

# Curbing ~~The School To Prison~~ ~~Pipeline:~~

Challenges Faced by Formerly Incarcerated and Justice Impacted Students, Youth, Young Adults And Families in West Contra Costa County

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## About the Safe Return Project

The Safe Return Project is a non profit organization run by formerly incarcerated, justice impacted, and other community members organizing to end mass incarceration and racial disparities. How we accomplish this goal is through community organizing, participatory action research, policy advocacy and systems change. Safe Return is committed to re-enfranchising community members who have been disenfranchised due to criminalization. We believe in investing and centering community leaders most impacted to influence the movement in social change through personal experience and testimonies.

Safe Return Project is committed to investment in deep leadership for healthy communities. The Safe Return Project was launched in 2010 through a partnership of the Pacific Institute, Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization (CCISCO), and the Richmond Office of Neighborhood Safety. In 2013, Safe Return became an independent organization, and is currently fiscally sponsored by the Social Good Fund. Over the past 6 years SRP has been generously funded by: The California Endowment, The San Francisco Foundation, East Bay Community Foundation, Tides Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, the University of Berkeley Richmond Partnership Fund, and others.

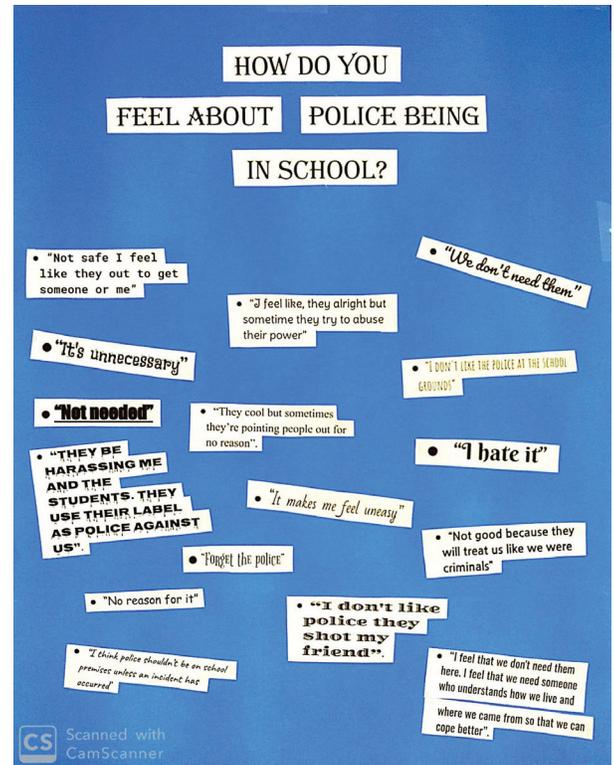


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# About this Report

This report was co-authored by Le'Damien Flowers, Amy Andrea Martinez, and Tamisha Walker. Data for this report were collected through focus groups, observations in community events, survey interviews with parents and youth, and academic research. Technical assistance and editing was provided by Eli Moore, Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society. The goal of this report is to identify and address issues in West Contra Costa County community and school district in regards to the school to prison pipeline, juvenile incarceration, heavy school policing, and lack of resources and support for parents with justice impacted students returning from incarceration. This report is part of a series that shares the findings and recommendations arising from Safe Return research and engagement with thousands of community members, service providers, elected officials, community stakeholders, and others. In addition to this report, the other topics in the series are:

- Rebuilding Family and Community Ties
- Employment and Community Reintegration
- Public Benefits and Essential Reentry Services
- Access to Quality Health Services after Incarceration
- Mass Incarceration and Community Reintegration
- Community Reintegration and AB109 Realignment



## About the Safe Return Youth Justice Survey

In 2017-2019 the Safe Return Team designed and conducted an extensive survey for formerly incarcerated youth and young adults in the West Contra Costa County Unified School District. The survey questionnaire included 103 questions that were created by the Safe Return Team. We surveyed 102 youth and young adults individuals between the ages of 14-25 years of age. Participants were required to have direct experiences with incarceration in juvenile hall, jail and/or prison, with ankle monitoring, and/or diversion programs. We ensured that we were inclusive of the experiences of young girls and women of color and those belonging to the LGBTQIA+ community, by including questions that were gender specific and sensitive to sexual orientation. All surveys were anonymous as to protect the anonymity of youth and young adult participants. Respondents and/or their parents signed informed consent forms and were provided with a small stipend for their participation.

## Acknowledgments

This report reflects the insight of hundreds of young people and young adults criminalized and directly impacted by the ever-growing systems of mass incarceration. This work would not have been made possible without the participation of youth, young adults, and parents who opened up to us about their experiences with the criminal justice system and their struggles with reentry after post incarceration. We hope that by putting those most impacted and their voices at the forefront in our fight to end the school to prison pipeline, the criminalization of Black and Latino youth, we can demand for equitable community resources and opportunities of higher education socially and academically for our young people. All those who have participated in Safe Return leadership meetings, public forums, focus groups, campaigns, and one to one interviews have shaped our views and made this work possible.

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# I. Introduction

Our vision is that there will be pathways for youth, young adults and their families to access equitable resources that support their academic success, and that proper safety and support factors are in place for all students and families of all ethnicities and races. When we look at some of the key factors and root causes that divert youth and young adults into incarceration, the racial disparity in the impact on Black and Brown youth and young adults of color is overwhelming. There [is growing recognition](#) of the problem of the school to prison pipeline and issues with the police presence on school campuses and the shortage of counselors, nurses, psychologists and social workers. This lack of support and presence of law enforcement pushes children and young adults of color out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system.

Students dealing with trauma and mental health issues are heavily policed in school, often do not receive proper services, and get funnelled into the criminal justice system. Arrest and incarceration creates a deeper hole to crawl out of. Reentering an under resourced community and school after incarceration at a young age makes the odds of success very slim. This experience often pushes young people into further incarceration into adulthood and or even death.

A principal goal of the Safe Return Project is to conduct our own research to fill in gaps in information needed to understand and support the kinds of policies and practices that will provide safe reintegration of youth and young adults involved in criminal and juvenile justice systems. Realizing the need for this type of research, The Safe Return Project convened a team of formerly incarcerated people and indirectly impacted allies to be trained as researchers to conduct (1) case studies of existing community organizations and youth service providers in the city of Richmond to get a better understanding of the barriers for successful integration of youth upon reentry, (2) a survey of youth and young adults between the ages of 14- 25 years old to better understand the social and legal conditions they face, and (3) focus groups with parents and youth to get an in-depth understanding of their lived experiences and insights.

This report presents our qualitative and quantitative data on the experiences of Black and Brown youth, young adults and families in the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD). We wanted to capture the stories and everyday life challenges facing justice impacted families. Black and Brown communities in Richmond and surrounding cities and unincorporated areas have been criminalized and harmed by structural racism. These families are experiencing incarceration across generations.

- Some of the key findings from our survey of over 100 youth and young adults in West Contra Costa county are:
- Almost every young person surveyed had lost a friend or family member to gun violence, and four out of five had not received trauma counseling.
- When asked the top priority for services they think are needed, youth and young adults picked family therapy and mentors.
- There is a severe lack of employment for youth and young adults. More than 3 out of 4 youth surveyed do not have employment.
- When asked about their age during their first encounter with law enforcement, the most common answer was 13 years old. Almost one out of four had their first encounter before they turned 12 years old.
- 55% of the youth surveyed did not receive any services to help them transition back into school after incarceration.

## II. Youth Incarceration

The U.S. makes up about [4 percent](#) of the world's population, yet it accounts for [22 percent](#) of the world's prison population. Historically, mass incarceration has plagued under resourced communities suffering from economic exclusion, which are predominantly people of color. More than 50 years of mass incarceration has been the key factor in driving oppression, breaking up families and homes, and disenfranchisement across the country. Since the late 1970's America has witnessed massive growth in arrests and incarceration nationally. According to a Reuters Report, local jail populations and facilities grew more than four times from around 500,000 to nearly 2.2 million, more than seven times the growth rate of the U.S. population overall. The prison population shot up following the widespread adoption of mandatory minimum sentence laws in the 1990s and other factors that were part of the 'war on drugs' that disproportionately impacted communities of color with harsh sentencing laws. Black and brown people make up only 29% of the U.S. population but make up about 59% of incarcerated population.<sup>1</sup>

Incarceration of adults often starts a cycle of incarceration and has a lasting effect on their children. Historically youth with parents are more likely to fall into the criminal justice system. According to a Go Kids Article from 2008, 70 percent of young kids with incarcerated parents are set up to follow their parents' footsteps and are 5 times more likely to commit crimes than their peers. Although nationally we are at the lowest point in the incarcerated population since 1996, the United States still commits massive investments to prisons, private prisons, and local jails while providing inadequate health, social and emotional services and school systems.

