



**CloseYouthPrisons**

**BuildYouthLeaders**

# Dream Beyond Bars Report

— A Youth Vision for Alameda County's Juvenile Justice System —

A collaboration between  
Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice  
&  
Urban Peace Movement

# A little bit about our work...



[www.curyj.org](http://www.curyj.org)

## About CURYJ

Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ) is a non-profit organization based in East Oakland California and our mission is to unlock the leadership of young people to dream beyond bars. We look to young people to lead the way by transforming our community and investing in their healing, activism, and aspirations. CURYJ offers programs for ages 14-25, healing circles, life coaching for system-impacted people, and political advocacy on issues that affect our community. We are committed to ending mass incarceration and creating opportunities for our community that work.

## About UPM

Urban Peace Movement (UPM) builds youth leadership in Oakland to transform the culture and social conditions that drive community violence & mass incarceration in communities of color. UPM's model of "Healing-Centered Youth Organizing" supports young people to feel self-confident & hopeful while empowering them to work for healing, social justice, and a brighter future for all!!! UPM's youth members work on: a) Policy & Systems Change: To advocate for social & economic justice and public policies that disrupt the cycles of urban violence and mass incarceration to create real opportunities and more peaceful communities; b) Healing & Culture Change: To improve the way that community members relate to one another and to change the cultural norms that govern our communities – to build a culture of peace; and c) Movement Building: to strengthen relationships between youth-serving organizations for a stronger more united youth movement.



[www.urbanpeacemovement](http://www.urbanpeacemovement)

— Alameda County —

# Dream Beyond Bars Report

## Special Thanks to...

Sierra Health foundation  
The California Endowment  
The Akonadi Foundation  
Zellerbach Foundation

# A tribute to Dr. Prince White



This project would not have been possible without the hard work, expertise, and love of Dr. Prince White, Deputy Director of Urban Peace Movement. Dr. White was one of the lead staff on this project. With a background in research and academia, he helped to train and support the young leaders who authored this report. It is with immeasurable sadness that we share the news that he passed away in August 2018 at the young age of 37.

Prince was a fierce warrior in the fight for social justice and cared deeply about every youth member that he worked with. He was extremely passionate about tearing down the walls of mass incarceration that impacted his own family. He led many campaigns, such as the 1400 Jobs for Freedom Campaign to create a hiring program for formerly incarcerated people within Alameda County, and the Freedom for Dajon Campaign to win the release of a youth who was tried as an adult in Alameda County.

He fought relentlessly for justice for Black people, young people, and communities of color through Urban Peace Movement and the DetermiNation Black Men's Group, and he deeply impacted everyone he met. He was a devoted loving husband and father of three young boys.

He and his wife Claire White, a criminal defense attorney, worked together in support of young men impacted by mass incarceration. His loving and fierce presence within the movement will be deeply missed. Prince was more than just the Deputy Director of UPM, he was our friend and our brother. We are devastated by his loss. **Rest in Power Prince!**



# " Unlocking the leadership of young people to Dream Beyond Bars "



## REPORT FOCUS AREAS

Preface

Introduction and Background

Who are the Dream Beyond Bars Fellows?

Findings and Research

Understanding the Trauma

Community Based Solutions

Examples of Community-Based Solutions

Policy Recommendations



# Preface

Greetings Friends and Allies,

This Community Based Participatory Research report is the culmination of 18 months of intensive work led by our Dream Beyond Bars Fellows - formerly incarcerated young people that have drawn on their own lived experiences with incarceration and validated that they aren't subjects to be researched by others instead they are the experts of their own lives! They have affirmed that those closest to the pain are closest to the solution, and through this process have reflected the expression, "nothing about us, without us!" They have undergone a rigorous leadership development process that focused on political education, community organizing, policy advocacy, power mapping, public speaking, technology training, decolonizing research methodologies, and much, much more. It is part of our theory of liberation that the process is often more important than the outcome.

