

The Promise of a Healthy California: Overcoming the Barriers for Men and Boys of Color

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Note to reader: Please see appendix for footnote references in relation to information throughout the following text.

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Part I: Introduction

Addressing the racial disparities that sort Californians from one another is not merely a matter of social justice. The state's alarmingly high school suspension and dropout rates for boys of color, and high rates of unemployment, incarceration and mortality rates for black and Latino men affects the bottom line, like an onerous tax borne by every man, woman and child, or valuable plant equipment idled by disrepair and a lack of investment. If California were a business, it would be awash in red ink, with too many unproductive assets.

Consider, as one example, the cost-benefit analysis if California managed to reduce by just 10 percent the number of black and Latino male high school dropouts. According to one study by the National Center for Education Statistics, the higher graduation rate would save California's criminal justice system \$1.2 trillion—over the affected students' adult life--by lowering costs associated with crime, such as prosecuting, jailing and monitoring defendants, inmates and parolees. Another study, conducted by a team of researchers at Columbia University's Teachers College, found that for each youth added to the graduation rolls, taxpayers saved \$127,000 in the form of additional tax revenues paid by the graduates and fewer public health, welfare and criminal justice costs.

Investing in expanding opportunities for men and boys of color is not just the right thing to do; it fattens our bottom line.

For decades federal and state governments have isolated men of color from the workforce, from their communities and even from their families with a grinding gauntlet of educational, social welfare and penal policies that have severely weakened households, neighborhoods and even, Gross Domestic Product.

Through our work and research, PolicyLink has identified **the importance of “place” in the lives of our citizens. Where you live, to a large extent, determines whether you are exposed to** hazardous pollutants and unhealthy food; whether you attend a good school or land a decent job with a livable wage; or whether you are likely to go to jail or die relatively young.

Just as place is a key factor in determining someone's quality of life, it can also be an effective resource and an organizing tool for addressing the systems that have largely failed men and boys of color. Who knows if the neighborhood school needs to improve its science curriculum, or if the community needs a new park, grocery store or a job-training center better than the people who live in the community?

Moreover, this report argues not just for a community-led approach to re-calibrate the trajectory of the lives of African-American and Latino men, but for an effort that recognizes that people

do not live in silos, but in communities where everything—the economic, the social, the physical and the environmental—are all connected. We can build a better man by cleaning the air he breathes, improving the quality of the vegetables at the stores he shops at, and making his commute to work faster and cheaper. Residents cannot thrive if their communities and neighborhoods have successful businesses but no way to get to work, full-service grocery stores but pollutants in their home, safe streets but no healthcare, a good education but no strong social networks that give them a voice in how their lives are governed. Developing healthy communities means crossing the artificial boundaries that divide, say, fixing transportation concerns from fixing education. **Policy makers, community activists and government officials must view the health of a community not in individual parts of the whole, but as an unbroken whole, made up of individual but virtually inseparable parts.**

In the context of systemic failures, the mantra of “personal responsibility” misses the larger and defining reality. The significance of Juan diligently doing his homework, for example, diminishes if he is taught by an inexperienced teacher using outdated books, or is attending a dilapidated school in a neighborhood that is dangerous and offers no appealing employment opportunities. The larger systems that shape and limit the lives of men and boys of color is broken and must be repaired to achieve any real and lasting change.

Like the United States as a whole, California’s institutions—in practice at least—function as a cruelly efficient system of exclusion and destruction. If a state had set out to intentionally construct a mechanism for crippling a large portion of its population, it could hardly have done a better job.

But there are solutions to these problems and PolicyLink, with a lot of help from grassroots leaders and advocates in these communities of color, has identified what works in strengthening neighborhoods, families, fathers and sons. These include a range of community health programs, early childhood education and after-school programs, mentoring and anti-violence efforts, and community college and training programs to prepare young men for a 21st century economy.

This report will not focus on data that illustrates racial disparities and their impact. Those trends have been well documented in previous reports prepared for The California Endowment, including the “Boys and Men of Color: Strategy, Purpose Direction” power point presentation and the “What are the Odds for Boys and Men of Color” report prepared by the Rand Corporation. Rather, this paper will assess the context of California’s systemic failures, detail the lessons gleaned from research done by Harvard University’s Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, explore the process for developing public will for change, argue for place-based solutions, highlight successful practices, and make recommendations for policy change and intervention.

Recommendations

- Build on current research and practice that address the institutional, political, and cultural factors that reduce opportunities for men and boys of color.
- Engage the African American and Latino communities to ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the effort to form effective, transformative policies. This builds consensus among community leaders, which in turn enables them to build public support among their various constituents.
- Coordinate efforts between researchers, institutions, stakeholders, local leaders, and policy makers to form a movement for integrating men and boys of color into the mainstream.

Policy Focus for Action

Community Health and Healthcare

- Address systematic factors that deny access to health care and treatment for both physical and mental health needs. Reduce the stigma associated with mental health treatment and access to mental health services.
- Elevate the understanding of health approaches to include the systemic factors in the physical or “built” environment of the community that limit opportunity for physical activity and/or healthy eating. Engage community stakeholders in defining health broadly to incorporate the health of the community into the definition—making a goal that encompasses good jobs, housing, schools, and is free of violence and crime.
- Encourage youth and men to make their health a priority and seek information about prevention from faith-based and community based programs.

Early Childhood Development and Education

- Reform systemic factors in schools that disengage and push children out of public schools and engage community organizing strategies that change these systemic practices.
- Work with children and parents to build the skills and capacity needed for healthy social and academic development.
- Reconnect youth and men to educational opportunities that put them on the path to success.
- Redouble investments in community colleges. Given the fact that only 54% of Latino, and 50% of African American, young men graduate from California high schools and an increasing number of jobs require some technical training, it seems clear that community colleges will have to play a more central role in preparing young men for the labor force.

Violence/ Gang Prevention/ Re-Entry

- Address the systemic economic, community and family conditions that fuel hopelessness and self-destructive behaviors such as chemical dependency, delinquency, unprotected sex and other acts of recklessness. .
- Develop an agenda to reform systemic barriers to education, health, and work.
- Identify policy changes that will enable ex-offenders to re-enter communities as better fathers, husbands, workers and citizens. .

Men and Boys of Color who are born into communities of concentrated poverty have few opportunities available to them. And with few positive male role models in their communities, young blacks and Latinos often exacerbate the problem by making the worst choice from a menu of bad choices, unaware of their alternatives or the consequences. The aim here is to fill their gaps in understanding by connecting these men and boys to social networks that offer them—like a road map—a better future than they would otherwise be aware of.