### Consequences faced when not provided with the proper services and resources

A little over 2 million people dealing with depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health illnesses are policed and mistreated each year. Thousands of people, particularly youth and people of color, are funneled into incarceration because of a failure in the system and community to support youth and young adults in under resourced communities. Studies have shown that lack of community based treatment can lead to a drastic increase in incarceration for people dealing with mental issues and psychological factors.<sup>2</sup>

### Youth Incarceration Nationally

Youth and Young adults in impoverished communities and neighborhoods that are predominantly people of color show up in the criminal justice system at young ages and are policed at much higher rates, and often incarcerated because of their social and emotional health. America spends more money on prisons than colleges and schools.<sup>3</sup> United States [leads in youth incarceration globally](#) as well.<sup>4</sup> Even though the youth incarceration has been declining since the early 2000's, the racial disparities have become worse. Youth of color, including Black, Latino and Native American youth nationally are overrepresented in juvenile facilities, while their white youth counterparts are under represented - driving an unequal impact.<sup>5</sup> Behind this is the fact that youth of color are growing up in predominantly low income communities, experiencing over-policing, and having encounters with law enforcement at young ages. These contacts with law enforcement often occur in schools around middle and high school levels, increasing the rates of arrest.

### Youth Incarceration in California

In California, Black youth are more than [9 times more likely](#) to be incarcerated than White youth. Native American and Latino youth are also incarcerated at disproportionately high rates in California.<sup>6</sup> As noted by The California Endowment, "California has built a total of 22 prisons but just one University of California campus since the 1980s. And we spend \$10 billion a year on our prison system."<sup>7</sup> California spends \$62,300 per year incarcerating one person in state prison while spending \$9,100 per

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1 Prison Policy Initiative (2014) Online at <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/rates.html#>

2 The Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights, "Incarceration and Mental Health". Online at <https://www.prisonerhealth.org/educational-resources/factsheets-2/incarceration-and-mental-health/>

3 US Department of Education (2016). Online at <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/report-increases-spending-corrections-far-out-pace-education>

4 Schiraldi, Vincent & McCarthy, Patrick & Shark, Miriam. (2016). The Future of Youth Justice: A Community-Based Alternative to the Youth Prison Model. New Thinking in Community Corrections Bulletin. NCJ 250142. Online at [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/International-youth-incarceration-rates-per-100-000-in-2010\\_fig3\\_310607289](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/International-youth-incarceration-rates-per-100-000-in-2010_fig3_310607289)

5 Burns Institute, "Unbalanced Youth Justice". Online at <http://data.burnsinstitute.org/#comparison=2&placement=1&racess=2,3,4,5,6&offenses=5,2,8,1,9,11,10&year=2015&view=graph>

6 Burns Institute, "Unbalanced Youth Justice". Online at <http://data.burnsinstitute.org/decision-points/5/california#comparison=2&placement=1&racess=2,3,4,5,6&offenses=5,2,8,1,9,11,10&odc=1&dmp=1&dmp-comparison=2&dmp-decisions=5&dmp-county=-1&dmp-racess=1,2,3,4,7,5,6&dmp-year=2014>

7 The California Endowment (2014) Do the Math: Schools Versus Prisons. Online at <https://www.calendow.org/do-the-math-schools-vs-prisons/>

year per student in public school, equivalent to 6.5 times more investment into the criminal justice system. It costs less to send someone to college with full scholarship, successfully pipelining youth and youth adults to higher education before ruining their future.

### Youth Incarceration in Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County is no exception. A recent investigation of Contra Costa County found that, “Black youth who live in Contra Costa County are detained in Juvenile Hall at 14-16 times the rate of White youth.”<sup>8</sup> The county has five detection centers or jails: Martinez adult jail, West County Detention Center, Marsh Creek Detention Facility, Martinez Juvenile Jail and Contra Costa Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility. Contra Costa county is one of the richest counties in California and has had recent population growth mostly in East County areas like Pittsburg and Antioch due to there being more affordable housing and the rising housing costs around the Bay Area. Many Black families and other low income families of color have had to relocate to newly developed regions of the county. There is now an uptick in arrests and increased crime. The county wasn’t set up with the services and resources to support these most impacted communities’ relocation. This is a trend that is taking place all over the nation, where low income people of color are being relocated to suburban areas that were predominantly white, and there is increased policing and racially profiling, which in some circumstances leads to police shootings of individuals in these relocated communities of color.

### Arrest Rates by Racial/Ethnic Group in Contra Costa County, 2005-2014<sup>9</sup>

The chart above shows that the arrest rate in Contra Costa county for Black youth is about 2,000 per 100,000 residents, while it is under 300 per 100,000 residents for White youth. This means Black youth are about 7 times more likely to be arrested.

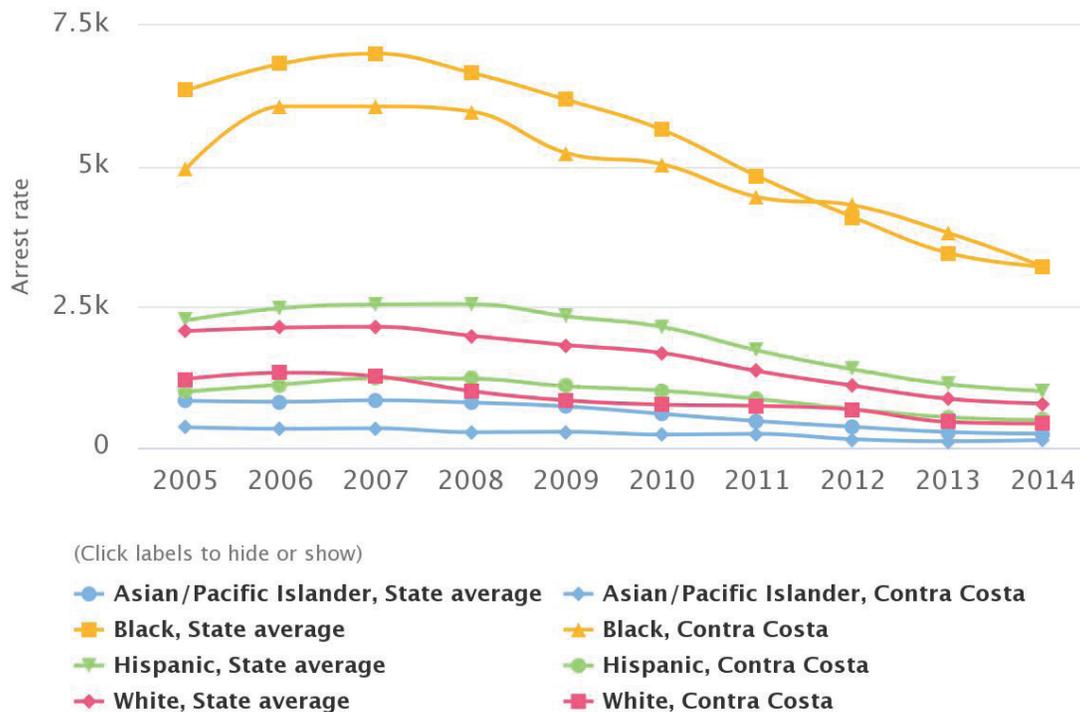


Figure 1

8 Final Report to the Board of Supervisors (June 2018) Racial Justice Task Force – Final Report and Recommendations. Online at [contracostaherald.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-FINAL-CCC-RJTF\\_Report.pdf](http://contracostaherald.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-FINAL-CCC-RJTF_Report.pdf)

