeping students safe. School communities are safer when funds are spent on trained community intervention workers, behavior interventionists, and counselors to help prevent and address safety concerns, ensure a welcoming environment and address students' needs. Additional teachers and smaller class sizes both prevent disciplinary issues and improve student achievement.⁶⁵ Every dollar spent on police, metal detectors and surveillance cameras is a dollar that could instead be invested in teachers, guidance counselors, and health professionals that support, not criminalize children.

Education policy should be driven by evidence-based interventions intended to address legitimate needs identified through research and analysis. However, school officials open their doors to school police based on an exaggerated fear of school violence brought on by national media attention, not an increase in violence within their schools.⁶⁶ This fear-based response is illogical, harmful and ignores students' demands for safe and supporting learning environments. Placing police in schools does not guarantee safe environments. In fact, doing so leads to the unnecessary and disproportionate criminalization of students of color and siphons money away from real solutions that improve school climate and build positive relationships between students and school staff.

"Placing more police in schools leads to students of color being at risk for arrests for everything and anything. Things that we do everyday. Things that I'm sure adults did when they were in school. But now, it's 'criminal.' In Arizona, because of SB1070, a law that was passed in 2007 where police can racially profile and ask for documentation, undocumented youth fear police officers on campus. Being in school can mean arrest and immigrant detention. We need to stop contact between law enforcement and students of color. We can't risk further criminalization and deportation. We just can't." — Ramon Sanchez, 15, Puente Arizona, Phoenix

"In 2013, Philadelphia closed 24 schools. The district cut teachers, librarians, counselors, and all full-time nurses. They stripped everything from our schools but school police officers. What does that say about what they prioritize? Students have died from these cuts. That doesn't make me feel safe. There are not enough mental and emotional supports for students. Without a substantial amount of guidance counselors and social workers, restorative justice, and supportive teachers, our schools are not safe." — Camryn Cobia, 16, Philadelphia Student Union, Philadelphia

Case Study:

The #AssaultAtBenFranklin & The Philadelphia Student Union

“Our vision for how we want young people to interact within the school environment is really looking at how do we shift what the power dynamics are between the school, the administrators, and students,” said Philadelphia Student Union Executive Director Julien Terrell.

Created in 1995, the Philadelphia Student Union (PSU) organizes young people of color to change and transform the Philadelphia public school system. From school funding to school discipline, and now school policing, PSU’s members have a long history of powerful youth organizing, including winning student success centers, changes in the district’s code of conduct, restorative justice policies, training for school police officers, and building the citywide Campaign for Non-violent Schools. PSU trains its student members on organizing and advocacy. Its student organizers then take to the streets, school districts and city council with their calls for actions and demands.

In the fall of 2008, Sayre High School in West Philadelphia was locked down after school police stopped two 9th grade students who were running late for class and who were out of uniform. A verbal and physical altercation between the police and the girls led to Philadelphia Police Department involvement and more than three dozen armed city police raided the school,



PSU and youth member of the Alliance for Educational justice demand justice for Brian Burney outside of the School District of Philadelphia Headquarters

arresting 16 students.⁶⁷ That violence continues to haunt Black and Brown youth in Philadelphia schools.

“THEY BEAT UP BRIAN!”

On Thursdays, the Philadelphia Student Union hosts its weekly citywide youth meetings, bringing together members from all the local school chapters in their West Philadelphia office. On Thursday, May 5th, 2016, Brian Burney, a junior at Benjamin Franklin High School and a PSU member, was missing. He had been assaulted by a school police officer while walking to the restroom.

Earlier that day, during 9th period, Brian attempted to use the school bathrooms but they were locked. Officer Jeffrey Maciocha told him

that he needed a pass. Brian didn’t have one, and in an act of frustration, threw an orange at the wall. Officer Maciocha punched Brian in the face twice, slammed him down on the floor, and put him in a chokehold.⁶⁸ Brian, who suffered from bladder issues and had been previously hospitalized for asthma, was later diagnosed with a concussion.

“I really had to go bad. We had words. I threw an orange at the wall out of frustration because I really had to go to the bathroom. I felt like Eric Garner because I couldn’t breathe. I felt like I was going to die that day.⁶⁹” – Brian Burney

MOUNTING A CAMPAIGN TO REMOVE POLICE FROM PHILADELPHIA SCHOOLS

Following Brian's assault, PSU released the video of the assault and a statement, demanding that Officer Maciocha be fired, that the school district reduce the school police force and redirect funding towards nurses, counselors and restorative justice, and that the district create a complaint system for students and families to report school police interactions, violence, and abuse.

"We understand police violence in school to be inextricably connected to state violence. We define violence as 'power that hurts people's chances at survival.' The School District of Philadelphia, in denying basic resources to students in already under-resourced communities, systematically

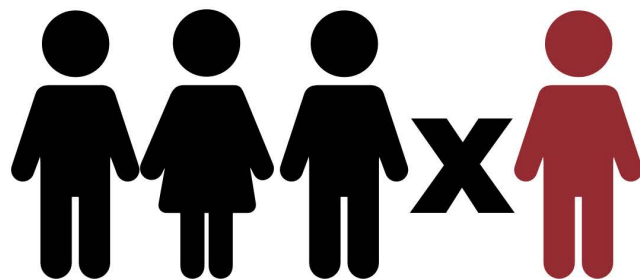
denies young people an equal and just chance at survival in the city of Philadelphia. The deprivation of basic needs is, in fact, a violent act. Policing students' bodies and right to use the restroom is a violent act. The young people of Philadelphia have been experiencing this type of violence for decades. Police in schools are the by-product of decades of disinvestment by the state coupled with the racist notion that the only way to 'control' young people of color is to criminalize and arrest them.⁷⁰" – Statement by the Philadelphia Student Union

At the time of Brian's assault, Philadelphia was recovering from a massive wave of school closures, extreme budget cuts to the school district, and layoffs of teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, and all full-time school

nurses. Benjamin Franklin High School had been merged with two other schools. The school was heavily policed. Amidst the financial crisis, the school district kept hiring new police officers without requiring the necessary trainings and education.⁷¹ The city's Auditor General had just released their findings that out of a sample of school police officers, nearly half had incomplete background checks. For PSU, this created the political opportunity to mount a campaign challenging the role of police in Philadelphia schools. The young people made a decision: to pivot from their emerging state funding campaign and take on police violence in schools.

"We were working on something completely different at the time. Our members decided we were going to focus on school funding. At the time, the state of Pennsylvania was dealing with a budget standstill ... they weren't going to allocate new funds to schools. We were thinking about engaging in some sort of project to connect youth from across the state. We dropped everything that we were doing when we found out about Brian's assault. We had new work to do." – Koby Murphy, PSU Youth Organizer

Students of color are more likely to attend schools that employ school police officers, but no school counselors



Black Students are **3 times more likely** to attend a school with more security staff than mental health personnel.

Source: 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection, "A First Look: Key Data Highlights on Equity and Opportunity Gaps in Our Nation's Public Schools." U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (June 7, 2016).

JUSTICE FOR BRIAN, YOUTH ORGANIZING AND POLICE INTIMIDATION

For four consecutive weeks, between May 25th and June 20th, PSU held a series of rallies and protests in front of the school district. Over 200 students and allies joined Brian the first week, including the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers' President, Jerry T. Jordan.

"At the first rally, we received a lot of support. We had young people, local organizing groups,

Helen Gym, a former education advocate turned City Council member, national allies and the President of the teachers' union. But as we kept organizing weekly vigils, the numbers grew smaller and smaller. Every week, there were just 15 of us, PSU members and staff, in front of the district. Imagine 15 young people, holding signs calling for police out of schools, spread out in front of the district offices, with two blocks of city police cars, about 30 city police on bicycles, 20 school police blocking the entrances to the building, and a city police helicopter hovering over us. It was intimidating. Every week, we were there. Every week, they were there. That level of police intimidation scared a lot of our members, our allies, and Brian's family. Brian eventually transitioned out of the campaign. Because of his financial situation, he needed to continue to work, and being out protesting, with that level of police presence, was taking him away from work." – Hiram Rivera, former PSU Executive Director

The campaign became larger than Brian. It became about police accountability. It became about systemic changes. After weeks of protests and a local media blackout, the students met with district superintendent, Dr. William Hite, winning a commitment from the district on five demands, including reducing the school police force and creating a school police complaint system for students and parents.⁷²

"We were able to organize not only to get the district to agree to a decrease in school police officers, but also to establish a complaint system with a transparent investigation which was only the second time in the country that this has happened after this was done in Oakland in 2012. We're not only precedent setting, but

pushing ourselves as an organization to think about alternatives." – Julien Terrell, PSU Executive Director

THE SCHOOL POLICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM: LESSONS ON STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

For many organizations that have fought and won significant policy change on school discipline, the question of implementation has always been a challenging one. While the district promised PSU would be part of the creation process, they rejected PSU's proposals for a public explanation of the potential penalties for school police officers and the creation of a School Community Review Board.

"Initially, our strategy was to force the district to create this open and public complaint process, knowing that a complaint process within itself is limited. Getting data on school police is incredibly difficult. Everything is hidden. We wanted to build this complaint system to flood it with any and every complaint – from everyday indignities like being yelled at and shoved in the hallway, to violent abuse like being body slammed and put in a chokehold. Once we collected that data, we would force the district to make that public and expose the contradictions of police in schools to set up more oversight and eventually get them out of our schools altogether." – Julien Terrell, PSU Executive Director

The complaint system was also significantly delayed until community pressure forced the district's hand. Isaac Gardner Jr, an 8-year-old Black boy at Solis-Colin Elementary School, was violently dragged from his classroom and forced into a staff bathroom by a school police officer. Isaac's parents filed a complaint, which

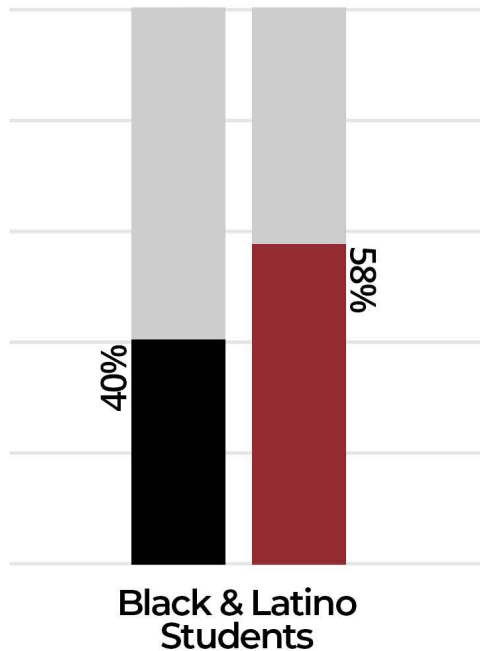
the district failed to properly address.⁷³ The district quickly moved to finalize the complaint system and finally, in February 2017, the official complaint process was released.