While we have been successful both as an organization and as a movement in passing significant juvenile and criminal justice reform in the last 8 years it is also important to note that the real transformative work happens through cultural shifts on the ground. It is those cultural shifts and social movements that change both people and institutions. Through their participation our young fellows have developed hard skills, leadership qualities, and analysis that will strengthen their capacity to help lead the "civil rights movement" of our generation. Leadership is an essential part of any authentic movement. It is through smart, innovative, and passionate leaders who represent those directly impacted by current policies and institutions that capture the frustration, righteous anger, and vision to articulate, resist, affirm, and facilitate the kind of transformative social change that defines a generation. I cannot express enough how immensely proud I am of them and I feel truly honored to have witnessed their growth and development.

At the same time I also don't want to give a false and romanticized impression that this has been an easy, or even smooth journey. Most things of authentic value don't come without struggle. Several of our fellows that began with us were incarcerated again. For those who truly know this work and the realities that our young people are confronted with on a daily basis I'm sure that this comes as no surprise. A healing journey is never a straight path Just as in life there are curves, bumps, dead ends, and sometimes one takes a step backward as they prepare to make several strides forward. Just as in life there are curves, bumps, dead ends, and sometimes one takes a step backward as they prepare to make several strides forward.

While systems will often be quick to condemn a young person particularly if they were afforded positive community engagement what is neglected is that past and current trauma doesn't get magically erased and that the step backward when approached in a restorative way can be a profound healing and learning opportunity. When a person hits a rough patch that isn't the time to pull away support! That is the time to double down efforts of support and dare I say it....love. We must show love! The challenges amongst some of our own Fellows is an example of why this report is so critical and important especially in this moment in time and in this current political landscape. Additionally we lost one of our great community champions from our partner in this project Dr. Prince White. He was an activist scholar that brought a youthful passion and commitment to promoting education to those most marginalized in society. The loss was devastating, but as his wife, attorney/activist Claire White has frequently reminded us, "Death is not the end..." Just as in life there are curves, bumps, dead ends, and sometimes one takes a step backward as they prepare to make several strides forward.

While systems will often be quick to condemn a young person particularly if they were afforded positive community engagement what is neglected is that past and current trauma doesn't get magically erased and that the step backward when approached in a restorative way can be a profound healing and learning opportunity. When a person hits a rough patch that isn't the time to pull away support! That is the time to double down efforts of support and dare I say it....love. We must show love! The challenges amongst some of our own Fellows is an example of why this report is so critical and important especially in this moment in time and in this current political landscape. Additionally we lost one of our great community champions from our partner in this project Dr. Prince White. He was an activist scholar that brought a youthful passion and commitment to promoting education to those most marginalized in society. The loss was devastating, but as his wife, attorney/activist Claire White has frequently reminded us, "Death is not the end..."

Newly elected Governor Gavin Newsom recently announced his intention to transition the Department of Juvenile Justice from the California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation to the Department of Health & Human Services and to end youth incarceration in California as we know it. This is a significant, potential paradigm shift, but I emphasize that the key word is "potential". We don't want to settle for a more humane cage. We cannot and will not settle for piecemeal reform – We want to fundamentally transform!

This means ending the adultification of youth. We want an end to all adult transfer hearings. Keep youth in youth court. Also we need to raise the age and align how we define youth with the brain science that indicates that the full frontal lobe of the brain is not fully developed until the age of 25 years. We want to Close DJJ, not merely put window dressing in the cell. We also need to stop out of state placements that separate youth from family and other valuable connections. It is expensive and nonsensical policy. It has also contributed to California not investing in developing its own capacity for specials needs populations despite our state being the 5th largest economy in the entire world. This is why we advocating for a justice reinvestment policy for a dollar for dollar match to transition from systems control and supervision to build capacity for community led solutions as alternatives to incarceration.