9 Open Justice, “Trends Over Time”. Online at <https://openjustice.doj.ca.gov/agencies/time-trends#/collapseOne>

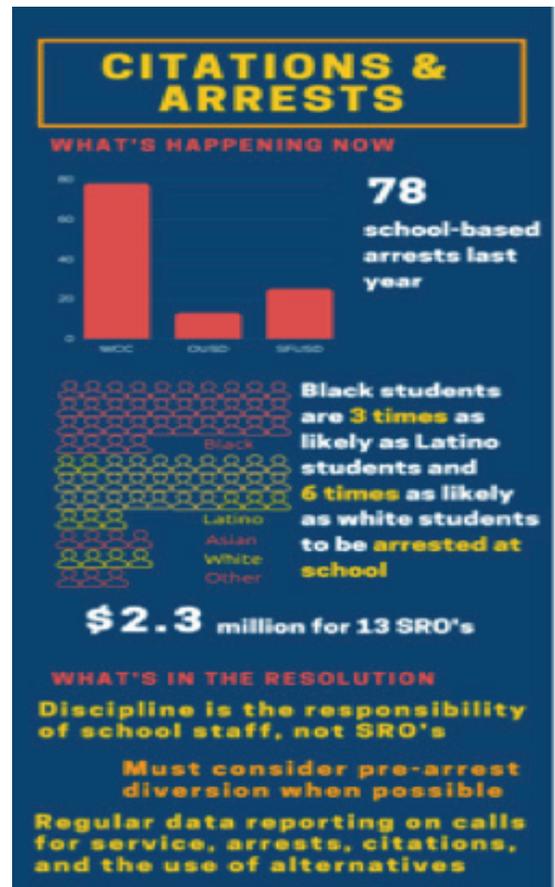
## West Contra Costa County

West Contra Costa County is made up of multiple cities and unincorporated areas in district 1, with Richmond being the largest city. North Richmond is socially attached to Richmond but divided into parts that are within the city and unincorporated. Richmond is made up of 20.6% Afro / African American, 42% Hispanic or Latino and 39.6% White. Historically North Richmond was a black community since the migration for employment during WWII, being only one of the areas where Black people could reside. In recent years the inner city of Richmond has been heavily impacted by incarceration of predominantly people of color coupled with a severe lack of services and resources, and inadequate resources and youth, young adult centers in Richmond.

In WCCUSD, data shows that there were 78 arrests at schools in 2017 academic year. In 2016 and 2017, Black students in the district were 3 times as likely as Latinos and 6 times as likely as White students to be arrested at school.

Racial/Ethnic Group	Number of arrests (and percentage)	Enrollment in WCCUSD
Black	34 (44%)	17%
Latino	33 (42%)	54%
Filipino	2 (3%)	5%
Other Asian	2 (3%)	11%
White	4 (4%)	10%
Other	3 (4%)	3%

Figure 2



# III. Youth and Parent Voices from Focus Groups

## Focus Group Goals and Methods

In order for youth, young adults, and family members to speak in their own words and have their voices be part of the development of community solutions, we facilitated 8 focus group discussions in West Contra Costa County. Through the focus groups, we listened and captured their experiences around racism, the direct and indirect experiences with the criminal justice system, law enforcement and police in schools, and community actions and investment for social and academic success. All participants were people of color that had been directly and or indirectly impacted by the criminal justice system. The key questions the participants reflected on were: How has race impacted your life? What is your experience with the Criminal Justice system? How Do you feel about police in your community and schools? Do you feel your community and schools invest into your social and academic success?

## West County Youth and Parent Voices

Youth and young adults expressed their feelings on the challenges in social spaces, being impacted by racism and judgment, the lack of support on their side, and feeling lonely at times in the world. Young people frequently talked about being racially profiled, such as when walking into stores. One young person stated,

**“When I walked into the store, the man told me and my friends to take off our backpacks, but when someone that was white came in, he said nothing to them. That made me hella mad but I don’t know man. Then he said to take everything out of my pockets and he wanted to search me when I already paid for my food. I felt like he over-charged me I swear. I told him anytime I come into the store I pay for my stuff.”**

There is this preconceived notion that young people of color are bad and don’t have money to actually buy things, which can really hurt a young person psychologically by making them feel othered and left out, as if they are not accepted in society.

Youth also had the feeling that there was nothing that they can do about racism and being stereotyped because of the color of their skin, especially when it came to encounters with police officers. A young person at Kennedy shared:

**“Just because we black and coming from Richmond they think that we bad and stuff and trying not to do nothing with our lives.”**

When asked, How has race impacted your life? youth named a range of experiences:

*Feel Judgement when walking to store*  
*Because I have a hood on I look like a criminal*  
*Stereotypes also make me feel bad about myself*  
*Makes me angry at the person judging me*  
*I’m used to being stereotyped, it feels like nothing we can do about it*  
*Feel like the odds are against me*  
*Name calling that leads to violence*  
*I’m messed with by law enforcement everyday and searched on a daily basis*  
*No jobs and no money*  
*It makes it harder to survive*  
*Racial profiling*  
*I feel restricted*  
*Unfair opportunities*  
*Cultural differences*  
*Biased teachers*  
*Assumptions*  
*The way you dress impacts you as well*

Some young people described feeling as if the police are only around when you’re in trouble but when you’re feeling down or depressed they don’t even acknowledge you. Only when you’re in trouble is when they acknowledged you. A majority of the participants stated that having more people at their schools to be able to talk to would be a better way to de-escalate fights and resolve issues on school campus.

## How do you feel about school resource officers on campus?

*They are unnecessary*

*Make me uncomfortable*

*Don't feel safe*

*They approach you only when you are in trouble*

*We don't need police in schools, it feels like they don't do anything that is needed*

*A lot of security*

*They should not have guns in schools, they should only keep tasers*

*They need to keep guns in lockers, they're not necessary*

*Negative*

*They stereotype us, label students as troublemakers*

*School feels like a jail or cage*

*They don't understand the students*

*They racially profile us, and show favoritism if you are white*

*They enforce a dress code on us*

*Enforce unnecessary rules*

*If they are in a bad mood the students will be targeted*

*Should be out in the community*

*Don't like them and do not have a relationship*

Young adults in the community described being harassed by police officers because of the music in their cars, having too many people in a car, and because of their race. When asked if they feel their community and schools invest in their social and academic success, a lot of the youth and young adults stated no, they don't feel like it. They said that in the schools they have to teach themselves or they won't learn anything. They said that there was too much turnover when it comes to the teachers, and the majority of them feel like the staff was impatient and just wanted to do the work and go home.

The root causes of incarceration were also explored, and one parent described how the factors behind incarceration can be hard to recognize:

**"You never know, kids go through a lot. And some kids are humble to where you don't know that they go through a lot and they don't know they're supposed to have feelings. And they hold everything inside, and when they hold everything inside eventually it's gonna come out but not in the right way, and then it's too late because they already blew up now. It could be a lot."**

One young person described the trauma in his life this way:

**"I really started coming to school when I had like 3 of my friends died. One friend got suspended from school, and I don't know what happened but on his way coming from school, someone killed him. I noticed all my friends were dying being out of school. Basically my right hand man went down a year ago or two years ago. And I seen dudes at my school."**



# IV. Youth Justice Survey Research Findings

## Survey Goals and Methods

Our Youth Justice Survey interviews were conducted in Richmond, California, and in the surrounding cities of San Pablo, Pinole and El Sobrante. We engaged justice-impacted youth and young adults through service providers, including the office of Neighborhood and Safety and YMCA Health Centers in the WCCUSD. Our research team visited 19 different organizations and youth service providers to ensure that any youth who was eligible for the survey would be included. Although we were barred from going on School Campus, we participated in school related meetings.<sup>10</sup>

To participate in the survey, individuals met the following requirements:

- Between the ages of 14-25 years old
- Had been previously incarcerated in juvenile hall, camp, prison, and/or jail OR participated in a diversion program
- Currently lived in Richmond or West Contra Costa County.

Survey participation was confidential, voluntary, and respondents received \$20 to \$25 gift cards. Survey interviews were conducted in English between times of work hours on multiple days from 2017 to 2019. We surveyed 102 youth and young adults. The 103 questions on the survey were developed by Safe Return Project staff, and covered the following topics:

- Experiences of women and young girls
- LGBTQ youth and young adults
- Conditions of confinement
- Diversion programs
- Experiences with re-entry post juvenile hall confinement
- Encounters with police and/or law enforcement
- Experiences with incarceration
- Services in the community and school
- Trauma
- Policing in schools
- Substance use

We have identified several potential limitations to our research approach. The surveys were conducted in English, limiting participation from non-English speakers. Due to the fact our research team approached well-known organizations and youth service providers in the Richmond community, we were only able to capture youth who frequent these spaces. Lastly, the survey relies on self-reported data because it is designed to capture the individual perspectives of youth and young adults who have been directly impacted by juvenile and criminal justice systems. By capturing the lived experiences of these young people, we hope to put their voices at the center of our research and policy recommendations. As with all self-reported data, the findings are subject to over or under reporting by participants.