"We were cut out of the process. It was our complaint process. Young people put in so much time and energy creating it. And what was released, after another child was harmed by school police, was nothing like what we dreamed of. We will continue to fight, centering the voices, experiences, and demands of students of color – even if the district doesn't want to hear it." – Saudia Durrant, PSU Youth Organizer

Nationally, Black and Brown students are more likely to be arrested by school police

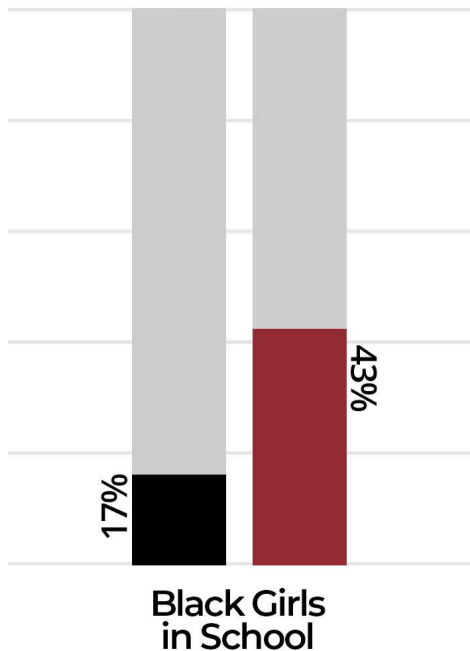
Black & Latino Youth in Schools

- % of school population
- % of school arrests



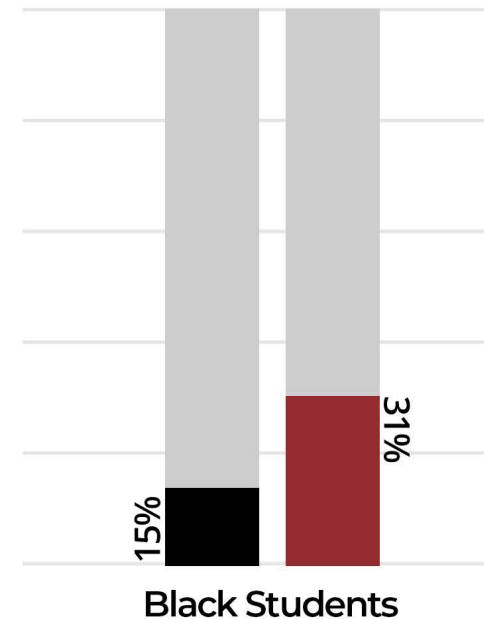
Black Girls During the 2015 - 2016 School Year

- % of school population
- % of students arrested or referred to law enforcement



Black Students During the 2015 - 2016 School Year

- % of school population
- % of the girls arrested at school



There is **no evidence** that students of color exhibit higher rates of misbehavior.

Black & Latino Data Source: Education Week Research Center. "Does Your School Arrest Students?" (January 27, 2017), (conducting original analysis of Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Civil Rights Data Collection).

Black Girls Data Source: National Women's Law Center & NAACP Legal Defense & Education Fund "Unlocking Opportunity for African American Girls," (2014)

Black Students Data Source: "2015-2016 Civil Rights Data Collection, School Climate & Safety" U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, (2018),



SCHOOL RESOURCE

031



We Came To Learn
The Institutionalization
of School Police

The Institutionalization of School Police

Despite the documented harm caused by school police, they are a fixture in many schools. Cops have become a regular part of our schools through laws, policies and public funding streams. School police are police: they are typically trained in the same manner as street police officers and have the same authority to restrain, arrest and even use deadly force.

“Student Resource Officers (SROs) propensity for arresting students demonstrates a lack of understanding of the negative consequences associated with such arrests. In fact, SROs stated that they viewed increased arrests in the schools as a positive result of their work. This perspective suggests a failure of training (including training in mental health, counseling, and the development of the teenage brain); a lack of priority given to de-escalation and conflict resolution; and insufficient appreciation for the negative educational and long-term outcomes that can result from treating disciplinary concerns as crimes and using force on students.”⁷⁴

School police are also treated as school

personnel. They are entrenched in our schools. Major cities serving large populations of Black and Brown students like New York City, Chicago and Houston, have more school police than school counselors and social workers combined.⁷⁵ Officers are assigned to maintain a regular presence in school buildings and are often assigned to one particular school. Others operate in a cluster model, where they circulate among campuses. Many schools designate offices or other space for school police to interrogate students and conduct other business. Throughout Illinois, police departments operate booking rooms at schools where they can process arrested students on site.⁷⁶

School policing can be particularly difficult to understand as it is often difficult to determine how many police are present in school, what structures they operate under, to whom they are accountable, and when their actions violate students’ rights. Their governing structure and rules vary from state to state, and district to district. School police go by many names: school resource officer, school safety agent, school

security officer, school safety officer and school police officer. The widely varied and unknown structure of relationships between police and schools permits them to escape accountability as communities often do not know the limits on their authority. Overall, school police are unaccountable to parents and students because the law provides limited protections for students, and a lack of transparency shields them from criticism and disinvestment.

A WEB OF LAW & POLICIES

An intricate web of laws and policies governs school police, making it difficult for local communities to hold them accountable. School police acquire the authority to patrol schools through state law, school board policies, and memorandums of understanding or intergovernmental agreements between law enforcement agencies and school districts. The relationship between police and school districts vary by school district. School resource officers may be employed by either a school district or local police department through an agreement with the school district.⁷⁸ In some school districts, the police department assigns a group of police officers to a set of schools without any formal coordination between the police department, the schools’ administration or school district. Finally, some metropolitan school districts serving large populations of Black and Brown students like Philadelphia, Baltimore, Miami, Los Angeles, and Oakland, have formed their own school police departments.⁷⁹

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) is a contract between a school district and a law enforcement agency that provides guidance on the operation of school policing and details the roles and responsibilities of officers and administrators.

OVERPOLICING IN AMERICA'S SCHOOLS

Source: 2013-2014 Civil Rights Data Collection, "A First Look: Key Data Highlights on Equity and Opportunity Gaps in Our Nation's Public Schools." U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (June 7, 2016).

24%

of elementary schools (grades K-6) have some sort of school police

42%

of high schools (grades 9-12) have some sort of school police

51%

of high schools with high Black and Latino student enrollment have some sort of school police



At their best, MOUs limit the scope of police involvement, outline which situations are addressed through discipline rather than criminalization and establish mechanisms to hold officers accountable for misconduct. For example, the MOU between Denver Public Schools and the Denver Police Department requires that officers differentiate disciplinary issues from criminal problems and de-escalate incidents whenever possible.⁸⁰ At their worst, these agreements expand police authority within schools and reduce the discretion of school administrators. For instance, Wake County Public School System's School Resource Officer

Memorandum of Understanding allows school police officers to intervene with or without a referral from school staff and allows officers to use force against students based on standard agency protocol, not based on the unique educational context in which students learn and develop.⁸¹

There are also state criminal laws that make it a crime for students to act in particular ways in school. For example, in South Carolina⁸², under the "disturbing schools" law, police officers can arrest students who disturb school "in any way... loiter about... or act in an obnoxious manner."⁸³

In 2013-2014, almost 1,200 students were arrested for disturbing schools, making it the third most frequent juvenile delinquency offense. Similarly, in Florida, students are charged with disorderly conduct for behavior in school. The third most frequent school-related arrest in the 2016-2017 school year was disorderly conduct with over 1,000 arrests.⁸⁴

MASSIVE UNTRACEABLE FUNDING

The school police infrastructure is usually funded by a combination of federal, state, and local budgets. The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has invested close to \$300 million in

school policing infrastructure over the past 20 years, placing school resource officers in all 50 states.⁸⁵ Federal school policing proposals tend to spur state and local investments in school policing. At least ten other states have grant programs to fund school police.⁸⁶ Many cities and school districts invest their own limited education budget into hiring school police or investing in law enforcement infrastructure.

The arming and weaponizing of school police is also funded through the federal government. Under the Department of Defense's 1033 program, excess military-grade weapons and other equipment can be transferred to local police departments, including school police.⁸⁷ Under this program, the Los Angeles School Police Department received equipment like a Mine Resistant Armor Protected (MRAP) vehicle, grenade launchers, and M-16 rifles.

It is hard to figure out how much money local schools spend on police. In many districts, budgets are not publicly available, schools and cities hide the cost of school policing and security, and the source of the funding is not clear. With millions spent on school police, yet no easy way of tracing the funding, school districts can hide the potential funding for solutions outside of a police presence. The funding process for police officers in schools often lacks the transparency needed for communities to hold them accountable.

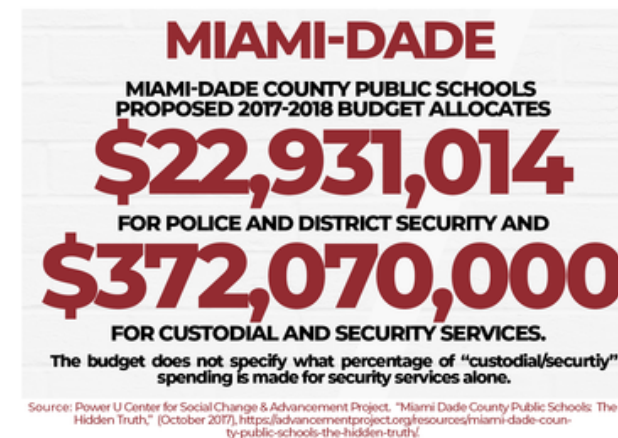
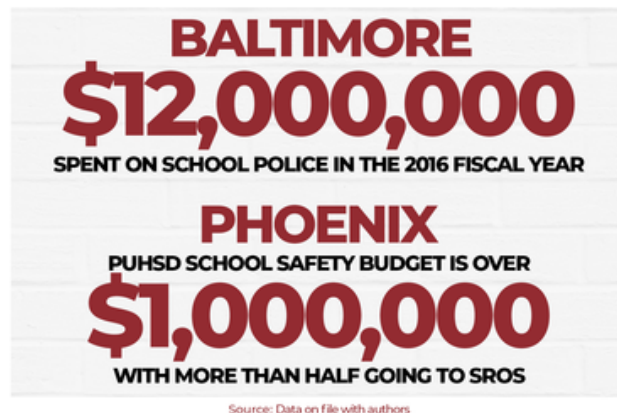
HIDDEN DATA

One of the major hurdles to police accountability is the lack of available school policing data. Without transparency, there is no full understanding of the depth of harm created by the presence of police in schools. There is

no uniform method for collecting or reporting school policing data. Many school districts and police departments simply do not track police interactions with students. When school districts do track this data, the information presented is often incomplete and unavailable to the public. As a result, advocates are often forced to file public records requests under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or state equivalents, in order to force the school districts or police departments to release information.

LACK OF INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The laws granting authority to school police tend to shield police from accountability. Parents and students have very few ways to hold police accountable for the harms they cause. The threat of officer retaliation alone is enough to deter students and parents from reporting incidents of abuse or wrongdoing. In fact, numerous students have been punished and even prosecuted for using cell phone footage to protect themselves and stand up for their peers.⁸⁸ During the #AssaultAt Benjamin



Franklin High School in Philadelphia, a student started to record the assault with his phone. While recording the video, other school police officers who had arrived at the scene demanded the student delete the footage or be at risk of arrest. The police seized the student's phone and deleted the footage. At Woodland Hills High School, a student who taped the principal was arrested for wiretapping right after he exposed the principal for making violent threats against students.⁸⁹

When parents or students want to make a complaint, they often find that there is no mechanism by which to do so. It is not clear if complaints should be filed with the principal, school district or police department – or even whether a formal complaint system exists. When a complaint system does exist, it is often ineffective. The frustration felt by many students and parents due to an inability to hold school police officers accountable for acts of misconduct mirrors the frustration with the lack of officer accountability within policing as a whole.⁹⁰

#AssaultAtRolesville - Wake County, NC

A school police officer was recorded body slamming a 15-year-old Black female student, Jasmine Darwin, then jerking her limp body up by the arm and dragging her out of camera view. Jasmine had been trying to intervene and stop a fight between two other students. The officer was placed on paid administrative leave. The student was diagnosed with a concussion and forced to transfer schools.

