

Focus: HOPE



EQUITABLE JUSTICE

It's no secret that we have a prison problem in the United States, stemming from a skewed justice system that criminalizes both poverty and color, especially in Black America, where entire communities are devastated through mass incarceration. Therefore, achieving *equitable* justice requires decriminalization, but also proactive action for repairing harms.

Black children contend early with being treated as criminals. For instance, 27% of students restrained, 23% of students secluded, and 31% of students referred to law enforcement during the 2015-16 school year were Black, despite making up only 15% of the student population. Further, 25% of males suspended and 23% of males expelled were Black, even though Black males made up only 8% of the student enrollment. That they are disproportionately suspended, surveilled, stopped, charged, overcharged, convicted, sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and met with excessive or lethal force, despite the equal likelihood of their white counterparts to commit crimes, crystalizes the monolithic consequences of bias faced by Black boys and men.

This is devastating to the person, but also to the community. Whether in prison after sentencing or in jail pre-trial, individuals risk mental and physical health deterioration; lose jobs, family members, homes and community ties; and are almost certainly faced with permanent stigma. The cost to the community includes an estimation of \$182 billion annually, which features a taxpayer allotment of \$14 billion to jail mostly low-risk, presumably innocent folks awaiting their day in court! Not captured in these figures are the disrupted relationships or the years of lost wages and community loss over generations. Detroit, for example, stands to be stripped of \$144 million in federal funding as a result of its 8,000 residents in Michigan state prisons during the 2020 Census. Also, those 8,000 folks are mostly unable to invest in homes or life insurance for the future of their families. The total harms of incarceration are clearly too far and wide to measure.

Focus: HOPE repairs harms through its programs and initiatives. We offer an early education that affirms the identity and strengths of 244 children annually while providing holistic services to their families. We are also in our 30th year bringing together culturally diverse cohorts of 60 juniors from 15 high schools across Southeast Michigan for creating a just region. On the advocacy front, we are partnered with Wayne State University and the University of Michigan in a \$400k community-based research project for Dismantling the School-To-Prison Pipeline (D:SToPP) endangering Detroit's bright youth. Through a process coordinated by the Urban Leadership & Learning Collaborative (ULLC) of HOPE Village—the 107-block neighborhood surrounding Focus: HOPE's campus—the project supports efforts to advance restorative discipline and education approaches promoting an antiracist and pro-Black society.

Here's What You Can Do!

- **Give** to support Focus HOPE's antiracism work. This directly supports our efforts to educate and advocate toward systems change.
- **Advocate** by [contacting your state representative](#) to ask him/her to introduce or support legislation that ends cash bail for nonviolent offenders and cuts the state prison, parole and probation populations in half by 2025.
- **Support** formerly incarcerated or other justice-involved individuals by helping them get connected to supports to get on their feet. Create pathways in your company that accelerate their growth. Ban drug screening wherever legal and safe.