There isn't a lack of resources in California there is a lack of priority and political will from our elected officials. This is another reason why this participatory action research is so powerful is that we aren't just conducting research for research sake, but will be translating this research into praxis to launch the Dream Beyond Bars campaign. This report is lovingly dedicated to the memory of Dr. Prince White and all currently and formerly incarcerated youth and families impacted by the trauma of incarceration. We look forward to building with all stakeholders in our mission to Close Youth Prisons, Build Youth Leaders!

In Unity and Struggle,

George Galvis  
Executive Director of Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ)



# OUR VOICE

# OUR FINDINGS

Today in Alameda County and across the nation, youth of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system. We believe those impacted by incarceration--and the social economic stressors that cause incarceration--are the most qualified to do the research and create solutions to mass-confinement. This report is a participatory action research project led by formerly incarcerated young leaders with the intention of creating impact and solutions while building up the leadership of the researchers.

**This report is the culmination of a year-long research project undertaken by the Dream Beyond Bars Fellows. With first-hand knowledge of the harms our current “justice” system inflicts on young people, their families, and their communities, the Dream Beyond Bars Fellows equipped themselves with the research tools needed to gather data from community members as well as those directly affected by the juvenile and criminal justice systems.**

We aim to examine the systems and organizations that are trusted to keep our youth out of jail and create community-based solutions to incarceration. The findings from our research highlight the harm of being incarcerated as a young person, the strong need for healing-centered alternatives to incarceration, and the broad general support that Alameda County residents have for community-based solutions that do not include incarceration. We imagine and envision a new and true youth justice system with community-based solutions to incarceration that treat youth that have caused harm as youth before they are treated as offenders. This report was done as a partnership between CURYJ (Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice) and UPM (Urban Peace Movement), with technical assistance from Dr. Angela Irvine from Ceres Policy Research and Impact Justice. This project was funded by the Sierra Health Foundation through their Positive Youth Justice Initiative.





## Our first Dream Beyond Bars Town hall!

Over 300 people in attendance

### BACKGROUND

As community-based organizations who work with systems-impacted young people in our communities, we are the eyewitnesses of the ineffective and harmful approaches that Alameda County has implemented in the juvenile justice system. Incarceration and the alternatives like ankle monitors and community supervision that are offered by the Alameda juvenile justice system do not fully address and solve the obstacles that young people face in our most dynamic communities. We are seeing the effects of systems that historically neglected and criminalized communities that have the most to offer. There are a lack of opportunities, employment and safe spaces for a young person before and after incarceration. Locking up vulnerable young people does not address and solve the crisis that they are facing, so why does the justice system spend so much money to supervise and incarcerate?

### METHODOLOGY

We chose to do a participatory action research report because we believe those marginalized communities most affected by youth criminalization and incarceration are best situated to research and create solutions around these issues. Our intent was to hear from the young people who have been involved in systems and the community that surrounds these young people in an effort to uplift their voices. The (PAR) approach forces us to listen to the lived experiences of people who have the most interaction with the juvenile justice system and look past traditional black and white documents and deeper into the black and brown lives of those affected. Over the past year, the Dream Beyond Bars fellows collected information for this Report using the following methods...

1. **Document Review** of public information such as budget reports, incarceration rates, criminal justice reports locally and statewide.
2. **Focus Groups** of formerly incarcerated young people and family and friends of young people who have been incarcerated. There were a total of 30 focus group participants.
3. **Surveys** that were distributed at our Town hall. There were a total of 200 surveys collected and analyzed.



**Daniel Mendoza**

My name is Daniel Mendoza and I was born and raised in San Francisco, California. Later in life, my family decided to relocate to East Oakland where I continue to work and live 'till this day. Since 2016, I have been working for Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ) as a community organizer. Me and my CURYJ family have poured our energy into ending the mass incarceration and criminalization of young people. A big part of my organizing background has been helping to facilitate and plan different internships, fellowships, focus groups, events, and presentations around issues that are affecting our most marginalized communities. As someone who is formerly incarcerated, and has had a chance to witness personal growth, I believe those closest to mass incarceration and criminalization are the most fit to create the solutions. I plan to continue doing the work that I do and to creatively think about community-based solutions to incarceration.