#AssaultatREACH Baltimore, MD

A Baltimore school police officer was recorded violently slapping and kicking a Black teenage youth, who was tardy, while a second officer

watched. The school, REACH Partnership School in Clifton Park, reported two 'intruders' outside of the school. The 16-year-old, whose parents say attended the school, suffered injuries to his face and ribs. The police officer was investigated and charged, but ultimately acquitted.

Sometimes, this lack of accountability is directly related to the confusion over what agency governs school policing. The Baltimore City Public Schools are policed by the Baltimore School Police (BSP), who are extended the policing powers, including the power of arrest, of the Baltimore Police Department (BPD).⁹¹ A federal investigation was conducted after BPD officers killed Freddie Gray, a 25 year old man who died from injuries sustained while he was in police custody. The Department of Justice found that the agreement between the school district and the police did not clarify which agency would investigate complaints of excessive force or that investigation would take place. As a result of this lack of clarity, BPD officers were able to ignore student and parent complaints and refuse to determine whether school police were acting within the authority granted to them by BPD.⁹² Without meaningful accountability, parents and students are placed in a position of powerlessness that is all too familiar to Black and Brown communities.

A LACK OF LIABILITY

As written, federal law should safeguard schoolchildren from abuses by police officers, but instead these statutes and sections of the Constitution often operate in ways that do not adequately protect the interests of young people. School police are typically found by courts to be acting reasonably and within the scope of their jobs and are protected from personal

responsibility. Additionally, discrimination claims are often rejected by courts because of a lack of evidence of intentional discrimination. Police in communities of color are rarely held accountable for discrimination, violence, and use of excessive force; school police are no different. While the law has limited reach, challenges must still be brought, and advocacy that relies upon the power of community must be tapped to ensure accountability.

"I was 17 in 2006 when I first started organizing for the Student Safety Act. We knew that students that went to schools like mine in Bushwick were being harassed, suspended, and arrested every day. But we knew we needed the numbers. It took us four years to win quarterly access to the data on student suspensions and arrests by race, gender, age, and borough. It was a long 4 years. We originally wanted both oversight of the NYPD police officers in our schools and data transparency, but the city pushed back. We were stuck in a back and forth. When the first wave of data was released, it told a story we were already familiar with: students of color and students with special needs were disproportionately impacted by zero-tolerance and school policing. It was good to have the numbers, but eight years after the legislation passed, very little has changed in our schools and we are still fighting for accurate data." – Adilka Pimentel, Make the Road New York & Urban Youth Collaborative, New York City.

Whose Rights? Student Rights!

Fourth Amendment Right to be Free from Unreasonable Search

The Fourth Amendment guarantees that a person or their belongings will not be searched by the government without cause. Students in school can only be searched when there is “reasonable suspicion” that the student is committing a crime or has something that is illegal to have at school. When considering whether a search was reasonable, courts look at: (1) the dangerousness of the crime or illegal item the officer suspects you have; (2) the reason why the officer is searching you or that particular area; and (3) the extent to which the search invades your private, personal space.

Fourth Amendment Right to be Free from Unreasonable Seizure and Excessive Force

The Fourth Amendment also provides the right to be free from unreasonable seizure (arrest or detainment) and excessive force by law enforcement. Courts decide whether the officer’s actions were “reasonable” by balancing the extent to which a student’s physical freedom has been limited with the officer’s reason for using force. The most important facts courts consider when balancing these interests are: (1) the student’s age; (2) their behavior leading up to the officer’s actions, including whether there is a threat to the safety of other students and staff; and (3) the specific educational environment in which the situation occurred.

Fourteenth Amendment Right to Equal Protection Under the Law

The Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits the government from treating people differently based on race (and other characteristics). The right applies when the government (like a school or police department) takes some action that is motivated by a discriminatory purpose and that treats people differently. School desegregation cases are examples of violations of the Equal Protection Clause. Equal Protection claims are difficult to prove, and the biggest barrier is that students must show that the government acted with the intention of discriminating. One-time incidents are typically not enough to prove discriminatory intent. A pattern of discriminatory behavior, or numerous examples of that behavior, can be enough to prove a discriminatory purpose.

The School District of Philadelphia

The School District of Philadelphia (SDP) has 218 schools and serves over 13,000 students, 85% of whom are students of color. Over the last five years, Philadelphia students have suffered severe disinvestment in public education; schools have closed, staff have been laid off, and students have been forced to attend under-resourced schools without counselors, nurses or other support staff.⁹⁷

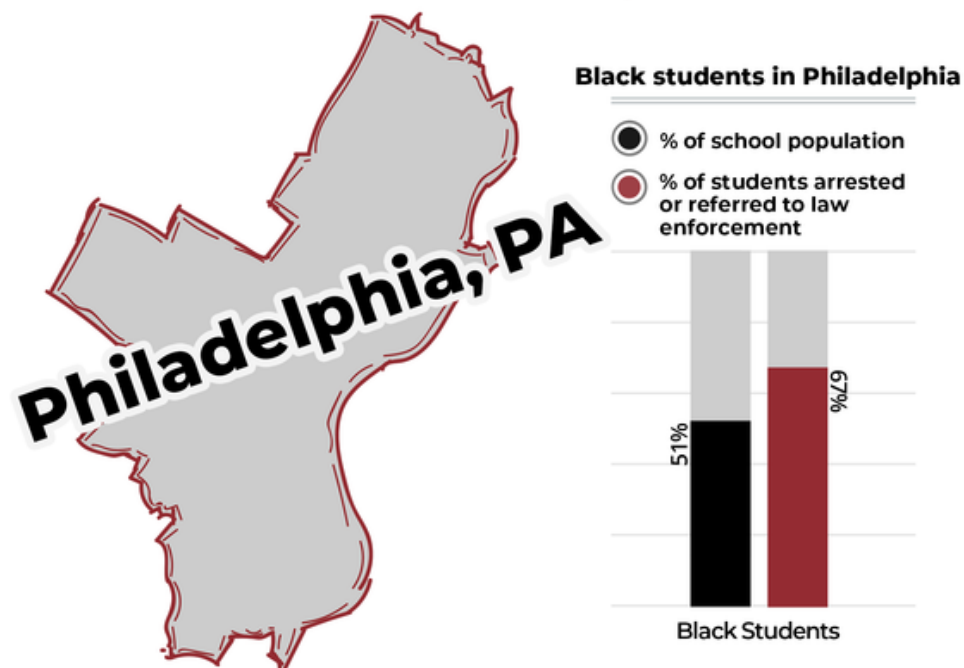
Despite these cuts, Philadelphia has found money to invest in policing its students. Philadelphia exemplifies a dual-policing model, where classrooms are patrolled by both school district police and city police. The School District of Philadelphia's Office of School Safety (OSS) employs 393 School Police Officers (SPOs) to monitor the District's 218 schools. The officers have a variety of duties including responding to student misbehavior and conducting unannounced searches of students with mobile metal detectors.⁹⁸

The School District of Philadelphia also has an agreement with the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) regarding the policing of school-related incidents.⁹⁹ It pertains to incidents which occur on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, or on school buses transporting students to or from school or school-related activities. Under this agreement, school officials are required to notify PPD officers when certain incidents occur and have discretion to inform them about a host of other behaviors. This agreement gives PPD officers, not school administrators, sole discretion in how these investigations are conducted and to determine when to take a student into custody. Under this agreement, students as young as 11 years-old can be arrested.

During the 2015-2016 school year, Black students were disproportionately arrested and referred to law enforcement in the School District of Philadelphia. Specifically, during the 2015-2016 school year, Black students were 51% of the student population, but represented over 67% of the students arrested or referred to law enforcement. Black students were 3.5 times more likely to be arrested or referred to law enforcement than White students.

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN STUDENT ARRESTS PHILADELPHIA

Black students were disproportionately arrested and referred to law enforcement in the School District of Philadelphia during the 2015-2016 school year.



Black students were **3.5 times more likely to be arrested or referred to law enforcement** than White students during the 2015-2016 school year.



Source: United States Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2015 - 2016 school year

Phoenix Union High School District

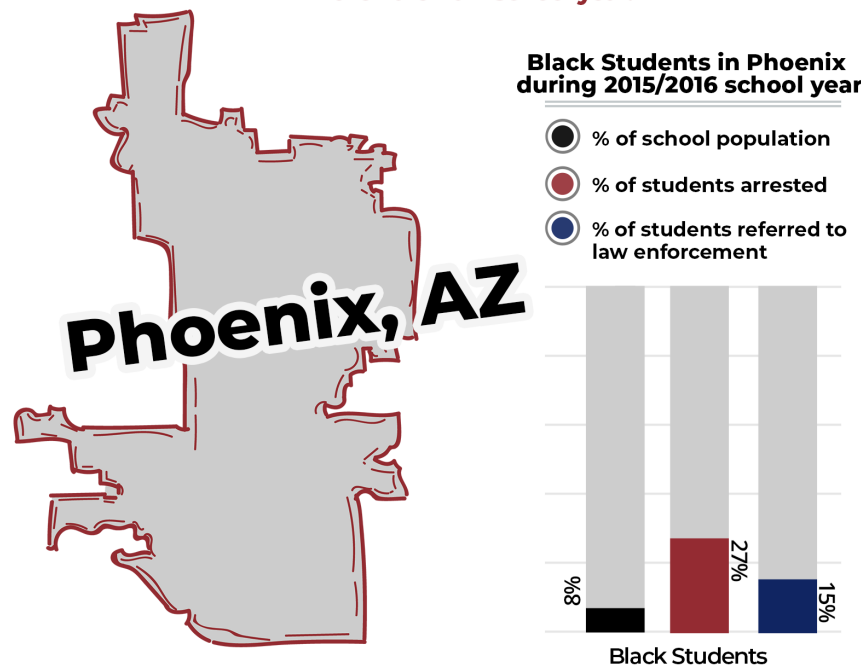
The Phoenix Union High School District (PUHSD) has 15 schools serving 27,761 students, 94% of whom are students of color. In 2007, students, parents and community members formed Puente Arizona in response to the first 287(g) agreement in Arizona, which authorized the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to deputize local police officers to enforce federal immigration law.¹⁰⁰ Youth advocates recognized that this agreement created a new dimension to the school-to-prison pipeline, placing students and their families at risk of deportation for simply attending school.

PUHSD is policed by the Phoenix Police Department through an intergovernmental agreement with the Phoenix Police Department (PPD) which calls for officers to maintain a visual presence on school campuses and even places plainclothes officers within schools. In 2016-2017, there were 12 SROs assigned to 12 different campuses. Over 500 referrals were made to law enforcement, the majority of these were for substance related offenses. During the 2016-2017 school year, PUHSD spent \$1.01 million on school safety, with \$533,866 going to school police officers and \$191,094 spent on security cameras.¹⁰¹ PUHSD also employs security guards who are not sworn law enforcement officers.

Black students are disproportionately impacted by school policing in Phoenix. During the 2016-2017 school year, Black students attending PUHSD were 2.5 times more likely to be arrested and 1.25 times more likely to be referred to law enforcement than their White peers.¹⁰² In the 2016-2017 school year, one out of every 100 Black students was referred to the police.

RACIAL DISPARITIES IN STUDENT ARRESTS PHOENIX

Black students were disproportionately arrested and referred to law enforcement in the Phoenix Union High School District during the 2016-2017 school year.