## Key Facts from the Youth Justice Survey

When we asked the youth and young adults if they had ever been incarcerated, close to 70% stated yes. When asked about their age during their first encounter with law enforcement, the most common answer was 13 years old. Almost one out of four had their first encounter before they turned 12 years old. When asked what grade they were in when they were first incarcerated, the most common answer was 9th grade. More than one out of three people (42%) who responded had been incarcerated before they started high school. When reviewing this data, community members agreed that early teenage years commonly when young folks first encounter police, law enforcement, juvenile system and or criminalization.

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<sup>10</sup> We experienced roadblocks gaining access with WCCUSD schools, particularly high schools and middle schools, due to the background screenings that bar parents and community leaders from having access to school campuses. People with past convictions are often blocked from being able to volunteer or be on school grounds. Having a federal (even if it was expunged from your state record), and all felony convictions bar you from school campus no matter if your past history have nothing to do with children or schools. There is no equitable process in place to submit an appeal to at least represent yourself to prove how you rehabilitated yourself. Parents cannot participate in children's field trips and cannot ride on the same bus as them. CBO's cannot have folks with similar direct experience with the criminal justice system engage youth and young adults on campus even when they are often the best ones to best support that population.

## First Encounters

How old were you when you had your first encounter with the police?

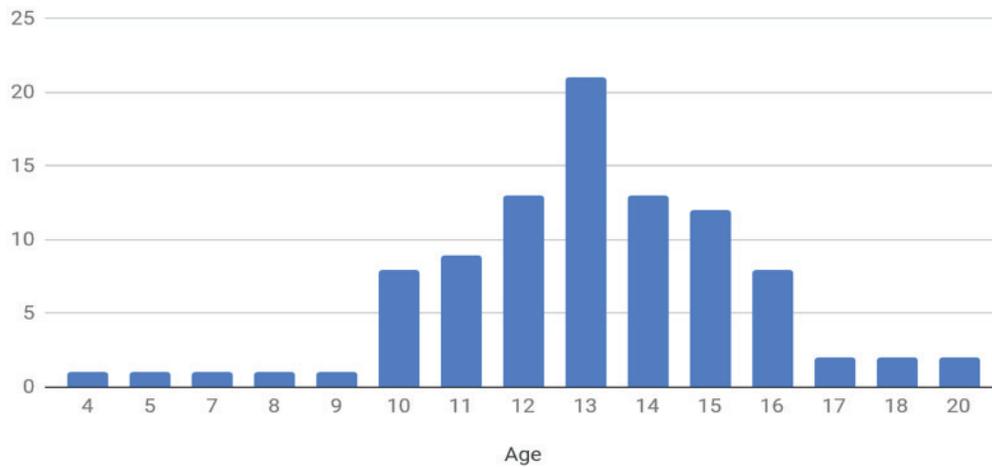


Figure 3

What grade level were you in school before you were incarcerated?

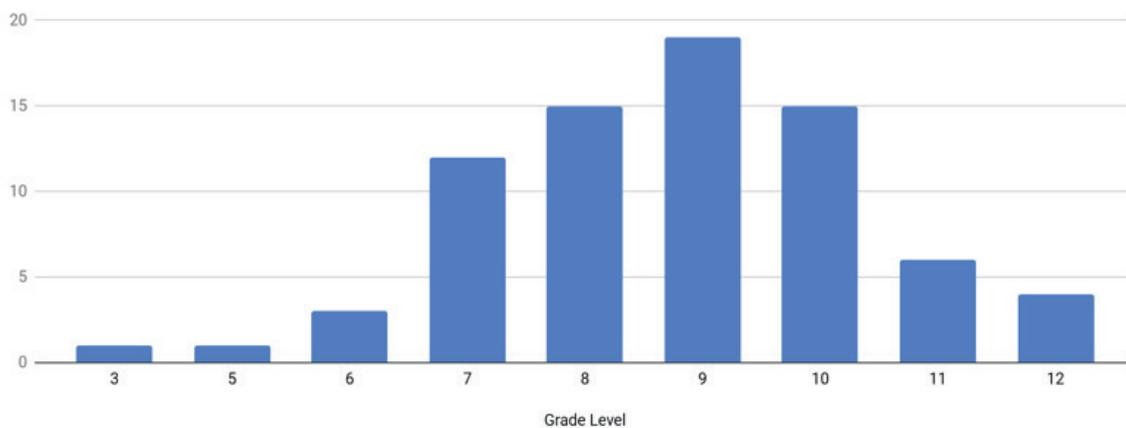
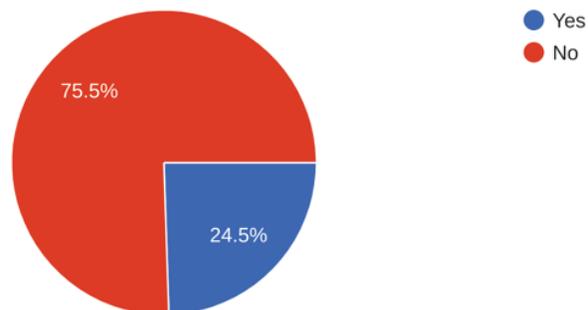


Figure 4

Figure 5

### Are you employed

98 responses



## Employment

More than 3 out of 4 youth surveyed do not have employment. This speaks to the key factors and root causes of economic despair and poverty. Not having access to jobs and sustainability often leads to desperate times and crime.

Which of these describes your race? Circle all that apply

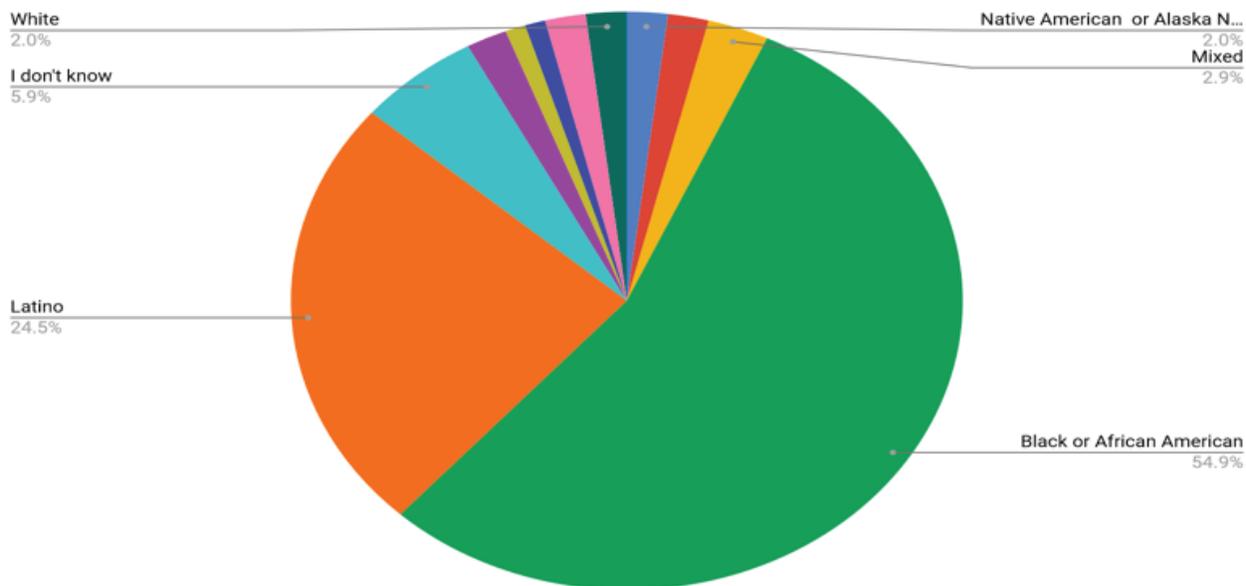


Figure 6

I am singled out by police and/or enforcement because of my race.