Providing this road map is the fundamental role of advocates working to steer men and boys of color away from the unemployment line, prison and early graves. Across the nation, communities are losing hundreds of thousands of their men and boys to violence, drugs, and an adult and juvenile justice system that does little or nothing to equip these men and boys to return to their communities successfully. Complicating this dire set of circumstances are the negative health consequences related to violence, drugs and unhealthy life styles that undermine opportunities for individual, family or community well-being.

Part II: Insights and Lessons learned from the research of Harvard University's Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice

(See Appendix for more complete version.)

According to the U. S. Department of Education, public schools are suspending and expelling increasing numbers of schoolchildren across the United States., leaving the youth more likely to spend time in prison. In 2004, more than 3 million public school students were suspended and 106,000 expelled, representing, respectively, increases of 7.4 percent to 9.3 percent since 2000. California's public schools suspended 396,000 students and expelled another 18,862 in the 2002-2003 school year.

For more than three decades, studies have revealed that harsh school disciplinary measures are imposed on children of color at highly disproportionate rates. The Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (IDEA) based at UCLA found African American students represented 8 percent of the state's public school enrollment but 19 percent of out-of-school suspensions in the 2002-2003 academic year.

Russell Skiba and his colleagues studied 37 states and found a strong relationship between racial disparities in school suspensions and overall juvenile incarceration rates. Nationwide, youths of color made up 38 percent of the public school enrollment in the U.S., yet 65 percent of the juveniles in secure detention facilities in 2003. That same year, African Americans made up 25 percent of California's incarcerated juveniles, more than three times the size of their population in the state.

In an attempt to make schools safer, school administrators have even adopted many law-enforcement techniques, including metal detectors, tasers, surveillance cameras, canine units, and even biometric hand readers. Some schools, including the nation's largest, which are in the New York Public Schools system, have dramatically increased the police presence inside the schools.

In his 2006 book, Punishment and Inequality in America, Harvard sociologist Bruce Western writes that these kinds of measures and harsher juvenile justice policies do not protect communities, but rather deepens the damage in the very communities the strategies are designed to protect by putting more children on a dropout track. This further widens inequality because dropouts are more likely to appear in the criminal justice system down the road.

A negative experience at school can encourage aggressive, anti-social behavior. A recent study suggested that metal detectors, surveillance cameras, locker searches and other zero-tolerance strategies actually put schools at increased risk for disorderly conduct and confrontations between students and faculty. Research indicates that students feel more connected to schools when they perceive the teachers as caring and the discipline as tolerant. Studies have linked students' sense of connectedness to their schools with reduced risk for teen pregnancy, violence and substance abuse.

The Challenge of Addressing Interrelated and Mutually-Perpetuating System Failures

At the other end of the prison pipeline ex-offenders are trying to return to their communities. Men enter prison with poor educations and few job skills and emerge with no more education and training than the day they went in. And, now they face the added challenge of looking for work as an applicant with a criminal record. It's a recipe for recidivism. In California, as elsewhere, black males have a higher unemployment rate than that of any other demographic group, are nearly six times more likely than whites to be locked up and four times more likely to be victims of violent crime.

The absence of the African American male—and historically the household's primary breadwinner—leaves the families they left behind with a hard road to travel, mostly on their own. Black children experience poverty that is deeper and more enduring than do children of any other racial or ethnic group.

First, the poverty of the neighborhoods alone is vastly different. Blacks live in the most racially and economically segregated neighborhoods. A poor white child, for instance, lives in a neighborhood

with a poverty rate of 13.6 percent. A poor black child lives in a neighborhood with a poverty rate of 29 percent and poor Latino children in neighborhoods with a rate of 26.2 percent.

The disadvantage often starts before birth. Boys of color are more likely to be born underweight, which is a factor in learning disabilities and emotional problems later in life. As children they are more exposed to abuse, neglect and trauma than other children, and large numbers of them swell the foster care system. They have increased early childhood exposure to lead paint and other toxins —another factor in learning disabilities and chronic illnesses like asthma—and , lack of full-service grocery stores in poor neighborhoods means a diet largely deficient in the health foods that children need for physical growth and brain development.

Furthermore, they live in inadequate, crowded, noisy housing conditions with poor indoor air quality and inadequate light, in dangerous neighborhoods where it is not always safe to even venture outside. These conditions in turn lead to school absences, poor academic performance, behavioral problems, suspension, disproportionate special education placement, high drop-out rates, unemployment and a general exclusion from mainstream society and opportunities.

It's a formula for despair and marginalization in which segregation is as important an ingredient as poverty. This almost perfect isolation from the mainstream and healthy, helpful role models hardens boys and men of color, encouraging hostile attitudes towards schools, teachers, police, clergy, authority figures and even parents

The children of incarcerated parents are more likely to experience anxiety, and withdrawal, behave aggressively in the classroom, drop out of school, and to bear children out of wedlock.

All of this creates an even more stressful environment which in turn is linked to violence.

Poor, single mothers are much more likely to suffer from depression resulting in hostility and irritability toward their children, even praising them less than do healthier mothers. Children experiencing toxic stress levels are unable to form positive relationships with teachers and peers, and engage in disruptive behavior that is often met with stern punishment, fueling feelings of low self-esteem. Without health care and mental health services, adolescents often self-medicate by abusing drugs or alcohol, or through risky sexual behavior that contributes to STDS, HIV-AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. .

Part III: What Advocates Know

With all these issues, advocates and policy reformers know a lot about how to help men and boys of color.

Through our work in communities of color, and our initial conversations with leaders on the front lines of this struggle, PolicyLink knows that a number of programs and leaders are working to

strengthen families and communities, and providing boys and men of color with the road map they need to navigate the existing system:

- Community and Family Health programs and agencies that are successfully meeting the physical and mental health needs of the families that boys and men of color are a part of;
- Early Child and After-School programs that are working with children, youth, and their parents to build the skills and capacity needed for healthy social and academic development;
- Youth lead community arts and leadership efforts are providing opportunities and mentorship support for boys and young men to develop their talent and contribute to community, and take control of their lives and futures;
- Community- led youth violence prevention and gang intervention efforts are succeeding in reclaiming young lives;
- Community Colleges and Workforce Education Programs are providing effective education and training that young men (and those returning to society) can draw upon to gain the skills needed to take advantage of good paying jobs in their communities;

Meanwhile, a host of other great leaders and organizations are hard at work leading system reform efforts to address:

- The institutional policies and practices that underlie the disproportionate incarceration of boys and men of color;
- The institutional policies and practices that underlie escalating drop-out rates and low college-going rates among boys and men of color;
- The institutional policies that underlie racial health disparities in communities across the nation;
- The institutional policies that underlie the widening racial divide in regards to poverty, economic opportunities, and wealth accumulation.