Black students were **2.5 times more likely to be arrested or referred to law enforcement** than White students during the 2016-2017 school year



Source: United States Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2015 - 2016 school year

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) is the fourth largest school district in the county, serving 345,000 students, 21.6% of whom are Black and 69.4% of whom are Latino. Miami students are heavily policed in schools. MDCPS employs and supervises its own school police force under the authority of the school board.

MDCPS invests at least \$22 million, and probably much more, in policing and security practices. The proposed 2017-2018 budget allocates \$22,931,014 for police and district security and \$372,070,000 for custodial and security services.¹⁰³ The budget does not specify what percentage of “custodial/security” spending is made for security services alone.¹⁰⁴ Of the \$22,119,168 budgeted for police and security, \$19,726,368 covers the salaries of 220 employees in the Police & District Security Bureau.¹⁰⁵ That’s an average salary of \$89,665 for each police and security employee hired under the Police & District Security Bureau. MDCPS has more staff dedicated to locking students up than staff with skills and training to support students and address student needs. During the 2016-2017 school year, the District reported employing 14 social workers and 460 counselors. In contrast, during that same year the district employed 906 security officers and 164 police officers.¹⁰⁶

During the 2015-2016 school year, Black students were five times more likely to be involved in a police notification than their White peers, and Latinx students were 2.5 times more likely. Students report feeling these disparities: in a survey conducted by Power U Center for Social Change, young people at more affluent, White schools reported that police and security officers treat them with respect at a significantly higher rate than students attending schools with more Black students. Even still, students across the board reported that police do not make them feel safer.¹⁰⁷

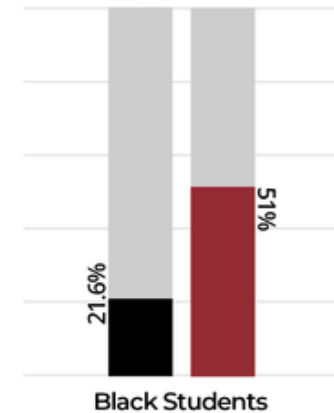
RACIAL DISPARITIES IN STUDENT ARRESTS MIAMI

Black and Latinx students were disproportionately arrested and referred to law enforcement in Miami-Dade School District during the 2015-2016 school year.



Black students in Miami

- % of school population
- % of students arrested or referred to law enforcement



Black students were **2.4 times more likely to be arrested or referred to law enforcement** than White students during the 2015-2016 school year



Source: United States Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2015 - 2016 school year

Case Study:

#AssaultAtSpringValley & The Alliance for Educational Justice

In 2008, youth and intergenerational organizing groups formed the national Alliance for Educational Justice (AEJ), to push the Obama Administration to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

In 2012, Trayvon Martin, a Black teenager, was murdered by George Zimmerman. Zimmerman shot Trayvon for looking “suspicious” while walking in a predominately White neighborhood in a hoodie. Black youth in AEJ called on its members to confront the extrajudicial killing of Black people. When it was initially announced that George Zimmerman would not be indicted, young people gathered, shaken and afraid. The Alliance moved to expand the notion of state violence to include the abuse, neglect, and miseducation of Black students and other students of color. State violence is the violent indoctrination that in America, for Black and Brown students, learning means learning to stay in your place.¹⁰⁸ The Alliance connected violence in communities to the violence youth faced at the hands of police and defined state violence as government power that hurts and harms.

In 2014, uprisings spread in response to the murder of Black youth at the hands of police. Young people in the Alliance moved member organizations to take stronger positions

opposing the school-to-prison pipeline, engage in direct actions, including AEJ’s National #EndWarOnYouth Day of Action, and made clearer connections between police violence, schools, and education justice. The same police force that teargassed Black young people in the streets of Ferguson, Missouri waited for them at school in the fall. AEJ youth were ripe for rebellion, fighting for a school system and a world that did not yet exist. Black youth pivoted AEJ to take on a movement building, intersectional approach to organizing.

Jonathan Stith, the National Coordinator of AEJ, shares the work of the Alliance to respond to and support student organizing after the #AssaultAtSpringValley and build a national campaign to remove police from schools.

THE ASSAULT GOES VIRAL

On October 26, 2015, a student-recorded video of a 16-year-old Black girl from Columbia, South Carolina, being placed in a headlock, flipped over in her desk, then dragged and thrown across her classroom by a school police officer went viral.¹⁰⁹ The high school was Spring Valley High. The young girl was Shakara. In the video, Deputy Sheriff Ben Fields, known to students as “Officer Slam,” is seen aggressively confronting Shakara, who remains silent, then violently attacking her, all for allegedly refusing to handover her cellphone. Many students bowed their heads down in fear, while others pulled out their own phones to record.

Niya Kenny, 17, did the latter. When her math teacher and school administrator called in Officer Fields, she knew what would happen next. Niya stood up, encouraged students to record, and intervened in the incident that is now called the

#AssaultAtSpringValley.

“Initially, when they said an SRO was coming – we have two – I didn’t know which one was coming. It could have been the other one. When I saw Deputy Fields, that’s when I started, that’s when I told them to get the cameras out, because we know his reputation – well, I know his reputation.¹¹⁰” – Niya Kenny

Hurt and scared, Niya and Shakara were arrested, sent to juvenile detention, and charged with ‘disturbing a school function,’ a South Carolina state statute carrying a penalty of \$1,000 fine or a possible 90 day jail sentence “I felt like I had to stand up for my sister. It could have been any one of us. It could have been me. When they arrested us and took us out of the classroom, I felt like God had forgotten about us. I was embarrassed and scared. They detained me for eight hours.¹¹¹” – Niya Kenny, former Spring Valley High School Student

Rage and outcry from students, parents, and advocates reverberated across the country as it became clear what police violence and brutality looks like in the educational sphere. News stations played the video on rotation, and experts and political commentators filled the airways, elevating critical questions about the role of police in schools.¹¹² For many, the video was shocking. But for the young people and youth organizers in the Alliance for Educational Justice, it was a confirmation of what they already knew: police do not belong in schools.



Youth organizers strategize at national school policing learning exchange

A Fight on Two Fronts: Youth Participatory Defense and Police Accountability

School police and schools' and districts' compliance with law enforcement strategies, reign terror on Black and Brown students – especially Black girls. Shakara's assault, and her and Niya's subsequent arrest, are part of the painful reality that Black women and girls are particularly vulnerable as they are “pushed out, overpoliced and underprotected” in the American school system.¹¹³

Quickly after the assault went viral, AEJ members, led by the Urban Youth Collaborative in New York City, began writing love letters to Niya and Shakara. For them, it was important to not only organize to end the criminalization and abuse of youth of color in schools, but to also show up and support those young people who experienced police violence firsthand. The Alliance had reached out and been in conversations with Efia Nwangaza of the Malcolm X Center for Self-Determination in Greenville, SC, who had made contact with Niya and her family. Efia, a long-time movement leader and elder, brought Niya and her mother Doris Ballard, to attend the Funder's Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO)'s first Youth Power Conference in Durham, NC.

At the conference, students from the Urban Youth Collaborative, the Philadelphia Student Union, and Power U Center for Social Change, invited Niya on stage and read their letters to her. They shared their stories from back home, linked arms, and welcomed her into the Alliance.

“We wrote love letters to Niya and Shakara because we had a duty to respond and support them, when the same system we were fighting

in New York City, had harmed them in South Carolina. Standing on that stage, hand in hand with youth from across the country, telling Niya we had her back was a powerful experience for me. We were connected now.” – Onyx Walker, 18, Urban Youth Collaborative

Young people and advocates pushed for the prosecution to drop the charges originally brought against Niya for filming and intervening in #AssaultAtSpringValley. Two months after the assault, youth from Baltimore, New Orleans, and Raleigh, joined Niya, her family, the Malcolm X Center for Self-Determination and Color of Change to drop off 225,000 petitions to the fifth judicial circuit solicitor Dan Johnson.

“We weren’t going to go back; we were in. We had made a decision that we were going to fight. We were going to fight for Niya. We were going to fight for Shakara. And we were going to ride it all the way. Every request I made, the young people met. They traveled to South Carolina. They traveled to Jackson, Mississippi with Niya. She never had to walk alone. And it was so powerful.” – Jonathan Stith, Executive Director, Alliance for Educational Justice

In January 2016, young people from New Orleans gathered with Niya in Jackson, Mississippi, to testify in front of the United Nations Working Group on People of African Descent, asserting their international right to an education and call for the end of police in schools and the privatization of education in Black communities. When the UN Working Group released its recommendations to the United States, it called for the removal of police from schools.¹¹⁴ On September 2, 2016, after months of delayed and cancelled hearing dates, youth rallies, and countless interviews

and testimonies, the charges against Niya and Shakara were finally dropped.¹¹⁵

“That day everything was going down, I felt like I did the wrong thing. I kept telling myself, ‘You should have just sat down and just been quiet.’ But speaking up and being arrested and everything, it just brought so much awareness to the school-to-prison pipeline. Honestly, if I could go back, I wouldn’t change anything. It was like the universe brought me there that day.¹¹⁶” – Niya Kenny

While the Alliance was able to support Niya and her family during the process, the fight to hold former Deputy Sheriff Fields accountable for the assault seemed dim. Fields already had two lawsuits against him, including one for excessive force.¹¹⁷ Although he was fired and a federal civil right investigation was opened, no criminal charges were filed against Fields for the #AssaultAtSpringValley.¹¹⁸

BUILDING A NATIONAL MOVEMENT TO REMOVE POLICE FROM SCHOOLS

“What we realized in doing this rapid response work was that there was so little we know about how school police operated and were entrenched in these schools. When the communities were asking for accountability, it became very clear that there was no system to hold school police accountable. No complaint system. Very few investigations opened. In fact, it was the young people who were assaulted, who were catching charges. We quickly realized we needed a larger national #AssaultAt rapid response infrastructure. AEJ couldn’t hold it all.” – Jonathan Stith, Executive Director, Alliance for Educational Justice

AEJ realized that the organization needed to develop a rapid response mechanism to support young people, organizations on the ground, and bridge national relationships to elevate local demands.

The rapid response work and the local campaigns that evolved on the ground, have naturally merged as the makings of a national campaign to remove police from schools. Through a partnership with the Advancement Project’s – National Office, AEJ developed rapid response protocols, provided strategic communications and research, political education and analysis, and worked with local organizers to move through a campaign development process.

For the Alliance, the fight to remove police from schools is the next iteration of the movement to end the school-to-prison pipeline. From New York City to Philadelphia and Baltimore, Miami to Chicago, Phoenix to Los Angeles and Oakland, groups have won local victories to reduce suspensions, demilitarize school police forces,¹¹⁹ engaged in political battles to limit the role of police in schools,¹²⁰ and stopped school-based citations and arrests. Organizations have deployed invest and divest strategies to redirect funding to school policing programs and waged budget battles to center the needs of young people of color. With over 20 years of youth organizing experience, AEJ is moving powerfully to liberate education for Black and Brown youth.



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**We Came To Learn
Roadmap for Change**



Youth of color participate in Advancement Project's 2018 ActionCamp: Policing Race

Roadmap for Change

Placing police in our schools may seem like the best solution to keeping children and youth safe, but it is the wrong answer. It is imperative that we secure alternative solutions that do not criminalize or cause physical or emotional harm to the students for whom we demand safety in the first place. Safety is found in schools that build positive cultures, are sufficiently resourced and provide supports to their students. The most effective methods to improve school climate is to engage students and teachers in pro-social activities that build positive relationships and instill a sense of community throughout campus. Schoolwide restorative justice initiatives are effective at making schools safer by improving school climate and promoting emotional, social and communication skills that follow youth into adulthood.¹²¹ Moreover, schools are safer when school districts prioritize hiring guidance counselors, social workers and health professionals because these individuals have the training and background to respond to students' needs and support their development. The presence of police in schools creates a harmful school climate and diverts funding that could otherwise be spent on these preventive and supportive alternatives.