96 responses

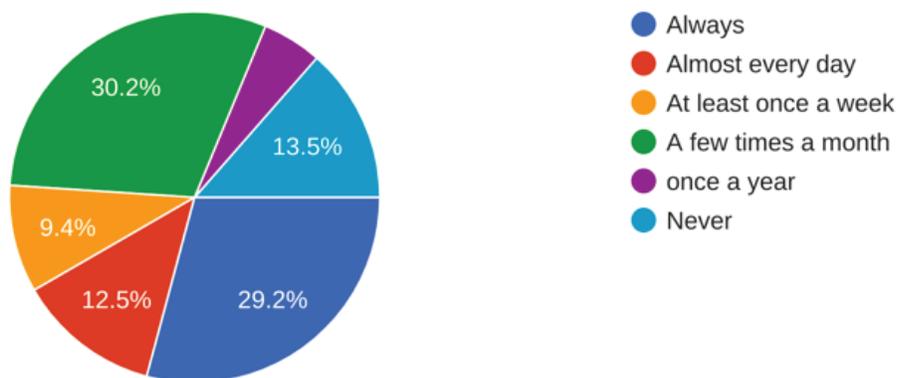


Figure 7

**Race and Ethnicity**

Our focus was youth and young adults of color because we know that statistically Black and Brown youth are funneled through the system at disproportionately higher rates than white and Asian peers. **81.3% of participants stated that they had been singled out by law enforcement because of their race always, almost everyday, at least once a week or a few times a month.**

When asked “**What factors played into being them being incarcerated**” there were 59 responses. 36 out of 59 were non victim crimes, 6 respondents didn’t respond with any factors, and 17 responded as “Violent” mostly gang activity and/or robbery. Here are the specific responses:

- Fighting
- Probation violation
- Stealing
- Fighting / stealing cars
- Gun violence
- Manslaughter
- Rather not say
- Doing what I thought was my last source of income
- Drug dealing
- I don’t know
- Intimidating a witness
- I don’t Know
- Fights
- Stealing from the store
- Strong armed robbery
- Fighting
- Weed
- Environment
- Drugs and gangs
- Robbery and assault
- Wrong place at the wrong time
- Broke on my birthday. Stealing from two white ladies who left their purse in the car
- Hanging around the wrong crowd
- Selling drugs /probation violations
- Pulled over without a license
- Drugs and my mom going to jail
- Wrong place wrong time
- None
- Got put on probation a lot
- Assault with a firearm
- I was broke and needed some money
- Trying to get some money
- High speed chase/stolen vehicle
- None really
- My family
- Alot
- The way I was living
- I was on the run
- Luck to help
- Being from the hood and my environment and surroundings
- Robbery, fighting
- Probations violations
- Don’t understand question
- Robbery
- Ran off with an Iphone
- Fighting
- Probation violations
- Was accused of attempted murder
- I was accused of fighting a girl with my sister who I didn’t even touch but I was arrested because I didn’t provide a statement so they believed her.

## Were there any services regarding housing and/or employment upon reentry offered?

77 responses

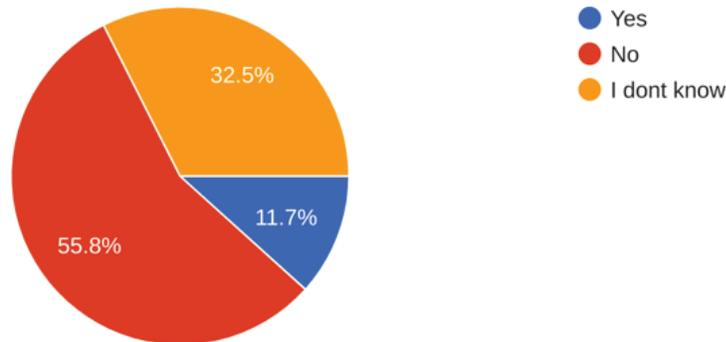


Figure 8

## Was there any services provided to help you transition or enroll back into school?

78 responses

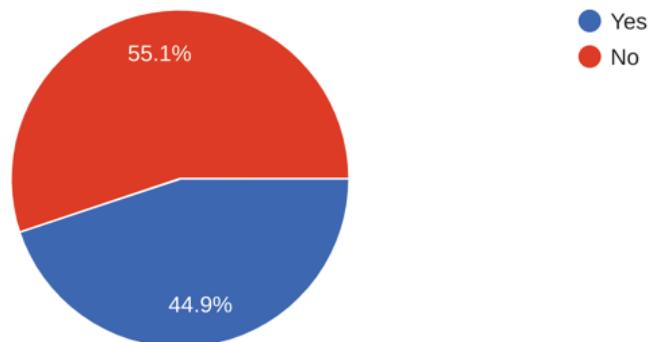


Figure 9

### Services

Services in schools and or community can be a necessity for young people reentering back into their community. Families and parents that don't have access to support their children are more likely to lose their child to further incarceration and or death to gang violence on the streets. **Only 11.7% of youth surveyed said they had support services to help them with housing or employment, two essential pieces of reintegration.**

55% of the youth surveyed did not receive any services to help them transition back into school. In focus groups when youth and young adults were asked if their school invested in their social and academic success, participants repeatedly stated:

- No resources to prepare for college
- Teachers don't pay attention to the students in class and are overwhelmed
- More subs than teachers
- Just want you to do your work and get out / go home
- I have to teach myself, they don't teach you anything here

# How much time did you spend in school on an average week?

90 responses

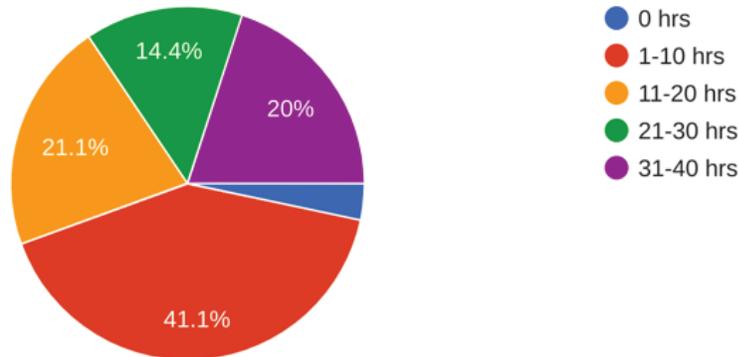


Figure 10

41% of the students stated they were only spending a quarter of school time in school, and a total of 60% said they were spending less than half of school time in school.

When this data was revealed to the parents, students, community and partners, they expressed the need for more parent inclusion and more support. One parent stated “We know how to help our young people we just need the funds to do it”. One community member stated, “Some folks don’t go to school because teachers are just trying to pass them along, they are not invested in their students the students needs some type of encouragement to make them feel like they can succeed in life”.

## How has crime and violence in your community affected you?

- “I’ve seen traumatic things which caused me to have anxiety and I’ve watched someone die which caused PTSD”
- “Too much killing”
- “IT’S MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I GOT ANXIETY”
- “I GOT SHOT”
- “Took me away from everything”
- “I HAVE LOST MANY FAMILY MEMBERS, AND FRIENDS AND HAVE SEEN A LOT OF VIOLENCE”
- “MY FRIENDS DYING OR FAMILY MEMBERS MAKE ME HAVE NO HOPE FOR MY COMMUNITY”
- “Crazy Mentally disturbing. My house got shot up”
- “Has me paranoid”
- “I’ve been traumatized by aggressive events”
- “I didn’t think I was going to make it past 21”
- “Individual isolation”
- “SLEEP DISORDER”
- “POLICE OUT HERE DON’T REALLY CARE BECAUSE OF THE CITY WE LIVE IN IS NOTHING BUT VIOLENCE”
- “Used to it already”
- “Down to my core, has caused me to be very upset”
- “WHEN A FRIEND GOT SHOT WHILE JUST WALKING INTO HIS HOUSE”
- “PTSD AND ANXIETY”
- “I’ll jump from loud noises and be paranoid”
- “It can be depressing at times and annoying since there’s a constant worry of being killed or arrested”
- “Loss of family members”
- “FEEL LIKE I HAVE TO PROTECT MYSELF”
- “Affects me because my community is very violent and I have family siblings who be walking or just passing by streets. Anything crazy could happen at any minute”
- “Losing my loved ones”
- “I lost a lot of my family members to gun violence”
- “PEOPLE DIE AND GO TO JAIL”
- “IT MADE ME ANXIETY AT THE WORLD. I FEEL DRAINED BY HOLDING IT IN”
- “At times I feel unsafe”
- “I don’t know, you just get used to it happening”
- “I’ve been traumatic”
- “IT MADE ME ANXIETY AT THE WORLD. I FEEL DRAINED BY HOLDING IT IN”
- “I HAVE ANXIETY. BEING IN THE HOOD AND THE SHIT THAT YOU SEE DODGING THE BULLETS”
- “Makes me watch my surroundings every where I’m at”
- “It has mentally emotionally and physically tore me down at times”