**Xochtil Larios**

I am an 19-year old full-time college student, social activist, and youth leader. I have endured being in the system since 12 years old, whether foster care or juvenile detention. I am dedicating my heart, sweat and personal experience to fight for what is right. I am so thankful that CURYJ reached out to me when I was detained - they filled a huge hole for me when I was released because I was removed from my beloved community and felt stranded and isolated.

# Who are the Dream Beyond Bars Fellows?



**Katie Ly**

I am a systems-impacted young woman of color who is invested in creating social, political, and economic change by working at the nexus of policy research and community organizing. If I am not bustling through the world of academia as a Political Science and Ethnic Studies double major at UC Berkeley, then you can find me working towards social justice on campus, in the community, and within the government. Serving as a Dream Beyond Bars fellow has been such a powerful experience. Our work, along with the work of other community organizations who also focus on progressing the movement toward prison abolition and/or criminal justice reform, is absolutely crucial to uplifting the narratives that often get left behind bars. It is time for those impacted by the system, especially the youth, to not only dream, but also heal and transform beyond bars.

I am a Program Fellow with the Urban Peace Movement. I currently work on UPM's DA Accountability efforts and am a member of the Determination Black Men's Group. I also lead community outreach for UPM, as well as being an Oakland native and a West Oakland resident. I am about vibrant energy and enthusiasm for my work around social justice issues. I have worked on such campaigns as Know Your DA Campaign, the Freedom 4 Dajon Campaign, and the Revive Oakland Campaign.



**Zay Coleman**



**Kamani Holmes**

I am Kamani a father and young adult leader from Urban Peace Movement. I am formerly incarcerated, born and raised in the Bay Area. It has become a duty for me to advocate for other youth impacted by the criminal justice system because I know what it feels like to be trapped in this injustice system. I also dedicate most of my time organizing and being part of the Determination Black Men's Group, where I am a role model to those younger than me.





**Alejandra Herrera**

I am 17 years old. I expect to graduate from Arise High School in June 2019. I identify myself as a leader in my community. In Oakland, I am involved in many activities that help me learn, strategize, and organize. For the past four years I have facilitated campaigns and town halls, as well as gained a lot of important connections that helped me thrive as I am improving my city from social problems like gentrification, the school-to-prison deportation pipeline, and immigration.



**Dajon Ford**

I am Dajon Ford born and raised in Oakland CA. Growing up in a high crime city has never been easy for a young man of color like me. I got really involved in sports at Clymonds High School and became a Football Star that granted me a scholarship at New Mexico Highlands University. When I learned my girlfriend was pregnant I felt a sense of responsibility and rejected my scholarship to take care of her because I knew I had to prepare myself for fatherhood. I am formerly incarcerated determined to use my experience to inform direct experiences to inform the dream beyond bars report.



**Tiauna Harrison**

Tiauna Harris a youth justice activist and community organizer, born and raised in Oakland, CA and the youngest of four siblings. I became a teen mom at the age of 17 to my baby boy Jelonie. I became extremely passionate and focused in supporting systems for youth in low income communities facing criminalization and racism. I enjoy reading, gardening, and creating memories with my son. He is my motivation to stay active in local environmental campaigns and sustainability efforts in my community using my skills in leadership, political advocacy, and facilitation. In the long run I am looking to pursue my college education to get my paralegal certification.



**Hayden Beaulieu**

I was incarcerated in the Alameda County Juvenile Hall for 8 months while I awaited extradition to Arizona for a case out there. My story is a sad one. I was abandoned by my father and sent away from my home in Seattle to a distant town in Arizona, I got in trouble out there and was placed in their adult criminal justice system, and now I am back in Alameda County fighting for the rights of youth who would be otherwise forgotten if not for our cause. As a victim of neglect, abandonment, arbitrary punishment, physical and sexual abuse, and poor representation, I feel like I relate to every child who is on the inside today. I have changed laws in one state, so I can definitely help do it here. I want to bring my experiences to all who are willing to listen so that we can make a difference together.