Advancement Project's national office, Alliance for Educational Justice, and our partners, members, and other grassroots movements are resisting the school policing model and demonstrating that communities of color have alternative solutions to school safety that empower students and address root causes of violence. It is time to remove police from schools, end the criminalization of young people of color, and invest in preventive and supportive initiatives that establish safe learning environments for all students.



Youth organizers from across the country attend a school policing learning exchange in Philadelphia





We Came To Learn
The #AssaultAt Campaign

The #AssaultAt Campaign

For over 15 years, Black and Brown students have demanded that school districts end the school-to-prison pipeline and invest in solutions that create true safety in their schools. Their visions of safe schools is one where schools build positive school cultures, are sufficiently resourced, and provide mental health supports to students who need them. It also means removing police from schools.

The #AssaultAt campaign began in response to the recorded assault of a young woman in Spring Valley, SC, which went viral. The #AssaultAtSpringValley exposed the state violence perpetrated by police that had been concealed by the schoolhouse gates. Student-recorded videos of police violence in schools regularly circulate through news channels, articles, and social media.

When police are present in schools, students of color face a significant risk of being attacked and assaulted by the police. To date, AEJ has documented 61 incidents of school police assaults and has called attention to these abuses by illuminating the pattern on social media platforms with the hashtag #AssaultAt attached to every incident. While police assaults on youth of color are not a new phenomenon, we now can record them. #AssaultAt incidents woven throughout this

report are the stories of youth who have been brutalized by school police officers and had the ability to record, report or otherwise document their abuse. Many more go unnoticed.

LOCAL CAMPAIGNS

Students and parents are the most impacted by over-policing and criminalization but are the least involved in the decision-making process around questions of school culture, school safety, and crisis response. From student walkouts during the civil rights movement to local protests against the epidemic of public school closures,¹²² there is a long history of denying Black and Brown communities self-determination over their neighborhood schools. Students and parents deserve the right to define what safety means to them as well as the decision-making authority to actualize that vision.

When schools engage students, families and communities to support learning, students tend to: attend school more regularly; achieve higher grades; and stay in school longer.¹²³ Student and parent involvement in the creation of school climate is both a necessary and viable pathway forward. This involvement should encompass a wide range of activities including: the ability to craft policies around student interactions with

law enforcement; change and create new programs that support students and families; and even develop policies on teacher hiring practices.

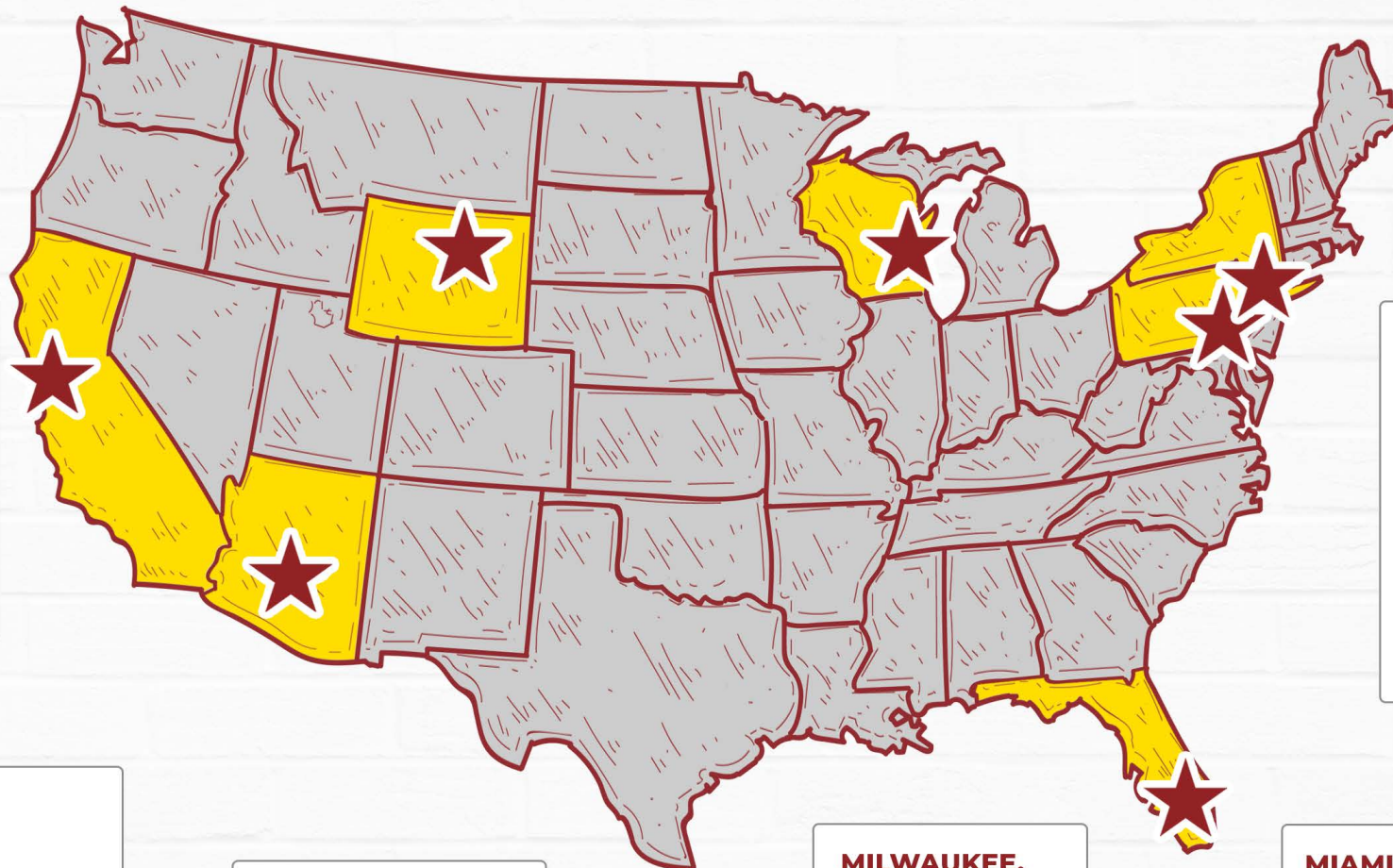
Students and parents know that their schools need more resources to support adolescent development, not more hostile interactions with law enforcement. Nonetheless, every year, the federal government, states and school districts spend millions of dollars to integrate police officers into the educational landscape and criminalize students of color. To reverse the expansion of school policing, it is imperative that students and parents are given the authority to set funding priorities and redirect funds spent on policing to alternatives that effectively support students while keeping them safe.

Students and parents must also have decision-making authority in developing policies that govern how students and police officers interact. The perspective of those most affected by school policing is critical to develop policies and best practices that establish a safe and positive school atmosphere for all students.

Youth and parent organizations throughout the country are calling for divestment from school policing and investment in preventive and supportive alternatives to school policing that create positive school climates and support the needs of students. To reverse the expansion of school policing, it is imperative that students and parents are given the authority to set funding priorities and redirect funds spent on policing to alternatives that effectively support students while keeping them safe.

“Instead of seeing police in schools, I rather see more teachers happy because they are getting paid more, more counselors helping with trauma, better buildings since my school doesn’t have any windows, better books and technology, restorative justice and better relationships. We don’t have any of that. Putting more police officers isn’t going to change the main problems in schools, it’s just going to create more issues. We need a quality education, not handcuffs.” Rachelle Scott, 17, Power U Center for Social Change, Miami

Students Demand Police-Free Schools



PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia Student Union is demanding a divestment from funds from more than 400 school police officers patrolling the School District of Philadelphia and an investment in school counselors, school nurses and restorative practices.

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Black Organizing Project, based in Oakland, California, through its Bettering Our School System (BOSS) campaign, is calling for an end to the current system of school policing in Oakland Unified School District and the implementation of alternative methods to school safety.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

The Urban Youth Collaborative, is calling for an end to the \$746 million a year school-to-prison pipeline in New York City and demanding: (1) the removal of police officers and metal detectors from schools; (2) the implementation of citywide restorative practices; and (3) an increase in the number of trained and supervised guidance counselors and social workers.

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Puente Movement, through their #CopsOuttaCampus campaign, is demanding that in Arizona, the Phoenix Union High School District end the prison-to-deportation pipeline by removing school police from campus and reinvesting the funds spent on police on supportive and preventive programs that actually make students safe.

DENVER, COLORADO

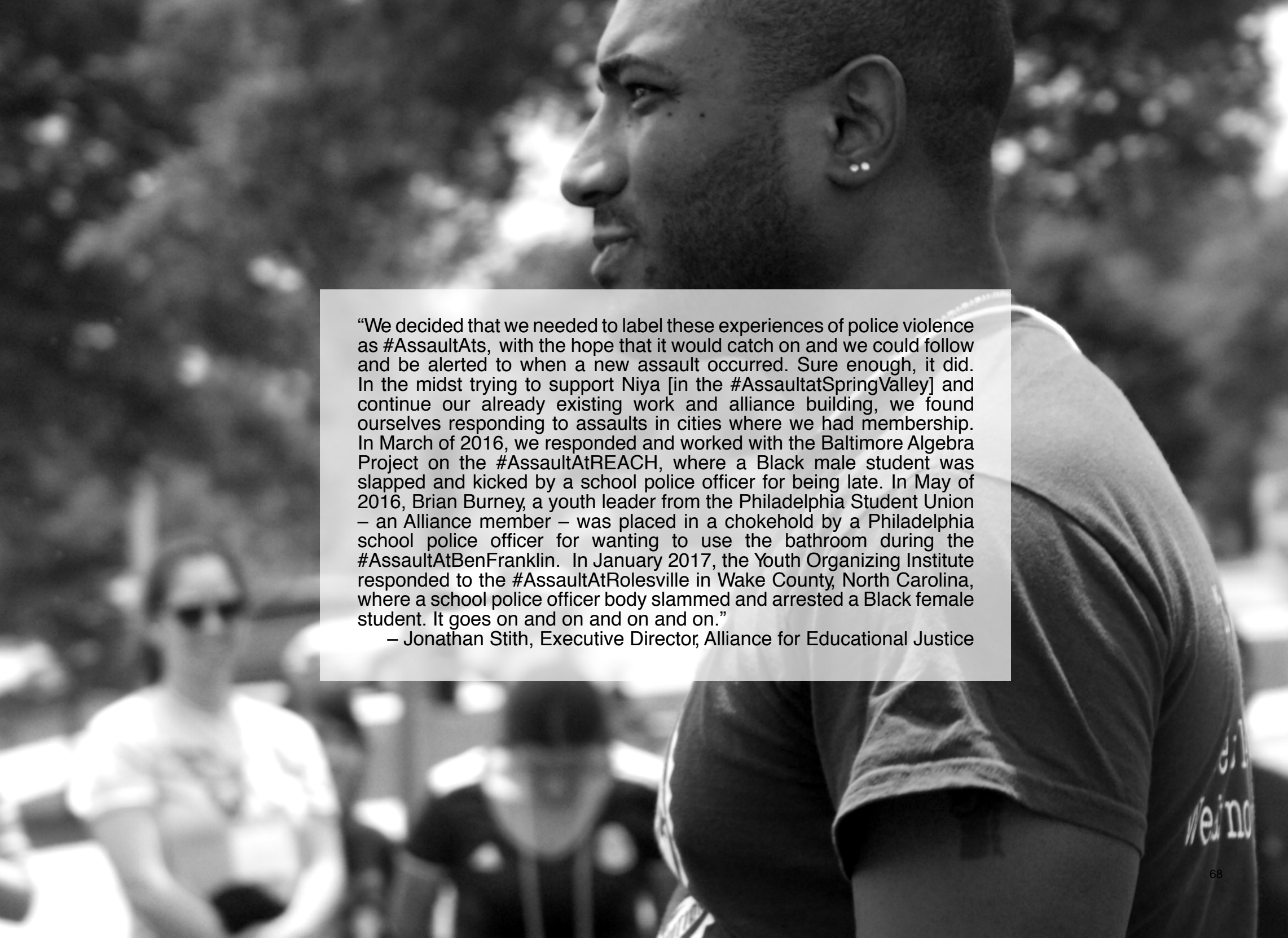
Padres y Jóvenes Unidos continues to fight against the school to jail track after successfully limiting the involvement of school police to serious threats to school safety and obtaining the implementation of restorative practices in Denver Public Schools in Colorado.