## HAVE ANY OF YOUR ENCOUNTERS WITH POLICE AND/OR LAW ENFORCEMENT BEEN VIOLENT? IF SO HOW?

- “ME AND MY FRIENDS WERE WALKING AND AN OFFICER TOLD US TO SIT ON THE CURB SO HE COULD RUN US THROUGH SOMETHING. I REFUSED AND HE PUT ME AGAINST THE CAR FOR RESISTING”
- “Beat me up alot of times. Slammed me alot because i’m big”
- “I got slammed and put into a arm hold it hurted”
- “Threw me into the police car”
- “THEY JUST SEEN ME AND GRABBED ME THREW ME ON THE GROUND FOR NO REASON”
- “KNEEING IN THE FACE”
- “THEY KEEP SLAMMING ME AGAINST THE FLOOR. I WAS 15 YEARS OLD”
- “The police beat me after I was on my stomach with cuffs on. I was kicked, hit with a baton and punched all while a gun was to my head for about 30 seconds from multiple officers. After I was pulled up I had a puddle of blood about 4 feet wide all coming from my head”
- “They were doing extra like slamming me and putting their knees on my neck”
- “Got slammed on the floor”
- “Like headlock and submissive move”
- “Well they pushed me to the sidewalk and they arrested me and i was bella pregnant with my 3rd child”
- “They slammed and hit me in my head”
- “I got choked out”

## Trauma

Youth and young adults experience a lot of trauma growing up in urban communities, surrounded by the factors that are connected to incarceration. The lack of trauma treatment resources and emotional services in most impacted communities and communities of color leads to mass incarceration or even death. Almost every young person surveyed stated they had lost a loved one or friend to gun violence, and four out of five stated they did not receive any counselling and or trauma counseling.

### Have you lost friends and/or family to gun violence?

94 responses

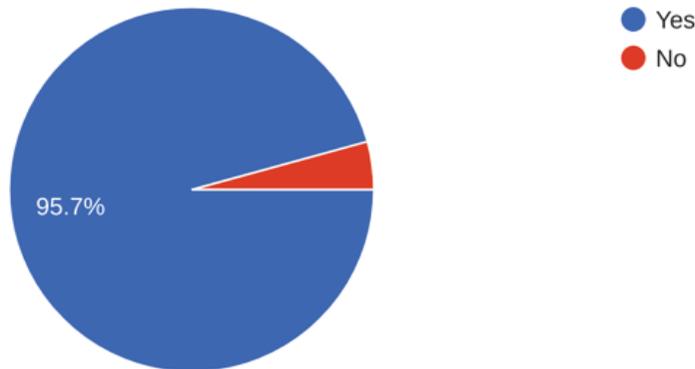


Figure 11

### If so, have you receive trauma counseling support in your school and/or community?

92 responses

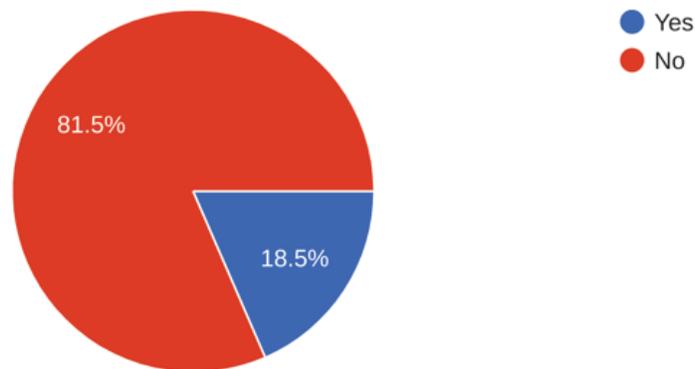


Figure 12

The **top five services** that youth and young adult participants thought could have helped them be more successful after incarceration were:

1. Family therapy
2. Mentoring
3. Depression and anxiety services
4. Drug use and addiction
5. Pain and Trauma services

# What kind of services do you think were not provided and could have helped you be more successful upon release?

71 responses

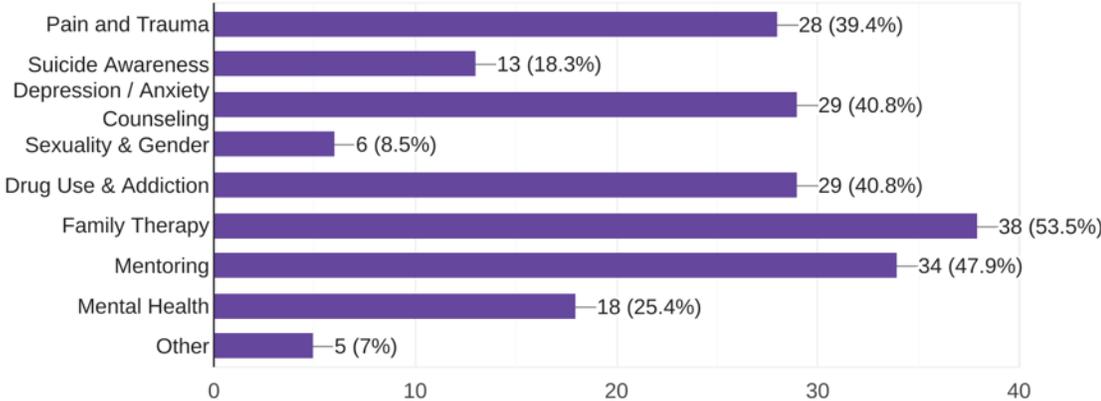


Figure 13

These are some of the factors that drive youth into the criminal justice system and repeat incarceration. When trauma and social health are not supported then the performance of a young person for success will be very low, driving them into the school to prison pipeline.



## Police in Schools

Justice impacted students of color are the most impacted when it comes to encounters with law enforcement in schools. School resource officers (SRO) engaging in school disciplinary issues with students often leads to harassment and or arrest for non criminal activity. Close to 60% of the participants surveyed stated that they have been detained by SROs on school campuses.

### Have you ever been detained and/or arrest by School Resources Officers?

97 responses

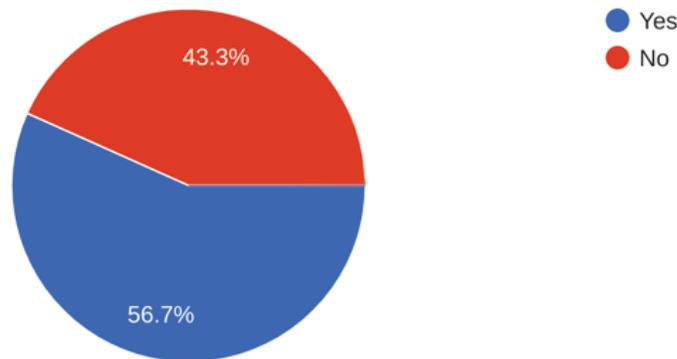


Figure 14

When asked, How do you feel about police being in school? Youth and Young adults stated:

*"I think police shouldn't be on school premises unless an incident has occurred"*

*"I don't like the police they shot my friend"*

*"I like them but then I do not"*

*"It is ok to be a certain point where they irritate me by always having their gun"*

*"It's stupid because they are always bothering people for no reason"*

*"Why do we need police?"*

*"There shouldn't be none because there is already security there"*

*"We have security for a reason to keep us safe"*

The more of a police presence in schools, the more chances there are of police contact with students and arrest.

### When you were in school or currently, in school do you feel there was and/or a heavy presence of police officers on your campus?