Unfortunately, PolicyLink also knows their successes have been limited by a lack of coordination and resources. In many cases, the scale of these efforts is insufficient to engage more than a fraction of those who need help. Equally important, many of our best thinkers, practitioners, reformers and partnership builders work is done in isolation from one another. PolicyLink knows that the tendency to work in silos makes sense for a number of good reasons. For example:

--Undertaking system reform is complex and the entrenched power interests in key institutions makes it extremely difficult to successfully move reform in even one system: as a result, tackling reform

across the continuum of systems that are charged with serving and empowering boys and men of color from cradle to grave seems daunting

--Some community leaders (and ex-system reformers who have given up on realizing system reform) have chosen to focus their energies on intervention strategies that strengthen the capacity of boys and men of color to successfully navigate the existing structural arrangements.

--As a result, PolicyLink knows many system reformers and intervention practitioners have chosen to target their talent, energy, and organizational resources toward the goal of helping boys and men of color successfully navigate different stages of development:

1) Early Childhood Investment frame: Those focused on strengthening families and early childhood may believe the best strategy is to ensure children ages 0-8 develop the strength and resiliency needed to succeed in spite of the challenges they are sure to face as early teens.

2) School-to-Prison Pipeline frame: Another set of leaders is focused on improving the chances that boys and young men of color ages (ages 8-19) will gain access to education and workforce development that will ensure their success and divert them from the incarceration/economic isolation path.

3) Recurrent Violence, Recurrent Trauma frame: Another grouping of leaders is most interested in developing intervention and reform strategies to help boys and men (ages 11-24) struggling to reestablish the feeling of safety and support after experiencing injury and stress.

4) Reentry frame: A grouping of leaders that are engaged in projects and policy reforms that will give men of color who are returning from prisons to their families the best chance to become contributing members of our society.

The lack of consensus on an over-arching research or policy framework to connect and unify this diverse set of practitioners, advocates, researchers and foundations needed to successfully craft and implement a prevention agenda for men and boys of color presents TCE with a significant, but daunting opportunity.

Below several programs are highlighted for their varying approaches and lessons of success. These are a sampling; there are many more effective and innovative programs than this report could list.

La Clínica de la Raza, Oakland – Health/ Male Leadership

The mission of La Clínica de La Raza, Inc. (La Clínica) is *to improve the quality of life of the diverse communities it serves by providing culturally appropriate, high quality and accessible health care for all*. Since being established in 1971, La Clínica has been at the forefront of providing culturally and linguistically appropriate health care services to the medically underserved, non-English speaking immigrant populations. Today, La Clínica operates 26 sites in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano Counties. La Clínica offers comprehensive health care services including pediatrics, family medicine, women's health, adolescent health, prenatal services, preventive medicine, mental health services,

dental and vision care, school based clinics, pharmacy, laboratory, radiology services, street outreach, case management, and community health education. La Clínica has recently emphasized services targeting boys and men of color through school and community-based health education, youth development and clinic services for youth and adults.

Since 2006, La Clínica has been actively involved in Alameda County Public Health Department's Urban Male Health Initiative, which has linked La Clínica's work to countywide initiative. Additionally, La Clínica staff have presented at conferences nationally to address the multiple health issues, such as male involvement in teen pregnancy prevention and fatherhood services, affecting males of color, specifically among immigrant communities.

In speaking with Ignacio Ferrey, he emphasized La Clínica's work with 1) young men in schools in partnership with Alameda County Public Health Department, focusing on developing leadership skills, peer education and emphasizing male responsibility - to prevent teen pregnancy, promote reproductive health and responsible sexual behavior; 2) day laborers in partnership with Street Level Health Project, to provide health education, information and health services to improve health access for one of the most vulnerable California populations; and 3) adult Latino men through an established support group that provides a safe space for men to talk openly about life as well as issues such as community violence, including domestic violence, while building leadership skills to be positive models in our families and communities. Recently, the group developed a digital story about the impact of the group on the men and in their families.

He attributes the success of the program to community input - the men participate in developing the program- the fact the clinic's programs are embedded in school communities, and outreach to day laborers. La Clinica staff takes the programs and resources to the population.

"You have to go where the guys are. You can't expect them to come to us. We learned that over the years, how to deliver services for males."

He also credits a committed staff and an approach that incorporates youth and cultural identity to re-define masculinity by challenging the stereotypes of society.

More recently, the agency's recognition of the importance of addressing the needs of young and adult men has been critical to finding ways to improve men's health outcomes and focusing on men's involvement in their family and community. This shift occurred in the last couple of years, which initiated an agency wide needs assessment process that identified gaps in services, best practices by population and possible ways to fill the gaps in health services for all men and boys.

For other agencies or communities to replicate La Clinica's success, he said they would have to critically evaluate their work with men, train staff and build relationships with other agencies providing services for the population, developing partnerships and coordinate services within and between agencies.

“We are working to shift the way health services are delivered for adolescent and adult males in addition to reframing their perception of their own health and self. As a society, we can’t continue to see men disconnected from families - we have to look at men in the context of families and community and get men to recognize that as well.”

Success A New Beginning, Los Angeles – Re-entry/ Education/ Community Healing

Success works to promote community healing and enhancement through non-traditional leadership and innovative civic engagement. All programs and services are based on its “Theory of Change for Community Enhancement.” The young adults and youth they serve engage in a wide range of activities including education, experiential service learning, healing circles, leadership development and civil participation to enhance their individual and collective capacity to identify and help meet their needs to participate more fully in the public discourse and policy initiatives that affect their lives.

This program uses formerly incarcerated people who return to the community to inspire and educate other young men and women that might be headed down the same path.

Maryanne Galindo, chief operating officer, said the organization’s focus on working with multiple generations, juvenile and re-entry adult offenders and multi-cultural populations has contributed to its success. In prisons, Latino and African American men are segregated according to race. To re-enter the racially-diverse South Central Los Angeles community, they need to detox from that segregated experience. The multiple generation focus has also been very successful.

The organization has the philosophical and pedagogical framework of taking people where they are and using cultural tools, such as storytelling, to allow them to feel comfortable. This approach builds them up and doesn’t expect them to conform to traditional hierarchical classroom lectures and formats.

The partnership with the local community college has been crucial, allowing participants to build their individual capacity. It has enhanced their sustainability, providing a continuum of services, creating a bridge to school where they take courses that offer skill certificates in fields such as construction, counseling, and teaching.

“We tell them if they spent 8, 10 or 15 years in prison, 2 years to get an AA degree is nothing. Their label is not ex-felon, but college student. It’s empowering.”