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Leaders Igniting Transformation is demanding that Milwaukee Public Schools divest from criminalizing and surveilling students by removing police officers and metal detectors from schools and invest in restorative approaches that create inclusive and nurturing schools.

MIAMI, FLORIDA

The Power U Center for Social Change, an organization led by Black and Brown youth in South Florida, demands fully-funded restorative justice programs to end suspensions and school-based arrests as well as the decision-making authority to implement solutions to injustices experienced by students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

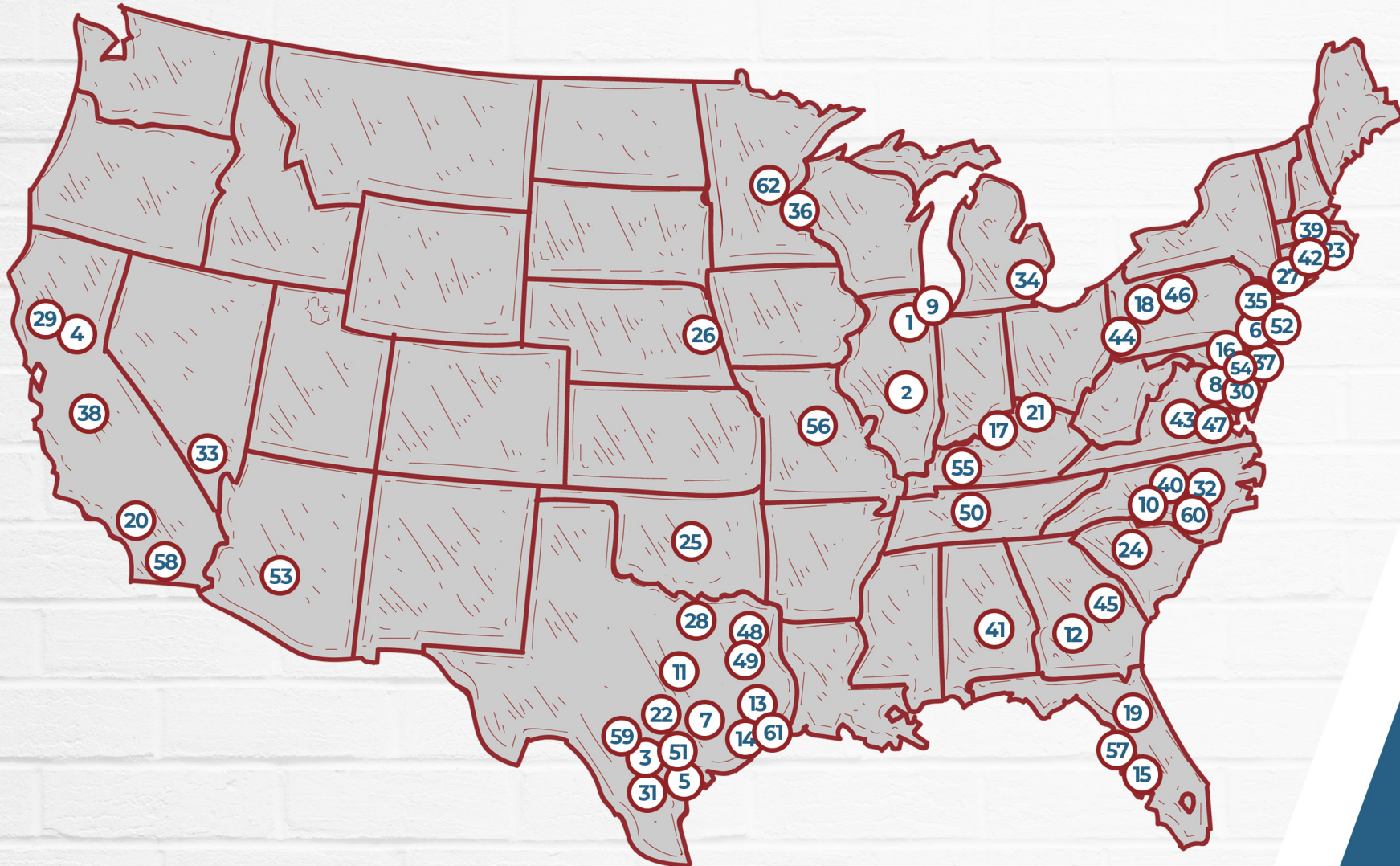


“We decided that we needed to label these experiences of police violence as #AssaultAts, with the hope that it would catch on and we could follow and be alerted to when a new assault occurred. Sure enough, it did. In the midst trying to support Niya [in the #AssaultatSpringValley] and continue our already existing work and alliance building, we found ourselves responding to assaults in cities where we had membership. In March of 2016, we responded and worked with the Baltimore Algebra Project on the #AssaultAtREACH, where a Black male student was slapped and kicked by a school police officer for being late. In May of 2016, Brian Burney, a youth leader from the Philadelphia Student Union – an Alliance member – was placed in a chokehold by a Philadelphia school police officer for wanting to use the bathroom during the #AssaultAtBenFranklin. In January 2017, the Youth Organizing Institute responded to the #AssaultAtRolesville in Wake County, North Carolina, where a school police officer body slammed and arrested a Black female student. It goes on and on and on and on.”

– Jonathan Stith, Executive Director, Alliance for Educational Justice

Violent Assaults Perpetrated by School Police

November 2010 - March 2018



1. Dolton, IL
#AssaultAtAcademyForLearning
2. Kankakee, IL
#AssaultAtKankakeeJunior
3. San Antonio, TX
#AssaultAtNorthSide
4. Oakland, CA
#AssaultAtSkylineHigh
5. Brownsville, TX
#AssaultAtCummingsMiddle
6. Clifton, NJ
#AssaultAtCliftonHigh
7. Cedar Creek, TX
#AssaultAtCedarCreek
8. Prince George's County, MD
#AssaultAtSuitlandHigh
9. Chicago, IL
#AssaultAtCYDI
10. Raleigh, NC
#AssaultAtRaleigh
11. Abilene, TX
#AssaultAtAbilene
12. Albany, GA
#AssaultAtHighlandAlternative
13. Houston, TX
#AssaultAtSouthHoustonHigh
14. Houston, TX
#AssaultAtSamHoustonHigh
15. Tampa, FL
#AssaultAtChamberlainHigh
16. Baltimore, MD
#AssaultAtVanguard
17. Louisville, KY
#AssaultAtOlmsteadAcademy
18. Allegheny County, PA
#AssaultAtWoodlandHills
19. Kissimmee, FL
#AssaultAtKissimmeMiddle
20. Los Angeles, CA
#AssaultAtBartonHill
21. Covington, KY
#AssaultAtLatonia
22. Austin, TX
#AssaultAtRoundRock
23. Pawtucket, RI
#AssaultAtWilliamTolmanHigh
24. Columbia, SC
#AssaultAtSpringValley
25. Oklahoma, OK
#AssaultAtGrant
26. Omaha, NE
#AssaultAtMillard South
27. Brooklyn, NY
#AssaultAtProgressHigh
28. Sherman, TX
#AssaultAtSherman
29. Oakland, CA
#AssaultAtFremontHigh
30. Baltimore, MD
#AssaultAtREACH
31. San Antonio, TX
#AssaultAtRhodesMiddle
32. Knightdale, NC
#AssaultAtKnightdale
33. Las Vegas, Nevada
#AssaultAtBehavior
34. Detroit, MI
#AssaultAtBenFranklin
35. Philadelphia, PA
#AssaultAtRolesville
36. St. Paul, MN
#AssaultAtCentral
37. Sandy Spring, MD
#AssaultAtSherwood
38. Fresno, CA
#AssaultAtHoover
39. Lowell, MA
#AssaultAtCareerAcademy
40. Hampton, SC
#AssaultAtEstillMiddle
41. Birmingham, AL
#AssaultAtHuffmanHigh
42. Bronx, NY
#AssaultAtUrbanAcademy
43. Wake County, NC
#AssaultAtRolesville
44. Pittsburgh, PA
#AssaultAtArlingtonSchool
45. Gwinnett, GA
#AssaultAtSouthGwinnettHigh
46. Allegheny County, PA
#AssaultAtWoodlandHills
47. Richmond, VA
#AssaultAtHuguenotHigh
48. Dallas, TX
#AssaultAtGabeAllenElementary
49. Dallas, TX
#AssaultAtPiedmontGLOBAL
50. Smyrna, TN
#AssaultAtSmyrnaWest
51. San Antonio, TX
#AssaultAtEdRawlinsonMiddle
52. Orange, NJ
#AssaultAtOrangeHigh
53. Phoenix, AZ
#AssaultAtEagleRidge
54. Philadelphia, PA
#AssaultAtSolisCohen
55. Jeffersontown, KY
#AssaultAtJeffersontownHigh
56. St. Ann, MO
#AssaultAtHoechMiddle
57. Pinellas Park, FL
#AssaultAtMorganFitzgerald
58. La Mesa, CA
#AssaultAtHelixCharter
59. San Antonio, TX
#AssaultAtMadison
60. Fayetteville, NC
#AssaultAtSeventyFirstHigh
61. Houston, TX
#AssaultAtHumble
62. Burnsville, MN
#AssaultAtBurnsville