97 responses

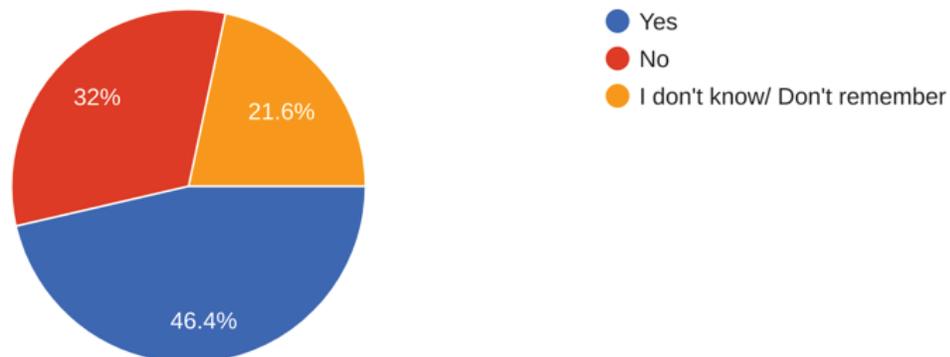


Figure 15

## If so, how many police officers and/or SRO's do you think are/were on site on a typical day?

84 responses

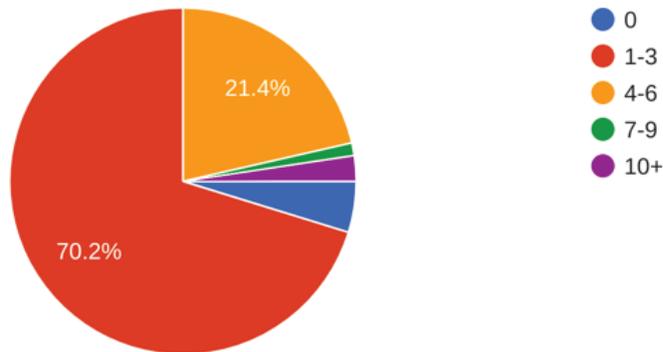


Figure 16

Over 80% of young people reported having 1 to 3 SROs on school, and 21% reported having 4 to 6 SROs on campus. One community member reflected on these facts this way:

**“Why do we need all these police in schools? We haven’t had mass shooting in school so there is no need for police on campus. Bullying, on campus conflicts can and should be resolved by trained counselor and/or campus security”.**

## Does your school campus feel like a prison or some type of confinement facility?

94 responses

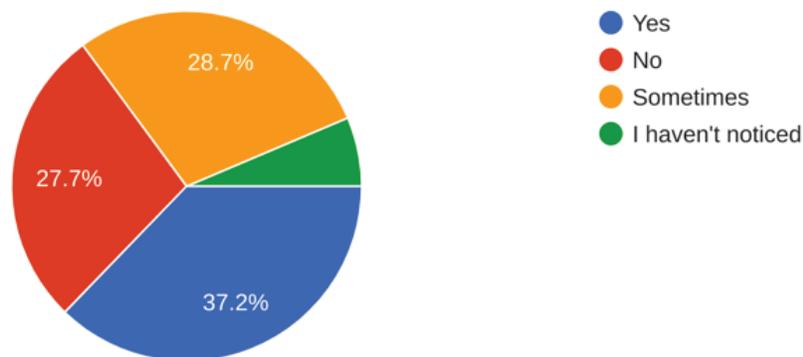


Figure 17

The schools in the city of Richmond have been compared to jails. One community member stated “John F. Kennedy High School and Richmond High School look like prisons”. These two high schools, the only ones in Richmond, have yet to be re-modeled and don’t have a positive, welcoming school feel to them.

## Have you witnessed any violence situations with students and School Resource Officers?

98 responses

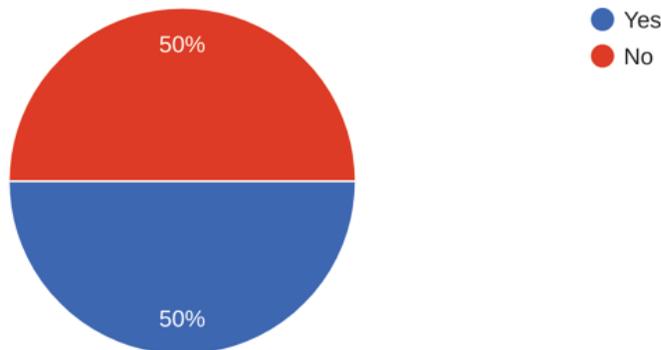


Figure 18

With high schools heavily involving police on campus, and little accountability for their actions toward students, it is not surprising that half of the young people surveyed had witnessed violence involving the SROs. Youth described the following incidents when asked, “Have you experienced physical assault school police officer and or law enforcement?”

*“The police beat me after I was on my stomach with cuffs on. I was kicked, hit with a baton and punched all while a gun to my head for about 30 seconds from multiple officers. After I was pulled up I had a puddle of blood about 4 feet wide all coming from my head”.*

*“They just seen me and grabbed me threw me on the ground for no reason”.*

*“They kept slamming me against the floor. I was only 15 years old”.*

*“A police officer threw me to the floor with handcuffs on and i almost busted my face”.*

*“They slammed and hit me in my head”.*

*“They just seen me and grabbed me and threw me on the ground for no reason”.*

## Would you have felt safer on school campus if School Resources were substituted with more counselors?

96 responses

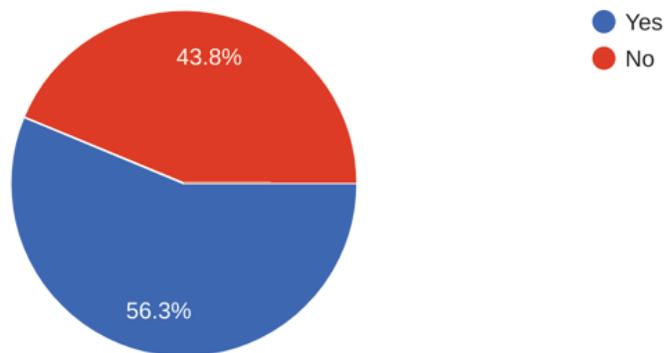


Figure 19

The [ACLU](#) released a recent report on over-policing students and the short fall of mental health workers, pointing out that “Black and Latinx students are arrested by school police at higher rates than white students. Black girls are four times more likely to be arrested than girls as a whole”. The report also states that there’s no data that indicates that police improves positive school climate outcomes socially, but actually in many cases “they are causing harm”.

## If you had the choice, would you want School Resource Officers in your school?

96 responses

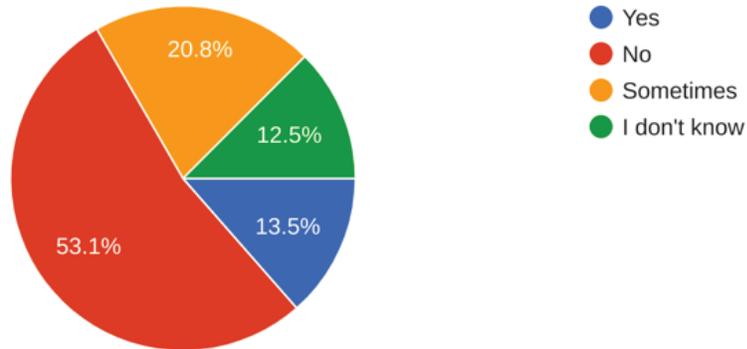


Figure 20

A majority of youth and young folks do not want SROs to be on campus and don't feel safe around police and or law enforcement. Youth recounted these events when asked, "Have you experienced verbal assault and/or verbal abuse by police officers?"

*"They was chastising me. Talking to me like a kid being completely disrespectful".*

*"I had a boyfriend older than me. I was about 15 and he was 20 and the police officer kept trying to tell me to say he was prostituting me. When it wasn't true and for a long time he (officer) would come see me and tell me that I had to say it or I was getting more time while I was incarcerated".*

*"They would tell me they were going to see me in jail or dead"*

*"They said if I come back they are going to make my life miserable and they are going to send me off to the big dogs".*

*"They told me to shut the hell up they disrespectful".*

## On a scale from 0 to 10, 0 being extremely low and 10 being really high, how safe do you feel around police and /or law enforcement?