**Jose Reyna**

While incarcerated, CURYJ got my permission and started helping me and my lawyer by doing participatory defense. We stayed in contact the whole time I was incarcerated. They even showed up at my high school graduation in juvenile hall and eventually got me and my co-partner to stay in juvenile court. I ended up being incarcerated for 3 years and 7 months. By the time I got out, I got involved with their life coaching program where I accomplished many things and even got to work as a full-time employee.



**Eliseo Ortiz**

I am a senior at Oakland Unity High School. I am working with Urban Peace Movement to end mass incarceration because I have seen first hand the damage it does to communities. I was incarcerated as a youth and I want to help other young people by sharing what I went through. I plan to attend Chabot Community College in the fall.



# Findings & Research .....

We have found that incarceration is expensive, ineffective, and harmful to youth (Mendel, 2011; Holman and Ziedenberg, 2006). Thankfully, there has been a 77% drop in the number of youth held in California secure facilities over the past fifteen years (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2018). Nonetheless, the impact of incarceration continues to weigh heavily on communities of color.

Locally, on the busiest days in Alameda County, the Juvenile Correction Center is at **21%** of capacity. And yet, like the rest of the state, the majority of youth in the justice system are Latino and Black.

In Alameda County, Latino youth are **2.3** times more likely to be arrested for a felony than a white youth.

Black youth are **10.6** times more likely. LGBTQ, gender nonconforming, and transgender (GNCT) youth of color are also overrepresented (Irvine et. al., 2017).

**There were six major themes that emerged from our focus groups and survey. We describe each of these themes below.**

# #1

## SYSTEM AND CRIMINALIZATION

*We found that the system and entities in charge of correcting youth are punishing youth through practices that don't reach the root problem and are further criminalizing them.*

**"Once you're in the system, you're in the system... you could be doing everything you're supposed to do, they'll make up that shit. They're getting money, they're getting paid, losing a check if they let you go" You really think they are going to let you go?"**

**"The more you go to group homes the farther they send you."**

**"I was 13 years old smoking weed I was ditching school in middle school and got in trouble and then they sent me to this place called thunder road I was there 12 months.....and because I didn't finish the program they sent me to a group home for 9 months....it wasn't ideal."**

**-Focus Group participants**

Overall we found it is time consuming and traumatizing to send youth away, particularly for minor offenses and infractions. There is a sense of distrust between youth and systems that are there to help and "rehabilitate" them.



## #2

## Money, Guidance and Support

*We found that these directly system-impacted youth need more opportunities for financial support and a “softer landing” when they are coming home from detention. In the quote below, a focus group participant describes that they needed money and resources prior to their arrest. They explain that they needed a job and now that they have a job they feel fine.*

“Write me a check... money...to eat, to clothe me...money to get around...The situation I was going through, I was going through by myself and if they would of gave me a job I would’ve been good...I got a job now.”

**Additionally, we asked youth what they would do with a million dollars to keep yourself or someone else out of the justice system. They said things like:**

“Invest it in a cannabis club and employ people.”

“Invest in stocks and pay for nursing school.”

“Get far away from here and open a UFC gym.”

“My education.”

Overall we found that youth and young adults need money, guidance, support and sense of fulfillment such as job when they get out of a secure facility. Youth particularly need money for basic necessities such as food, transportation, shelter and clothing in the expensive Bay Area. When we asked what youth would do with a million dollars, almost all of them discussed something around creating self employment opportunities and education.

# #3

## System Alternatives to Incarceration

*We found that system alternatives to incarceration-- particularly ankle monitors and group homes--that are offered to juvenile offenders are punitive, disliked, and as traumatizing as incarceration itself.*

**Youth identified a number of problems with ankle monitors. When one youth was asked, "Was GPS better than incarceration?," they said...**

"It was but then it wasn't. You still can't go outside"

**When other youth were also asked about ankle monitors, they said...**

"One time I fell asleep without charging it and I didn't feel it vibrate or nothing and next thing I know I'm waking up to the police asking me how come I didn't charge it."