- 1** **#AssaultAtAcademyForLearning - Dolton, IL May 2009**
 Marshawn Pitts, a 15-year-old special needs student, was beat by a school police officer for not tucking in his shirt as school dress code and policy requires. The student was confronted in the hallway by the officer and school staff. After walking away, the officer slammed him against the lockers, pinned him on the floor and broke the student's nose.
- 2** **#AssaultAtKankakeeJunior - Kankakee, IL Jan 2010**
 Two federal lawsuits were filed by the parents of two 12-year-old boys who were shocked by a school police officer with a stun gun during an in-school demonstration.
- 3** **#AssaultAtNorthSide - San Antonio, TX Nov 2010**
 Responding to minor assault and told to stay with the victim and not search for the suspect by his supervisor, the school resource officer disobeyed the order and ran into the backyard of a Northwest Side home with his gun drawn. Moments later, the officer fired his weapon, killing an unarmed 14-year-old Latinx North Side student.
- 4** **#AssaultAtSkylineHigh - Oakland, CA Jan 2011**
 On the evening of January 22, 2011, Raheim Brown, a 20-year-old Black young man, was shot and killed by Oakland School Police Sergeant Barhin Bhatt outside a Skyline High School dance. His crime: attempting to start a car with a screwdriver. Raheim and Tamisha Stewart were parked near the school campus with the car's hazard lights on. Sergeant Bhatt and his partner Jonathan Bellusa, who were patrolling the school surroundings during the dance, came across Raheim's vehicle, and engaged in a verbal, then deadly altercation. Sergeant Bhatt shot 7 bullets into the car, killing Raheim.
- 5** **#AssaultAtCummingsMiddle - Brownsville, TX Jan 2012**
 15-year-old Jaime Gonzalez, an 8th grader at Cummings Middle School, was shot and killed in the hallways of the school after he allegedly refused to drop an air gun he brought to school.
- 6** **#AssaultAtCliftonHigh - Clifton, NJ Apr 2012**
 A video of the incident initially shows Clifton police breaking apart a fight off school grounds. However, it quickly turned to an unidentified officer fighting a 15-year-old, male student. The police officer pushed the student to the ground, punched him in the face as he stood up, grabbed him by the neck and briefly put him in a chokehold. As the student tried to twist away, a plain-clothed police officer appeared to knee the student in the head and swing him into a busy street. The officers teamed up and slammed the student into the ground where he was restrained with a knee in his back and handcuffed.
- 7** **#AssaultAtCedarCreek - Cedar Creek, Texas Nov 2013**
 A 17-year-old Texas student, Noe Nino de Rivera, spent 52 days in a medically induced coma after police used a Taser on him at school, while he was attempting to break up a fight between two peers. The student fell to the ground, striking his head on the floor, rendering him unconscious. He was then placed in handcuffs. School officials did not immediately call paramedics. When they did, he underwent surgery to repair a severe brain hemorrhage and was placed in a medically induced coma.
- 8** **#AssaultAtSuitlandHigh - Prince George's County, MD NOV 2013**
 A school police officer was recorded by school security cameras removing his gun belt, placing his weapon on the floor, taking off his bullet-proof vest and kneeling down to pray before punching a 17-year-old student in the face for allegedly possessing marijuana. It was later revealed that the student did not have marijuana.
- 9** **#AssaultAtCYDI - Chicago, IL Nov 2013**
 An off-duty Chicago police officer working security at Community Youth Development Institute, targeted 17-year-old Aaliyah Russell-Morgan after being late for class. The officer yelled "If you're going to act like a boy, I'm going to treat you like a boy," then proceeded to wrestle Aaliyah, who is lesbian, down to the ground and beat her. As her brother came to her aid, the police officer kicked his teeth out.
- 10** **#AssaultAtRaleigh - Raleigh, North Carolina Jan 2014**
 Eight children, through their parents, filed a complaint in federal court alleging that school police have "violently tackled" students, pepper-sprayed teens and handcuffed, interrogated and arrested students on baseless accusations without informing them of their rights or calling parents.
- 11** **#AssaultAtAbilene - Abilene, TX April 2014**
 Three schoolchildren, through their parents, filed a lawsuit in federal court claiming that a Abilene School Resource Officer violently assaulted them on three separate occasions: placed an arm-bar lock on a kindergarten student, a chokehold against a twelve-year old student, and repeatedly slammed a 15-year-old student.
- 12** **#AssaultAtHighlandAlternative - Albany, CA May 2014**
 A surveillance video revealed a school police officer assaulting a 15-year-old student. The video showed the student walking into a hallway when the school police officer tackled the student into a wall and then body slammed him onto the ground. Then, the school police officer unleashed a barrage of punches to his face and torso. The officer restrained the student by kneeling on his legs and handcuffs him. As a result, the student suffered two bone fractures.
- 13** **#AssaultAtSouthHoustonHigh - Houston, TX May 2014**
 A student, Cesar Suquet, was struck 18 times by a metal nightstick administered by a district school officer. The student had become upset that the district officials would not return a confiscated cell phone and used a profane word before being assaulted. His parents later took him to a medical clinic for extensive bruises and bleeding on his arm, back and neck.
- 14** **#AssaultAtSouthHoustonHigh - Houston, TX Sept 2014**
 Three school resource officers were recorded aggressively pinning a 10th grade, Latinx student to the ground after she refused to give up her cellphone. Ixel Perez was on the phone with her mother when she was sent out of class and approached by her assistant principal who demanded her phone. Ixel refused, walked away, and was approached by three school resource officers. One officer handcuffed her while forcing her legs down by kneeling on them, while another officer pushed her head into the ground with the full force of his knee. Ixel was suspended from school and her cellphone was held until a \$15 fine was paid.
- 15** **#AssaultAtChamberlainHigh - Tampa, FL Sept 2014**
 After a report of having mace, two assistant principals in the schools lunchroom confronted a Black female student, Brittany Overstreet. A school resource officer grabbed the student's ankles and snatched her legs out from under her. Twice the officer, first against a table and then onto the ground, slammed the student, breaking her jaw. No mace was ever found. Brittany received a 10-day suspension.
- 16** **#AssaultAtVanguard - Baltimore, MD Oct 2014**
 A Baltimore City Schools Resource Officer was caught on video using a baton on three Black girls, sending one to the hospital for 6 stitches. After an altercation in between the officer and one of the female students classes, the others gathered to intervene. One student, Diamond McCullum, was hospitalized for a head gash, the others because of pepper spray.
- 17** **#AssaultAtOlmsteadAcademy - Louisville, KY Jan 2015**
 School Resource caught on video putting a 13-year-old in a chokehold and leaving him unconscious. The student, who had a friendly relationship with the officer, thought they were playing around. After being pushed by the student, the officer grabbed the student and choked him until the student could "barely breathe and had blurry vision".
- 18** **#AssaultAtWoodlandHills - Allegheny County, PA Mar 2015**
 A surveillance video captured the brutal assault of Ahmad Williams by a school resource officer and the principal in the school's office. The video shows the officer grabbing Ahmad by his collar, putting him into a chokehold and dragging him down the hallway. The officer body slammed Ahmad to the ground and tased him, while the school's principal held Ahmad's head down. He snatched Ahmad from the ground by the handcuffs and brought him to his office, where the camera couldn't see, and assaulted him again.

- 19** #AssaultAtKissimmeMiddle - Kissimmee, FL May 2015
Unprovoked, a school resource officer was caught on surveillance video jabbing his finger in a student's face before throwing him to the ground and nearly breaking his wrist in front of his mother in the school office. The 13-year-old was arguing with his mother when the officer grabbed him by the shirt, placed him in the wrist lock and lifted his body off of the floor.
- 20** #AssaultAtBartonHill - Los Angeles, CA May 2015
An 11-year-old's, Andres Munoz, wrist was broken when a Los Angeles police officer grabbed his wrist, pulled it behind his back, and handcuffed him at his elementary school. The parents were not notified that their son was handcuffed.
- 21** #AssaultAtLatonia- Covington, Kentucky Aug 2015
The ACLU filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of two elementary school children with disabilities, 8 and 9-years-old, who were handcuffed and traumatized by a Kenton County sheriff's deputy for behaviors that were manifested by their disabilities. The handcuffs did not fit on the children's wrist, so they were placed on the children's biceps, in a painful position.
- 22** #AssaultAtRoundRock - Austin, TX Oct 2015
Two school police officers confronted a Black, 14-year-old Round Rock student, Gyasi Hughes, after a fight had broken up in the school cafeteria. The officers cornered the student, who grabbed his backpack as if to leave. As he attempted to move away from the officers, one of them grabbed him and put his hands on the boy, who attempted to remove the hand. At that point, the officer grabbed him by the throat, turned him around, and slammed the boy to the ground.
- 23** #AssaultAtWilliamTolmanHigh - Pawtucket, RI Oct 2015
While handcuffing 17-year-old Ivander DeBurgo, a school resource officer was recorded grabbing 14-year-old Tyler DeBurgo by his throat and body slamming him into the ground. According to the Pawtucket Police Dept., Tyler approached the officer from behind. However, the video shows Tyler with his back turned to the officer. The brothers were suspended for five days. The officer was removed from Tolman, but was cleared of any wrongdoing.
- 24** #AssaultAtSpringValley - Columbia, SC Oct 2015
A 14-year-old, Black student, Shakara, was asked to leave a classroom after using her phone during a math class. She refused, and was later confronted by School Resource Officer Ben Fields, who aggressively demanded she leave, and then proceeded to attack her. He grabbed her by the neck, slammed her desk to the floor and then dragged her out of the desk. He also arrested another Black female student, Niya Kenny, who spoke up, filmed the assault, and attempted to deescalate the situation.

- 25** #AssaultAtGrant - Oklahoma, OK Oct 2015
A school resource officer was arrested after he was caught assaulting a 16-year-old student on a surveillance recording. The student had reportedly been in the hallway without a pass, when the officer confronted him. When the student went to drink some water, the officer struck the student twice in the head..
- 26** #AssaultAtMillard South - Omaha, NE Dec 2015
A School Resource Officer forced himself between a group of students to stop a fight. Then, without provocation, the officer started punching a by-standing student in the face multiple times. According to the student who posted the video, the student getting punched wasn't swinging during the fight.
- 27** #AssaultAtProgressHigh - Brooklyn, NY Dec 2015
NYPD officer Kareem Phillips was videotaped yelling expletives and striking Yordy Aragon, an 18-year-old student, twice with a baton while he was on the ground, not resisting. While the NYPD were responding to a series of large fights within the school, Aragon says he was defending himself from other students when Phillips pushed him into a full classroom.
- 28** #AssaultAtSherman - Sherman, TX Jan 2016
15-year-old Shatayvian Nelson was violently slammed on the floor by a school police officer during a fight with another female student. The student suffered a severe concussion but was never taken to the hospital or allowed to contact her mother.
- 29** #AssaultAtFremontHigh - Oakland, CA Jan 2016
16-year-old Roberto Canales is shown being pushed out of camera view by two school officers after asking to be released early from schools because he was not feeling well. After accusing Roberto of selling drugs, the officers handcuffed the student. The student suffered back injuries and bruising. Two years prior, in the same office, the same camera caught two guards punching and choking a different student.
- 30** #AssaultAtREACH - Baltimore, MD Mar 2016
A Baltimore school police officer was recorded violently slapping and kicking a Black teenage youth, who was tardy, while a second officer watched. The school, REACH Partnership School in Clifton Park, reported two 'intruders' outside of the school. The 16-year-old, whose parents say attended the school, suffered injuries to his face and ribs. The police officer was investigated and charged, but ultimately acquitted.
- 31** #AssaultAtRhodesMiddle - San Antonio, TX Mar 2016
A school resource officer lifted a 12-year-old Latinx middle-school student into the air and slamm

- 32** #AssaultAtKnightdale - Knightdale, NC
After a scuffle between two students, a 17-year-old junior was pinned down by a school police officer. The student was charged with disorderly conduct and resisting an officer.
- 33** #AssaultAtBehavior - Las Vegas, Nevada
A Clark County School District police officer was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of excessive force against a student and assault. The officer assaulted the student with a baton and slammed the student into a wall and threw her to the floor. After, the officer filed a false report of the altercation, accusing the student of being "aggressive, threatening and non-compliant."
- 34** #AssaultAtCassTech - Detroit, MI
Detroit School Police were called on a Black female student who tried to ride the elevator with an expired elevator pass. The officer pushed the student into a corner in the hallway. When she started to walk away, the student took a cell phone. The officer became enraged, snatched the phone out of her hands and again pushed her into the corner. This time with so much force, the phone head appears to hit the wall, where she fell and cowered in the corner.
- 35** #AssaultAtBenFranklin - Philadelphia, PA
A Black high school senior and member of the Philadelphia Student Union, Brian Burney, was arrested in a school bathroom but didn't have a pass. A School Resource Officer told him he couldn't use the bathroom, antagonizing Brian. In a fit of frustration, an argument ensued and Brian was arrested. The cop retaliated by slapping him twice in the face, slamming him into the wall, and choking him. Another student who was in the bathroom was told to delete the footage or be arrested. The phone was taken from him by the school resource officer, who deleted the footage to erase the documentation of the assault.
- 36** #AssaultAtCentral - St. Paul, MN
A school resource officer pushed a Black female student, who was asked to leave the classroom, against a wall and kned him in the back after she fell to the ground. The officer then sprayed mace in the Black teen's face and arrested her for trespassing.
- 37** #AssaultAtSherwood - Sandy Spring, MD
A police officer placed a female student's headlock and then pinned her to the ground at a senior prom. The police officer believed that the student and other students had been intoxicated, but realized that she had not been drinking.