As well as helping students enroll, the program takes classes into the California Youth Authority, bringing the college to the community. The arrangement is mutually beneficial, increasing the enrollment of the college and providing a bridge for the students. The program also provides technical support to professors to help them understand how to teach this population more effectively.

Galindo emphasized the importance of the healing component. Many participants are veterans who treated their pain with drug use that led them into the criminal justice system. The combination of the healing and academic approaches is important. The program has trained and certified 35 participants in both the academic and healing curriculum.

Success would benefit from resources that would allow it to document its approach and curriculum. It believes the curriculum could be adapted to other programs. The organization has received inquiries from several communities about replicating its approach and hopes to expand the skills certificate model to community colleges throughout the state.

Youth Uprising, Oakland – Youth Development/ Arts & Culture/ Community Healing

Youth Uprising offers a wide range of programs and services that include Youth Leadership & Community Building, Media Arts, Physical Arts, Performance Arts, Material Art, Health and Wellness, Career & Education and Social Enterprise, under the roof of its state-of-the art 25,000 sq-ft. facility in East Oakland. Youth Uprising is dedicated to being a leader in the advancement of youth leadership development as a means of affecting positive community change by ensuring that youth and young adults are supported in actualizing their potential as a result of:

1. Consciousness raising that exposes them to a broader set of realities to develop their capacity to think critically about personal and community experiences;
2. Personal Transformation that builds their capacity to transform experiences of trauma and oppression into opportunities for positive personal and community change; and
3. Hard Skill/Leadership Development that increases their creativity, strengths and skills as effective leaders who are competitive in the marketplace.

Omana Imani, director of special projects, attributed the program's success to multiple partnerships, including with the city, county, community- based organizations and the city police department, and to the staff's dedication.

Many of the staff members are community residents. The team of indigenous workers and staff members with academic degrees in their fields is a rich and effective mix. When the 3 ½- year-old program was getting established, planners made a point of talking to the neighbors, community-based organizations, schools and churches.

“We didn't want to just plop down in the neighborhood. We didn't want to be seen as someone else who comes in and takes over what is happening in the neighborhood. We were collaborating with the neighborhood to build an organization.”

She thinks that type of up-front, community buy-in could serve other organizations.

Currently the organization is in the process of strategic planning. It is thinking of ways to build on its youth leadership development success to work toward community transformation. In a short

time, the organization has been able to build an impressive clientele - 200 to 300 young people go to the center daily. However staff members feel they must respond to the high homicide rates in the area and the city and are searching for ways their work can “trickle out to the community” in a more strategic and deliberate manner.

Fathers and Families of San Joaquin, Stockton – Community development/ Father Engagement

Fathers and Families offers services and parenting classes for young fathers, incarcerated men, youth development and gang intervention programs, healing circles that incorporate indigenous teaching and culture cures and community research and organizing initiatives. The organization’s central belief is that re-connecting fathers to their families strengthens the families and communities.

Sammy Nunez, executive director, said the program started as a grassroots group that recognized a gap in services to the community; there was little effort to reach out to fathers. In surveying the needs of the community, they found too many fathers were either chronically unemployed and unable to support their families in a meaningful way, were in county jail, drug treatment or simply transient in the community.

They started with an information campaign to inform the community of the services and found a “hunger for daddy-type services.” Men were referred by their mothers, wives, ex-wives and children.

“We saw we could turn this around if we engage the fathers. We saw the need for fathers to get back involved in the community and their children’s lives, to re-establish themselves in a good way with their children and family.”

Nunez said a lot of fathers of color carry pain and shame from untreated trauma, and themselves grew up with absent fathers. They had vowed not to repeat their father’s mistakes but didn’t know how. Fathers and Families give them the skills and support they need to build relationships, reconcile and bond with their children and families. Once fathers bond, they begin making decisions based on how they will affect their family.

The healing circles are powerful tools that help the men confront their pain and remain accountable to each other.

He attributes the program’s success to the dedication and sincerity of the staff, having a method to approach the work, training and constant self-examination and evaluation and the professionalism and strength of the organization

Nunez calls the work sacred.

“There is nothing like giving a family, a child, back their father, getting a family moving upward toward success and self sufficiency. It truly is a blessing to do this work.

Community Build, Los Angeles – Comprehensive/Environment

Community Build’s programs for youth includes the Scholars to College program, a health initiative that provides health education and direct mental and physical services, career exploration consulting, counseling, drug and alcohol dependency support and child care issues. Community Build’s Telecommunications Career Training (TCT) program provides services for youth ages 16-18 who are incarcerated and are scheduled to be released to the community. The program, run by residents of the community, addresses recidivism by focusing on skill attainment and employment retention.

It includes an adult re-entry component that provides placement and assistance to adults 18-30 with felonies or misdemeanors. They are assisted with supportive services such as clothing, housing, traffic warrant clean-up, tattoo removal and career preparation.

Brenda Shockley, president and executive director, said the program began working with men and boys of color in response to the conditions that led to the Civil Unrest in Los Angeles in 1992. It focused on the ages 17-30 because these young men were literally hanging out on the corners as the job training and employment programs had been decimated by Republican administrations.

“We found, that for that population, *nothing*, and I mean, *nothing* changed a young man faster or more permanently than a decent pay check. The fact that they could contribute to the household and support their children made all the difference in the world.”

She said it takes time, attention and resources, but the organization has had remarkable success in getting young men of color into college.

Over time, Community Build also began working with a younger population, primarily middle school students and their families to help them avoid barriers such as school dropout, school failure, lack of preparation for college, criminal activity and gang involvement. The program engages families in cultural, athletic and spiritual activities.

Its model - assessment, education, training, employment placement, along with case management and support services – has served the organization well and has been tailored to work with foster youth, youthful offenders and gang-involved youth. The services have been expanded to include mental health and housing.

Shockley attributes the program’s success to the fact that staff members come from the community, identify with the young men and are able to address their issues in the context of their personal needs, the needs of the family and the community. In addition, a one-stop arrangement allows case managers, teachers, peer counselors and job developers to work as a team, sharing insight and responsibility for the young person.

The program's efforts to stabilize the lives of young men of color and their families could be enhanced by the availability of affordable housing and jobs providing a livable wage.

PolicyLink knows the issues facing men and boys of color must be addressed on both the harm and opportunity sides – re-attracting high school drop outs, for example, and creating positive school climates that keep students from dropping out to begin with.

The overall strategy must connect the people helping men and boys of color navigate the broken system with the people trying to affect policy change that will fix or replace the broken system.

