

Public schools are facilitating the incarceration of youths. This practice is a part of institutional oppression called the school-to-prison pipeline. According to the American Civil Liberties of Washington (ACLU), the school-to-prison pipeline is a series of policies and practices that push youth out of schools and into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems (n.d.). This social and economic problem is growing, and the number of youth trapped in this scheme has risen. Those most affected are students of color, those with disabilities, and those who have experienced trauma and have unaddressed behavior issues. We must stop this systematic mistreatment before jailing all students from marginalized backgrounds.

The issue of students pushed from public schools to jails demands policymakers' involvement and the general public's awareness. We need a stiffer policy around exclusionary discipline practices such as suspension, expulsion, and policing for minor offenses. "The school-to-prison pipeline can only be interrupted by uprooting the racist and classist under-pinning of juvenile and criminal justice, by returning to a separate, less punitive juvenile justice system, and by the re-envisioning of a legal system guided by reparative justice rather than retribution and mass imprisonment" (Heitzeg, 2009).

We must unify, build trust between the schools and families, and create relational cultures. Schools need trained specialists who can spend more time with troubled students and ultimately create and monitor care plans to get them back on track or refer them to specialized services.

What are the consequences if we allow the school-to-prison pipeline to continue? Everybody loses, especially the students, families, and our communities. Students' trauma can increase and may never be addressed. Kupchak and Catclaw (2013) explain that "students who have been suspended are less engaged in their communities as adults." We must remove exclusionary discipline practices and support our students' growth to be respectable citizens.

References

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