38 #AssaultAtHoover - Fresno, CA Aug 2016

A 16-year-old Black student was assaulted by a school police officer after dismissal for jaywalking across the street. The assault was recorded, but the student was charged with resisting arrest and jaywalking.

39 #AssaultAtCareerAcademy - Lowell, MA Sept 2016

A school resource officer handcuffed a 16-year-old student behind his back for allegedly having possession of a bag of marijuana. According to an 87-page report, the officer ordered the room where the student was being held cleared before grabbing the 16-year-old boy by the neck, striking him in the head, and threatening to spray him with mace.

40 #AssaultAtEstillMiddle - Hampton, SC Sept 2016

A school resource officer was found guilty of third-degree criminal sexual conduct with a middle school student and engaging in a lewd act with a minor and misconduct in office.

41 #AssaultAtHuffmanHigh - Birmingham, AL Sept 2016

A Black high school student, Adam Goodman, was assaulted by school resource officer in a locked cafeteria as punishment for wearing a hat indoors. "I thought we were going to have a normal conversation about the hat but it turned out to be something else," said the high school junior. "When I turned my back, he punched me in the head and he grabbed me and then start choking me. He threw me on the floor and start kicking me in my back." The assaulted continued until another officer knocked on the door and alerted the school principal.

42 #AssaultAtUrbanAcademy - Bronx, NY Dec 2016

A 14-year-old student was tackled down, handcuffed, and tasered by school police officers after she tried to defend herself after months of bullying from other students.

43 #AssaultAtRolesville - Wake County, NC Jan 2017

A School Resource Police Officer was recorded body slamming a 15-year-old Black student, Jasmine Darwin, then jerking her limp body up by the arm and dragging her out of camera view. Jasmine had been trying to intervene and stop a fight between two other students. The officer was placed on paid administrative leave. The student was diagnosed with a concussion and forced to transfer schools.

44 #AssaultAtArlingtonSchool - Pittsburgh, PA Jan 2017

An officer placed a 12-year-old boy in a chokehold and slammed him against the wall for yelling and making 'derogatory comments.'

45 #AssaultAtSouthGwinnettHigh - Gwinnett, GA Feb 2017

During an altercation between students, a school police officer used excessive force to pin down one of the students, 16, leaving him bloodied and unconscious. Three students were charged with disruption of a school.

46 #AssaultAtWoodlandHills - Allegheny County, PA Apr 2017

On April 3, Steve Shaulis, a Churchill police officer at Woodland Hills High School assaulted and injured Que'Chawn Wade, a 14-year-old student, after publicly using expletives and derogatory slurs towards him. The offending officer body slammed and repeatedly punched Que'Chawn in the head, causing him to lose two teeth and sustain bruises and multiple lacerations to his face and neck.

47 #AssaultAtHuguenotHigh - Richmond, VA April 2017

Two parents filed charges after a video was released of their 17-year-old son, Andre "AJ" Nious, being body slammed by school police officers. A loud scream is heard in the video after a school police officer picked AJ off the floor and slammed his head to the ground. AJ had been in a confrontation with students who had been bullying him.

48 #AssaultAtGabeAllenElementary - Dallas, TX May 2017

While the school principal choked him with her elbow, Dallas ISD Police tased and handcuffed 7-year-old Yosio Lopez, a special needs student with ADHD and a mood disorder. After Dallas ISD police violently responded to the call that Yosio was banging his head against the wall, he was taken to Dallas Behavioral Healthcare for close to a week, without his mother's permission.

49 #AssaultAtPiedmontGLOBAL - Dallas, TX May 2017

Mere days after the #AssaultAtGabeAllenElementary, a Dallas ISD police officer was caught on camera body slamming 12-year-old Mariana Benton into the ground. The Dallas ISD police officer also pepper-sprayed Benton, which prompted medical attention that revealed her fractured clavicle from the forceful impact to the ground.

50 #AssaultAtSmyrnaWest - Smyrna, TN Aug 2017

A video exposed a school resource officer putting a student in handcuffs, pushing him against the wall and pepper spraying him before slamming him to the ground. The officer was charged with assault, perjury, filing a false report, and later fired.

51 #AssaultAtEdRawlinsonMiddle - San Antonio, TX Oct 2017

Parents were outraged when a video surfaced of a campus police officer body slamming a 6th grade male student after breaking up a fight.

52 #AssaultAtOrangeHigh - Orange, NJ Oct 2017

Police Officer Hanifah Davis was recorded slamming Kyasia Sorrells into a storefront and snatching her twin sister Nyasia to the ground by her hair. While he sat on top of both high school students, the school's principal tried to intervene and was placed in a headlock.

53 #AssaultAtEagleRidge - Phoenix, AZ Oct 2017

A 10-year-old immigrant student at a neighboring school district (but located inside the city boundaries of Phoenix) was assaulted by a school police officer hired through the Phoenix Police Department. The student, who is autistic and has an Individualized Education Plan, suffered several injuries, including a dislocated shoulder. He was handcuffed and isolated in the school's "calm-down" room. The mother, who is undocumented, was called and came to the school, found her son handcuffed, and recorded it with her cell phone.

54 #AssaultAtSolisCohen - Philadelphia, PA Oct 2017

An officer forcibly removed 8-year-old Isaac Gardner Jr. from his classroom, took him into a nearby faculty bathroom and shut the door at Solis-Cohen Elementary. The officer threw the child to the ground, cursing at him and calling him names, all for refusing to leave his art class.

55 #AssaultAtJeffersonHigh - Jeffersontown, KY Nov 2017

A student-recorded video of three Jeffersontown police officers assaulting a young Black student at Jeffersontown High School went viral. In the video, the three police officers are seen beating, kicking and using their Taser gun while the student was held face down on the floor. Immediately after, the school principal and the police department released statements justifying the police violence experienced and witnessed by students.

56 #AssaultAtHoechMiddle - St. Ann, MO Dec 2017

12-year-old Tyrese Leggitt's arm was broken in two places after suffering a breakdown in class. Rachel Kozma, Tyrese's mother said her son was on medication for oppositional defiant disorder. ODD made it harder for Tyrese to snap out of angry emotions. The school claims the students pushed his teacher against the door as he was attempting to leave the classroom.

57 #AssaultAtMorganFitzgerald - Pinellas Park, FL Dec 2017

A school resource officer deployed his stun gun as a middle school female student was walking away from a fight. The fight occurred as students were being dismissed. The student's back was turned to the officer. She was handcuffed while on the ground.

58 #AssaultAtHelixCharter - La Mesa, CA Jan 2018

A 17-year-old Black female student was flipped and body slammed on the cement floor of her school grounds after refusing to leave the campus after a suspension. The student had been sick and was on medication when the school staff accused her of being on drugs. The student pulled away from the officers, when she was picked up and slammed.

59 #AssaultAtMadison - San Antonio, TX Jan 2018

During Saturday school, a 16-year-old female student was filmed being pinned face down and arrested. In the video, two school police officers are seen lifting her up as she was handcuffed and letting her face fall to the ground. The student is heard crying for help. The student's father arrived to the scene demanding the officers let go of the girl. The father was placed in a chokehold.

60 #AssaultAtSeventyFirstHigh - Fayetteville, NC Feb 2018

A 16-year-old Black male student was grabbed, held, and pepper sprayed in the face by a Cumberland County deputy and school police officer after the student intervened in a fight between two female students.

61 #AssaultAtHumble - Houston, TX Mar 2018

A school police officer flipped a 16-year-old Black female student, Essence Prince, to the ground and pinning her down with his elbow on her throat. The student had gotten in an altercation with another student when the officer threw her to the ground. She was questioned by police without contacting her parents and initially denied medical attention.

62 #AssaultAtBurnsville - Burnsville, MN Mar 2018

A 14-year-old Black student was tasered in the chest, taken to the ground, and arrested outside of Burnsville High School by a school police officer after a confrontation with another student.





We Came To Learn Recommendations

Recommendations

Divest from Law Enforcement Strategies in Schools

School districts and local municipalities spend millions of dollars every year on school policing, which is directed towards stationing police officers in schools, metal detectors and various forms of surveillance.

We must identify exactly how much is spent on school policing and demand that those funds are divested from systems that police students and invested in creating safe, high-quality schools for all students.

Deprioritize the Reliance on School Police

School police should be deprioritized so that use of police officers in schools are an instrument of last resort.

Memorandums of understanding between law enforcement agencies and schools, intergovernmental agreements, and school district policies should eliminate the permanent presence of police officers on campus and place limits on requests for police assistance.

De-escalation interventions, supportive student services, and restorative practices should all be utilized instead of relying on criminalization that has collateral consequences for students, families and their communities.

Recommendations

Disarm School Personnel, Including Police

We must disarm school personnel by removing weapons from school police officers and other school staff.

Weapons like guns, electronic restraints, chemical restraints and batons, place students at risk of abuse due to excessive force by police officers and are harmful to the overall school climate.

Creating a safe atmosphere for students of color requires that they are also safe from police misconduct and abuse.

Decriminalize Student Behavior

Student behavior must be decriminalized.

We must eliminate laws and statutes that criminalize students for age-appropriate behavior, like the statutes that make it a crime to disturb school or act in an obnoxious manner in school.

Eliminating these laws while enacting policies that require the use of alternatives to exclusionary discipline and arrest will decrease the number of youth funneled into the school-to-prison pipeline and help establish a positive school climate for all students.

Recommendations

Delegitimize Policing as a Safety Mechanism

School policing does not equate to safety, especially for students of color.

We must shed light on the falsehood that increased policing and militarization of school environments makes schools safe.

Data, both qualitative and quantitative, can help demonstrate what happens when schools are over-policed.

Sharing the voices and stories about what young people in school experience at the hands of school police illustrates the reality of school policing as one that instills fear and causes real harm.

Dismantle School Policing

We must end the practice of policing young people.

All of the other strategies - divestment, deprioritization, disarming, decriminalization, and delegitimization - must ultimately work together to end the relationship between school districts and police departments.

We can dismantle school policing and create police-free schools.



**We Came To Learn
Conclusion**

Conclusion

“We need to expand the definition of, and investment in public safety to include more school-based counselors, social workers, and nurses. Counselors, social workers, and nurses are trained to de-escalate community members in distress, whereas law enforcement are trained to meet force with force and to neutralize potential threat. Too often youth of color and young people from low-income communities are seen as this threat by law enforcement. All students have the right to safety and security and for many that does not include police and armed personnel. Safety for all includes restorative practices and restorative justice, not zero-tolerance or criminalization practices that re-traumatize youth of color and young people from low-income communities.” – Dominga Black, 18, Voices of the Unheard, Columbus, OH



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