While multi-dimensional intertwined systemic failure presents a daunting challenge, it also offers the opportunity for multi-dimensional, intertwined systemic correction. As researchers and advocates understand the myriad ways poor health, for example, affects the ability to learn, they know that programs and policies that improve health will also enhance the ability to learn.

PolicyLink knows theories of change involve leadership development, research, program development, communication, building public will to impact policy. PolicyLink and TCE have a jump start in several of these areas, including leadership development, research and program development.

A policy advocacy agenda that would address challenges and opportunities facing Men and Boys of Color, should be grounded in a comprehensive analysis of the systems and institutions that line the pathway choices made, and generate interventions that result at a minimum in pathway choices that are not dead end; and at best, in choices to real opportunities to succeed in life. This analysis should include a better picture of the comprehensive set of system reform strategies that can succeed at eliminating the institutional practices that push boys and men out of the very institutions that are charged with preparing them for success (e.g., early childhood programs, K-12 schools, physical and mental health systems, workforce education, higher education, the regional labor market, etc.). To significantly increase the numbers of boys and men color that have access to the supports they need for healthy development and success, a more robust and inter-connected intervention and policy reform strategy is needed.

Advocates know they cannot turn away from this challenge, as foundations, as equity activists, as policy makers, program directors, legislators, government officials, and, Californians. The continued racial disparities and their costs -- social, economic and moral -- threaten to drown the state and its future.

Part IV: Developing Public Will

The health of men and boys of color are critical to realizing a “Healthy Communities” agenda. Simply put, communities can not be healthy if their men and boys are sick, uneducated, incarcerated and unemployed. An examination of how the mass incarceration of men harms their families, neighborhoods and larger communities makes this point all too clearly.

Too many of our residents may believe the problems facing men and boys of color are too big to solve, however public opinion can be changed, public will directed. The media campaign against smoking cigarettes, and the population’s growing environmental awareness are two compelling examples.

Advocates already have convincing information that can be used to develop the public will. While law-makers have often favored harsh penalties over prevention because of political expedience, there is greater public support for a preventive approach than many may have believed. In a 2007 survey, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency found that while 90 percent of respondents said crime was a major problem in their community, two-thirds did not believe harsher penalties are effective solutions by a ratio of two to one, respondents said prevention is more effective; 91 percent supported strengthening rehabilitation efforts in the juvenile justice system.

In a national survey conducted in 2006, researchers led by Mark A. Cohen found that spending more public money on “prevention programs to help keep youth out of trouble” ranked higher than spending more for police on the streets, prisons and tax relief. While elected officials have pursued a get-tough approach, the public is well aware it is not working.

It is not surprising that Californians, increasingly, recognize that excluding significant segments of the population from reaping a windfall from citizenship has a price tag. Education offers a compelling example. According to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard Law School, only 54% of Latino and 50% of African American men that enter high school graduate with diplomas.

In their study entitled “The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America’s Children,” a team of researchers at Columbia University’s Teachers College documented substantial savings to taxpayers when high school graduation rates are increased. With each additional high school graduate, there is a lifetime public benefit of \$209,100 resulting from more taxes paid, less public health costs, fewer welfare payments and lower criminal justice costs. When the cost of intervention was included, the savings was still \$127,100.

If the drop-out rate were cut in half nationwide, U.S. taxpayers would save \$45 billion over their lifetime.

Looking at the cost savings in reduced criminal activity alone, the numbers are startling. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, if the high school graduation rate for males (enrolled in 9th grade in 2005-2006) was increased by 10 percent, California would see a lifetime savings in crime costs of \$1.2 trillion. Los Angeles would see a similar savings of close to \$134 million. If the rate

went up 10 percent for black and Latino males, the city would save more than \$128 million dollars (\$23 million for black and \$105 million for Latino.)

Imagine what the city and the state could do with those millions of dollars, how much stronger California's economies and communities would be. Californians would be able to invest in the building and development of the cities - in education, rebuilding the infrastructure, developing green technology, building health care centers, for example - rather than in the arrest and jailing, resulting in severely limited life choices, of so many young men of color.

In another revealing cost benefit analysis, researchers at Vanderbilt University and the University of York, led by Mark A. Cohen, established that the lifetime benefit of saving a high- risk youth from extended bouts of delinquency, joblessness and incarceration is between \$1.7 and \$2.3 million, while a typical career costs taxpayers between \$1.3 million to \$1.5 million. The cost for a high school dropout is between \$243,000 and \$388,000 and for a heavy drug user; the cost is anywhere from \$370,000 to \$970,000. These numbers do not include the loss of economic development that results from the population's fear of crime and efforts to avoid it.

California has valuable, largely untapped resources. Seen simply as a balance sheet, the current system is wasteful, costly and senseless.

Part V: Building a Platform and Infrastructure for Action

The goal is to create healthy communities throughout California through the development of local and statewide policy and advocacy strategies that target the needs of men and boys of color in the areas of healthcare and community health; early childhood development and public education; community and workforce development; and the built environment. Addressing the needs of men and boys of color is critical to improving the overall health outcomes of their families and communities and requires a complete systems change. Work on this project needs to take place at the community, advocacy, local and state policy implementation levels.

This calls for the development of a network of practitioners and advocates working in the four areas named above, promoting policy reform, strengthening intervention work on the ground conducting research and providing technical assistance to peers. This effort should include the development of black and Latino leadership forums—working on parallel tracks—to collaborate on a joint policy agenda.

To develop this network, it is necessary to: identify and recruit leaders from a wide cross-section of stakeholders; foster dialogue between academics; act as a liaison between the academic community and practitioners; develop an infrastructure to create and implement a prevention agenda; develop an online learning community; and plan a series of regional meetings to share research and develop a joint policy agenda for action at the local and state levels.

The California Endowment can benefit from a framework that analyzes how the focus on men and boys of color complements the foundation's strategies, identifying an approach that integrates the needs of this population but is applicable to other populations. This should include collaborative work to understand the challenges, identify the policy opportunities and deepen the understanding of how the foundation's objectives are advanced by improving the outcomes for men and boys of color. An information base validating this work should be established.

This work also requires a comprehensive policy agenda to include the needs of men and boys of color and advance place-based strategies that will have an impact on policy. Working in partnership with the foundation and the leadership forums, the framers of the agenda should establish an infrastructure to move from place to policy and develop strategies that lead to state-level policy reform and recommend successful place-based strategies that can be taken to scale. This would include the identification of concrete policy recommendations and systems reforms in the California Endowment's four focus areas.