96 responses

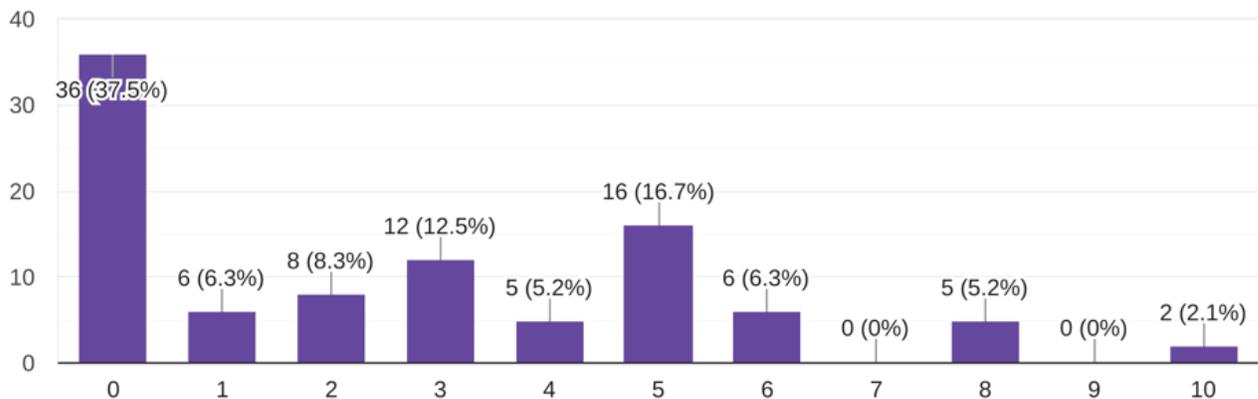


Figure 21

# V. Existing Policies and Priorities

## Police in WCCUSD Schools

The West Contra Costa County school district contracts with police departments to place police officers in public middle and high schools, particularly in schools in the Richmond area. These police are formally called “School Resource Officers” (SRO). In 2017, WCCUSD had a contract for 13 SROs. WCCUSD holds more SRO’s than other neighboring school districts in Contra Costa County. Because WCCUSD schools are also predominantly students of color, these students are the most impacted by the SRO policy. The WCCUSD schools are also under resourced in terms of student health services, social workers, and programs. They have a student to counselor ratio that is too high and no mentors to support the most at-risk youth. In 2017, the WCCUSD board passed a “Positive School Climate” resolution, that stated that “Unless there is a serious and immediate threat to life or physical safety, school personnel shall utilize school-based interventions and shall not refer the incident to School Resource Officers or other law enforcement.” However, in the 2018/19 Parent Student Handbook, the district states that “While the SRO can follow up quickly on incidents requiring police involvement, the SRO is more often involved in discussing issues and problem solving with students, making classroom presentations, and helping with after school activities.” The use of police for classroom and after school activities increases encounters with students that can lead to harassment and arrest for non-criminal activity. Recently WCCUSD committed to decreasing the number of SRO’s from 13 to 8 in the district.<sup>11</sup>

## Youth Prosecution and Incarceration

A 2018 independent investigation of Contra Costa County found that “Black youth were more than 7 times more likely to be arrested than youth from any other racial/ethnic group.”<sup>12</sup> It also found that the charges made against youth in court were more likely to include ‘enhancements’ that would make the sentence more severe if the young person was Latino or African American than if s/he was White.

## Current Youth Service Providers and Community Organizations

We conducted interviews with Richmond community based organizations to see what kind of resources are provided for youth and/or young adults who have been impacted by the criminal/juvenile justice system. This research revealed that:

- Only 5 out of 19 youth serving CBO’s that we identified explicitly serve youth and young adults who are formerly incarcerated.
- 3 out of the 5 organizations felt like welcoming and safe spaces and were clean and comfortable, based on our observations coming into the physical space and greeting staff members.

## Funding for Programs for Justice-impacted Youth

In the state of California two funding sources, YOBG grants and JJCPA grants, gets distributed to the counties to reduce youth involvement in juvenile jail systems. Contra Costa received \$7.8 million in fiscal year 2016-17, and 94.5 percent of it went to county staff salaries and benefits and no funding went to community based organizations.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the funding goes to probation officers. Programs in 2016 - 2017 that were operated with the YOBG and JJCPA grants were:

- Girls In Motion Treatment Program (YOBG: \$575,509)
- Youthful Offender Treatment Program (YOBG: \$2,656,734)
- Deputies in High Schools - High School Challenge Team Program (JJCPA: \$1,822,853)
- Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility Deputies- Safe Futures Program (JJCPA: \$619,138)
- Community Probation (JJCPA: \$1,527,801)

San Francisco county took a different approach and spent approximately 96% of its JJCPA funds on community-based providers and only 2.6% on probation and other county staffing. More recently, the Contra Costa County District Attorney Office formed a partnership with the RYSE center to divert young system involved youth away from the criminal justice system and toward restorative alternatives.

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11 “School Resource Officers Remain at Current Staffing, Funding Levels”. Online at: <https://www.wccusd.net/site/default.aspx?PageType=3&DomainID=24&ModuleInstanceID=6159&ViewID=6446EE88-D30C-497E-9316-3F8874B3E108&RenderLoc=0&FlexDataID=30729&PageID=4875>

12 Final Report to Board of Supervisors (June 2018) Racial Justice Task Force – Final Report and Recommendations. Online at [contracostaherald.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-FINAL-CCC-RJTF\\_Report.pdf](http://contracostaherald.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-FINAL-CCC-RJTF_Report.pdf)

13 Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice (May 2018) [http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/juvenile\\_justice\\_funding\\_informational\\_sheet\\_contra\\_costa\\_county.pdf](http://www.cjcj.org/uploads/cjcj/documents/juvenile_justice_funding_informational_sheet_contra_costa_county.pdf)

## VI. Recommendations

As California continues to work to reduce youth arrest and confinement, there is a need and opportunity for reinvestment and community-based alternatives to detention. Successful Juvenile Justice reinvestment requires meaningful collaboration between local agencies and [credible messengers](#), “specially trained adults with relevant life experiences (often previously incarcerated, Returned Citizens)” who share the background of the youth they work with. Youth in the justice system can be best served by community partners that provide culturally responsive care and build trusting positive relationships beyond the Juvenile Justice System. In order for all youth and young adults to be safe and accomplish academic success within the WCCUSD, formerly incarcerated and other justice-impacted youth must be recognized a population with special needs and supported by a pipeline to success.

Another change across systems that must be implemented is [trauma informed learning](#). This trauma-informed teaching approaches are flexible to different learning settings and can help meet the complex needs of students who have experienced violence, abuse, or neglect. A lot of the youth and young adults surveyed had been impacted by trauma, and when this trauma goes untreated it literally gets policed as criminal behavior. Knowing how to recognize and work with this trauma is essential for equitable learning environments, diverting our young people to success, and curbing the school to prison pipeline.

Our main goal is to ensure that systems are in place that will achieve safe integration for justice impacted youth and young adults returning from incarceration to the school district and communities, leading to their social and academic success. Based on our research and experience, we propose these actions as part of reaching this goal:

- Formerly incarcerated youth should be classified and given a case manager that would guide them with the support and resources they need to succeed, such as housing, trauma therapy, mentoring, depression and anxiety services, drug use and addiction counseling, and family therapy.
- Create systems for holding police in schools accountable so that impacted youth and young adults can be treated fairly and officers do not act irresponsibly.
- Make trained counselors available to support young people and parents with intensive training around trauma.
- WCCUSD students impacted by the criminal justice system need to be classified as a protected group in the School District, Local LCAP and in the district budget to get direct services to support them through the reentry process.
- WCCUSD should have an oversight body to track students impacted by the criminal justice system and the support being provided for their social and academic success. This body should include impacted youth, parents, and community advocates.
- WCCUSD should adopt a policy that says school administrators cannot call school police to handle student discipline problems, and that officers should not be allowed to be school disciplinarians.
- Enact an equitable process for people with past convictions to become volunteers and serve youth in WCCUSD.
- Reduce the use of out-of-home placement.
- Reduce direct referral of young people to the District Attorney office.
- Reduce the number of school site referrals that could cause a youth and or young adult to come in to contact with law enforcement.
- In funding decisions, prioritize community-based diversion programs that are operated independently from law enforcement and probation.
- Increase funding for community-based, trauma-informed interventions that focus on addressing unmet needs of youth and young adults impacted by the criminal justice system.

# Contributors

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