Part VI: Conclusion

This report began with the vision of a healthy California that includes all of its residents and nurtures and utilizes their vast potential. It identified the savings realized when so many resources are not drained by school discipline, incarceration and illness that limit the life choices of men and boys of color and their communities. More importantly, it discussed the untapped potential of this population that would impel the state toward greater health, achievement, innovation and economic well-being.

As a society, we must ask ourselves, why wouldn't we work to build a state that is healthier in all aspects? How could we decline such a charge? It is not simply in the interest of the men and boys of color, but of the entire state's population.

The society is thus challenged to identify and address the needs of men and boys of color. This report has laid out a theory of change and several of the pathways to their promising future. It has discussed the task of developing the public will to back this change, identifying compelling arguments and information.

PolicyLink's initial charge was to build upon what was learned from the research effort of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at the Harvard Law School and connect it to the work on the ground that PolicyLink has identified as promising. With the Institute's highly informative research on the school to prison pipeline as a base, PolicyLink analyzed the interrelated and mutually-perpetuating systemic failures in the areas of employment, health, built environment and violence that push out and permanently exclude men and boys of color from mainstream society and its promise. PolicyLink advocates a holistic approach to intervention and policy reform.

This report has also identified several programs that have devised successful strategies for addressing the needs of this population. Some of these strategies include: the involvement and

employment of community residents in programming; program development based on the needs assessment of the community; healing circles and counseling for pervasive and untreated trauma; programming that is taken to the population- in school, jail or day labor centers; effective partnerships with other organizations and agencies; and the use of cultural models to promote male leadership. Based on their on-the-ground experience, these programs have already started practicing a belief that is gaining currency among service providers and policy makers -the health and wellbeing of men and boys of color is essential to the health of their families, communities and the larger society.

The report makes several recommendations to TCE, starting with the goal of developing a unifying framework that will foster collaboration to connect interventions, policy and system reforms. Toward the accomplishment of that goal, the report offered four strategies: build on the current research and further explore the institutional, political and cultural systems that limit opportunities for success; engage stakeholders and build on growing relationships within the African American and Latino communities to ensure all members with a stake in the issue are supported and represented in the process for forming policy; strategize solutions in a proactive fashion with local leaders and policy makers that ensure sustainable outcomes; coordinate efforts between researchers, institutions, stakeholders, local leaders and policy makers to collectively advocate on and for the behalf of men and boys of color; and build the public will for change.

It further sets forth a platform and infrastructure for action that includes the development of leadership tables comprised of practitioners and advocates, the fostering of strategic thinking, analysis and planning with The California Endowment and the development of place-based policy strategies and system reforms at both the state and local level.

In closing, the report looks to the words of Glenn C. Loury, author of The Anatomy of Racial Inequality. In the conclusion of a powerful essay entitled "America Incarcerated," he challenges society to look at the issue from the perspective of political philosopher John Rawls' theory of justice. Rawls says individuals look at justice from an "original position," behind "a veil of ignorance" that conceals realities such as their class, race, gender and talents.

"We need to ask what rules we would pick if we seriously imagined that we could turn out to be anyone in society," Loury writes. "Imagine that you could be born a black American male outcast shuffling between prison and the labor market on his way to an early death to the chorus of *nigger* or *criminal* or *dummy*. Suppose we had to stop thinking of *us* and *them*. What social rules would we pick if we actually thought that *they* could be *us*?"

"What weight would we give to various elements in the deterrence-retribution-incapacitation-rehabilitation calculus, if we thought that calculus could end up being applied to our own children, or to us? How would we apportion blame and affix responsibility for the cultural and social pathologies evident in some quarter of our society if we envisioned that we ourselves might well have been born into the social margins where such pathology flourishes?"

That is our challenge and moral imperative: Imagine if we were them and they were us, Californians.

Appendix

The Neighborhood to Prison Pipeline: A Well-Worn Path from Suspension, Expulsion, Dropping Out and Incarceration, excerpted from the Harvard Report, *Paving Pathways to Participation, Promise and Prosperity*

The words “school to prison pipeline” offers a powerful visual image. It is through this lens that one might best appreciate that a child’s life trajectory can change in an instant through no fault of his own. Here, the limited usefulness of thinking in terms of individual “choices” is also evident. What might look like a “choice” from a middle-class vantage point might not be a “choice” at all for a child with a limited array of options – a child who experiences trauma and compounded stress every day of his life.

Increasing numbers of children and teens in the United States are getting suspended and expelled from public schools.¹ Such suspensions and expulsions make students more vulnerable for falling onto the track to jail and prison. School to prison pipeline is shorthand for three phenomena: One, the increasing use of “zero tolerance” discipline policies with mandatory or predetermined punishments for certain behaviors. These policies have led to increased expulsion and suspension, which denies opportunity to learn, and have been linked to dropping out², both of which research links to incarceration.³ Two, the practice in which educators refer students to the criminal justice system for relatively minor infractions previously or better handled within the school and three, the less tangible proliferation of a criminal justice culture, apparatus and architecture in schools.⁴

According to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Department of Education, in 2004, more than 3 million students were suspended and 106,000 were expelled, representing a 7.4 percent increase in suspensions and a 9.3 percent increase in expulsions since 2000⁵. In California, 396,000 students were suspended and another 18,862 were expelled during the 2002-2003 school year.⁶

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_153.asp

² For example, see Rafaela Mendes, Linda M. “Predictors of suspensions and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation,” In Wald, Johanna and Daniel J. Losen, eds. *Deconstructing the School to Prison Pipeline*. New Directions for Youth Development, No. 99 (Fall 2003).

³ Abandoned in the Back Row. Walter Haney—The Ninth Grade Bulge, presented at School to Prison Pipeline Conference, May 2003.

⁴ Organizations and institutions differ on the meaning of the “school to prison pipeline.” The American Psychological Association, for example, uses it more exclusively to refer to educator referrals to the criminal justice system for relatively minor infractions.

⁵ The 2000 suspension and expulsion figures can be found here:

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d04/tables/dt04_144.asp The 2004 suspension figures can be found here:

http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d07/tables/dt07_152.asp

⁶ Ibid.

For more than three decades, simple investigations have revealed that harsh school discipline policies are imposed upon children of color at highly disproportionate rates.⁷ Because racial disparities can be misconstrued to be an illustration that more African American and Latino youngsters are committing crimes, any discussion must answer the question of whether or not African American and Latino youngsters are receiving harsher punishments than white students after being accused or found guilty of the same or similar offenses. Similarly we must look at underlying causes for disparities, understanding the roles of implicit forms of bias, structural forces and social ills.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, nationally in 2003, 14 percent of African American students but fewer than 5 percent of white students were suspended at least once from school. African American students were almost 3 times more likely than white students to be suspended. These disparities have widened since 1972 when 6 percent of black students and just 3 percent of white students were suspended.

In California, public school educators suspended more than 770,000 students last year, that's 6 out of every 100 students, up from 5 per 100 the year before, according to a recent analysis by the *San Francisco Chronicle*⁸. Of those, 394,463 were suspended in the amorphous categories of "Willful defiance" and "Disruption of school activities" – the categories most likely to include disproportionate numbers of African American and Latino students

The Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (IDEA) based at UCLA finds that in California in 2002-2003, African American students represented 8 percent of the state's public school enrollment, but 19 percent of out-of-school suspensions⁹. Latino students make up half of the enrollment and half of the expulsions and suspensions¹⁰.

School failure is also linked to incarceration. About 40 percent of incarcerated people

⁷ For example, Children's Defense Fund, 1975. This year, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights found suspension rates for black students two and three times higher than suspension rates for white students. Research consistently found this pattern. See, for example, For citation, See online, School Failure, Race and Disability. Decreasing Vulnerability for Involvement EDJJ The National Center on Education. Leone, Chritle, C. Michael Nelson. Corporal punishment – Gregory, 1996; Shaw and Braden, 1990. Rabinovic and Levin (2003) found that in Massachusetts during the 2000-2001 school year, while Latino and African American students were only 19 percent of school population, they represented 57 percent of school exclusions.).Rabinovic, G., and Levin, J. (2003, May) The quality of post-exclusion assignments: Racial and ethnic differences in post exclusions assignments for students in Massachusetts. Paper presented at the School to Prison Pipeline Conference, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. In 2000, researchers found that African American students are two to three times as likely to be suspended or expelled as other students. (Skiba, Michale, Nardo, and Peterson, 2000). Opportunities Suspended, 2000 (Civil Rights Project and Advancement Project).

⁸ Asminov, N. "Suspensions point to trouble in schools," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 19, 2008

⁹ "Suspension and Expulsion At-A-Glance" Institute for Democracy, Education and Access at the University of California, Los Angeles. Calculations based upon Office for Civil Rights, 2002 Elementary and Secondary School Survey.

¹⁰ Ibid.

did not graduate from high school. Upon entering prison, only about a quarter of California's inmates could read at or about the 7th grade level¹¹ In 2005, California incarcerated 460 white people, 2,992 African Americans and 782 Latinos per 100,000 residents. In an alarming racial disparity, African Americans were 6.5 times more likely than white people to be incarcerated.¹²

Suspension rates are highest in urban districts and these are of course the districts that enroll a disproportionate share of students of color¹³ Some research has demonstrated that urban administrators were more likely to follow zero-tolerance policies to the letter without considering mitigating circumstances while administrators in rural districts used such policies in a more "interpretive" manner. In urban districts, in 2003, nearly 25 percent of students were suspended at least once, compared with 13 percent in suburban schools and 7 percent in rural schools.¹⁴

Russel Skiba and his colleagues studied 37 states and found a strong relationship between racial disparities in school suspension and overall juvenile incarceration rates.¹⁵ Nationally, in 2003, youth of color made up 38 percent of the U.S. youth populations. However youth of color represented 65 percent of the youth in secure detention facilities.¹⁶

In California, in 2003, 25 percent of incarcerated juveniles were African American, though only 8 percent of the state's youth population was African American.

In his study, "The Color of Justice: Understanding and Addressing Racial Inequity in School Punishment," Russ Skiba and his colleagues at Indiana University found that African American students in a large Midwestern urban school district were referred to the office for less serious and more subjective reasons than white students and generally received harsher punishments than white students accused of similar offenses. They concluded that "these results argue that disproportionate

¹¹ From Cellblocks to Classroom: A Lao Report. Legislative Analyst's Office. (A Lao Report, Legislative Analyst's Office, From Cellblocks to Classroom: http://www.lao.ca.gov/2008/crim/inmate_education/inmate_education_021208.pdf)

¹² U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear, 2005.

¹³ See for example, Dunbar, C. and F. F. Villarruil, What a Difference the Community Makes: Zero Tolerance Policy Interpretation and Implementation," Equity and Excellence in Education, 37, 351-359 (2004). This study uses Michigan as a case study.

¹⁴ Derived from Department of Education, 2004.

¹⁵ Skiba, R. Simmons, A, Staudinger, L., Rausch, M. Dow, G. and Feggins, R. 2003, may. Consistent removal: Contributions of school discipline to the school-prison pipeline. Paper presented at the School to Prison Pipeline conference, Harvard University.

¹⁶ Improving Life Opportunities for Youth, Families, and Communities of Color. Annual Report of the Haywood Burns Institute. San Francisco, California. 2007. <https://secure.lenos.com/lenos/burnsinstitute/bihome/burns.report.2007.pdf>

representation of African Americans in office referrals, suspension and expulsion is evidence of a pervasive and systematic bias that may well be inherent in the use of exclusionary discipline.”¹⁷

Some research suggests that teachers are more likely to refer African American students than white students for suspension, suggesting that they may be misinterpreting as threatening actions of African American males.¹⁸

A growing body of research points to the power of “implicit bias” in decisions that affect life outcomes for people of color, referring to unconscious negative feelings about particular racial or ethnic groups that clash with one’s publicly professed views or feelings. Some social psychologists and others advocate for further professional education that might bring such prejudices and their consequences to light and possibly reduce huge racial disparities in school discipline and harsh juvenile sentencing.

Courts at both the state and federal level have increasingly deferred to the power of school officials to regulate student conduct. Professor Randall Beger of the University of Wisconsin argues that at just the time courts dispensed with constitutional safeguards protecting students, schools stepped up intrusive surveillance tactics.

Various law enforcement agencies have increased the use of criminal justice apparatus in schools, often in a well-meaning attempt to make schools safer, including metal detectors, tasers, surveillance cameras, canine units and biometric hand readers.¹⁹ Generally schools have also increased the presence of the police force in public schools.

This national-level increase in punitive school policy does not appear to be a rational response to increased school violence. The most recent government data, in fact, indicates the opposite - there had been a decline in school violence.

Indeed, we built the school to prison pipeline concomitant with our collective construction of a system of mass incarceration. Evidence shows that both policies _ exclusionary school policies and incarceration have failed to make our urban schools or neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage safer.

In February, 2008, the Pew Center on The States reported a disturbing milestone – more than one in every 100 adults is in jail or prison. One in 30 men between the ages of 20 and 34 are incarcerated. For black males, that figure is one in nine. One in every 53 people in their 20s is behind

¹⁷ Skiba, Russell J., *The Color of Discipline*. 2000. Indiana Education Policy Center.

¹⁸ For an excellent discussion of this phenomenon, see: Ferguson, AA. 2000. *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

¹⁹ See for example, Judith Brown., *Derailed! The Schoolhouse to Jailhouse Track*, Advancement Project (2003).

bars.²⁰ U.S. per capita incarceration rate is 700 per 100,000 citizens, the world's highest rate and 7 times the world average. The U.S. prison population more than doubled from 1980 to 1990 alone.²¹

Pew joins several other research organizations in concluding that growth in incarceration has not been driven by either an equal increase in crime or by general population growth, but flows from a wave of policy choices that sent more lawbreakers to prison and for longer periods.

In his 2006 book, Punishment and Inequality in America, Harvard sociologist Bruce Western demonstrates that punitive policies that increase incarceration backfire and end up hurting the communities they are ostensibly designed to protect. He documents the strong link between mass incarceration and inequality, particularly among African American men. He argues that incarceration is not merely a symptom of social inequality, but itself creates and exacerbates inequality by undermining families and further separating poor communities of color from American mainstream opportunities and life. Western's study, for example, shows that previous incarceration reduces a man's annual earnings by 40 percent; the risk of divorce is also heightened. Steady work and a stable emotional relationship are two variables strongly linked with a crime-free life.²²

Western advises it is time to reconsider our 20-year experiment with imprisonment, pointing out that separating poor black communities from mainstream American life has divided the nation. The stigma of criminality now brands a whole generation of young black men with little schooling. His analysis is relevant to punitive policies for juveniles.

Suspension and expulsion are spectacularly ineffective policies by any measure. For more than a decade, well-controlled research studies demonstrate an alarmingly high correlation between suspension/expulsion and dropping out of school.²³ Dropping out is strongly correlated with involvement in the criminal justice system and incarceration.²⁴

One study in Texas recently found that students with a history of school discipline were

²⁰ The Pew Center on The States. One in 100: Behind Bars in America 2008. February 27, 2008

²¹ U.S. Department of Justice. ²¹ U <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/glance/tables/corr2tab.htm>

²² Bruce Western, Punishment and Inequality in America. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006. See also, Bruce Western & Becky Pettit, 2005. Black-White Earnings, Inequality, Employment Rates and Incarceration. *AM. J. SOCIOLOG.* 111:553-578. See also, Becky Pettit & Bruce Western. 2004. Mass Imprisonment and the Life Course: Race and Class Inequality in U.S. Incarceration. *AM. SOCIOLOG. REV.* 69:151-69.

²³ Tobin, T. G. Sugai; and G. Colvin. 1996. Patterns in middle school discipline records. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*. 2: 82-94. Ekstrom, R.B., M.E. Goertz, J.M. Pollack and D.A. Rock. (1986). Who drops out of high school and why? Findings from a national study. *Teachers College Record*, 87, 357-73.

²⁴ Lochner, L., and Moretti, E. (2004). "The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self Reports." *The American Economic Review*, 94 (1), 155-189. Freeman, R. (1996). "Why Do So Many Young American Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About It?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10(1), 25 - 42.

23 percent more likely than those without such a history to become involved in the criminal justice system.²⁵

School culture can also contribute to student behavior that leads to suspension, expulsion, arrest and incarceration. Ethnographic research strongly shows negative school culture can engender aggressive, “anti-social” behavior, making exclusionary policies seem sensible and natural to adults working there.

However, research indicates students feel more connected to and engaged with schools when they perceive the teachers as caring and the discipline is tolerant. Studies have linked a student’s sense of connectedness with reduced risk for teen pregnancy, violence and substance abuse.²⁶

Even architecture and school layout contribute to an alienating and hostile school climate that can engender negative behavior and aggression, according to research. Portable building and classrooms can increase isolation and prevent communication and decrease feelings of membership. Overcrowding is also associated with feelings of isolation and disengagement with school, correlated with involvement in the juvenile justice system.²⁷

In a contradiction of what might seem obvious, a study of discipline practices in the U.S. showed that metal detectors, surveillance cameras and locker searches actually increased the risk of disorder within a school.²⁸

In 2002, researchers analyzed the effectiveness of zero tolerance policies and found that during a decade and a half since they took hold, there existed no evidence that student behavior improved or that perceptions of school safety or that school safety itself increased.²⁹ Researchers in an earlier study also found little evidence that zero tolerance strategies improved student behavior or overall school safety. The data on suspension and expulsion, they wrote, raise serious concerns about the equity and effectiveness of school exclusion as an educational intervention.

²⁵ Study of Minority Over-Representation in the Texas Juvenile Justice System, Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A & M University (2005).

²⁶ McNeely, C., Nonnemaker, J., & Blum, R. (2002). Promoting student connectedness to school: Evidence from the national Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of School Health*, 72, 138-147; Surgeon General’s Report on Youth Violence, 2001

²⁷ Flannery, D.J. (1997). School violence: Risk, prevention, intervention, and policy. Report No. RR93002016 ERIC Clearinghouse. <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/monographs/uds109>.

²⁸ Johnson, Tammy; Boyden, Jennifer; Pittz, William J. (2001). Racial Profiling and Punishment in U.S. Public Schools: How Zero Tolerance Policies and High Stakes Testing Subvert Academic Excellence and Racial Equity. See also, Berger, Randall, “The Worst of Both Worlds: School Security and the Disappearing Fourth Amendment Rights of Students,” *Criminal Justice Review*, Vol. 28, no. 2 (2003).

²⁹ Skiba, R.J. and Knestling, K. (2002) Zero tolerance, zero evidence. An analysis of school disciplinary practice. In R.J. Skiba and GG Noam, Eds. *New directions for youth development* no. 92: Zero tolerance: Can suspensions and expulsion keep schools safe? Pp 17-43. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Thus, the interlocking set of structures that give rise to the school to prison pipeline is manifest in corridors, playgrounds and in skyrocketing suspension, expulsion and dropout rates. A review of the research and experience with the school to prison pipeline, which we believe to be closely related with our nation's corrosive infatuation with incarceration, clearly shows that an important step in redirecting that pipeline will be better informed inclusionary school-based policies and practices that enhance a student's engagement with school.

We should be careful not to demonize the educators who employ ill-advised ineffective zero-tolerance policies. They did not create the structures of inequality that result in the school to prison pipeline by themselves. In our most distressed communities, educators have been left alone to respond to the host of social ills and inequities that undermine their efforts to educate children. One study found that teachers recognized suspensions were not effective in addressing student misbehavior, but they supported suspensions because they needed immediate relief in their classrooms and did not feel equipped to tackle the deeper emotional and psychological needs of their students.