"It hurts when you play sports and scratches you ... I had scars"

"They had too much authority over me, I [couldn't] go outside. I [couldn't] do nothing... too much authority. It was not helpful."

**Youth found group homes to create even more social division with peers.**

**“Every time I went to school, people thought I was going to kill them or something because everyday when I went to school there was the big white van in front of the school [that transported me to and from my group home] that said Fresno County Jail .”**

**Group homes were as punitive as secure facilities:**

**“I went to a level 14 group home which is ran by guards...There [are] hands on [you] if you try to run out. They beat you down.”**

Overall we found that ankle monitors are physically painful to youth and doesn't stop them from being places they shouldn't just punishes them for it. Group homes are punitive and sometimes more traumatic than incarceration itself.

# #4 Trauma and Healing

*We found that many of the focus group participants experienced significant amount of trauma at a young age prior to incarceration. In the quotes below, focus group participants describe experiences seeing violence, death, and mental health issues in pre-adolescence.*

“You get exposed to it at a young age and then slowly get accustomed to it and slowly start exhibiting the same behavior and mimicking it.”

“You know for me, my sister was suicidal... and I saw my brother get shot and then from there it was a wrap.”

“When it's brought on from childhood, some things are embedded in you. The things you witness at 11, 12, 13, 14 years old--its trauma and then you react.”

**Some focus group participants described using marijuana and other substances as coping strategies at the same time all these traumatic experiences are happening.**

“For me, I think it was exposure ...I was exposed to a lot of things at an age where I shouldn't have been... I saw my uncle die right in front me... I started smoking weed at the age of 9.”

**Focus group participants also described how few adults were around to support them:**

“In my life, there was no support there was no honest support. People were getting paid to help me...but that's not honest support. I was exposed to things when my mom left me. My dad left me and the only person who stayed with me was my uncle and he really wasn't a good role model.”

Overall we found focus group participants describing seeing so much trauma that it becomes normalized and learned behavior.

The focus groups participants discuss a point where the behavior goes from observed and inflicted trauma to hyper vigilance and mimicking.



# #5

## Impact on Families

*We found that incarceration causes family members to fear of their child mental stability, concerns about their proper care ,not being able to see them enough and signs of long-term effects on emotional health.*

“The conditions, when you’re a teenager, you don't have a voice...How are you going to speak up for yourself? Until you 18 you can't do shit. You can't do shit. People on the outside trying to help you, but they cant even help you.”

“To see them go through that and to see them so young away from me, to have to go visit them, it wasn't great.”

“My son served 2 years, after he came back, he changed his personality, he ended up giving up in school. He no longer wanted to go to school. It affected his mentality and it's like, what can I do”

**One mother described the long-term effects on her emotional health:**

“I still feel like my nerves were not the same after her incarceration... I still feel really stressed for my daughter even if she's out now.”

**The impact on families also extended beyond mothers and their children. Incarceration can severely disrupt sibling relationships:**

**"Losing time and loved ones you can't get that back"**

**"One [thing] that impacted me the most was my brother. I saw my brother last when i was 8 and I am 16 now. He finally got deported. I never really had a relationship with him and even though he's my brother now, when he calls me, I feel like I am talking to a stranger."**

Overall we found that incarceration has long-term effects on families, ultimately undermining emotional health of mothers and disrupting relationships. Incarceration and alternatives that exist cause further trauma and expenses to family members.

# #6

## Healing community-based alternatives are more popular than incarceration

The young adult researchers surveyed 200 people at community meetings. The survey respondents were a diverse group, varying across the following variables:

Our survey found that a higher percentage of people support healing alternatives to incarceration or existing community-based programs than the percentage of people that support probation, youth prison, or adult prison.

### Gender Identity/Expression:

**26.5%** of respondents were male, **61.7%** were female, and **6.2%** were gender queer or non-binary.

### Sexual Orientation:

**23.5%** of respondents were lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or pansexual.

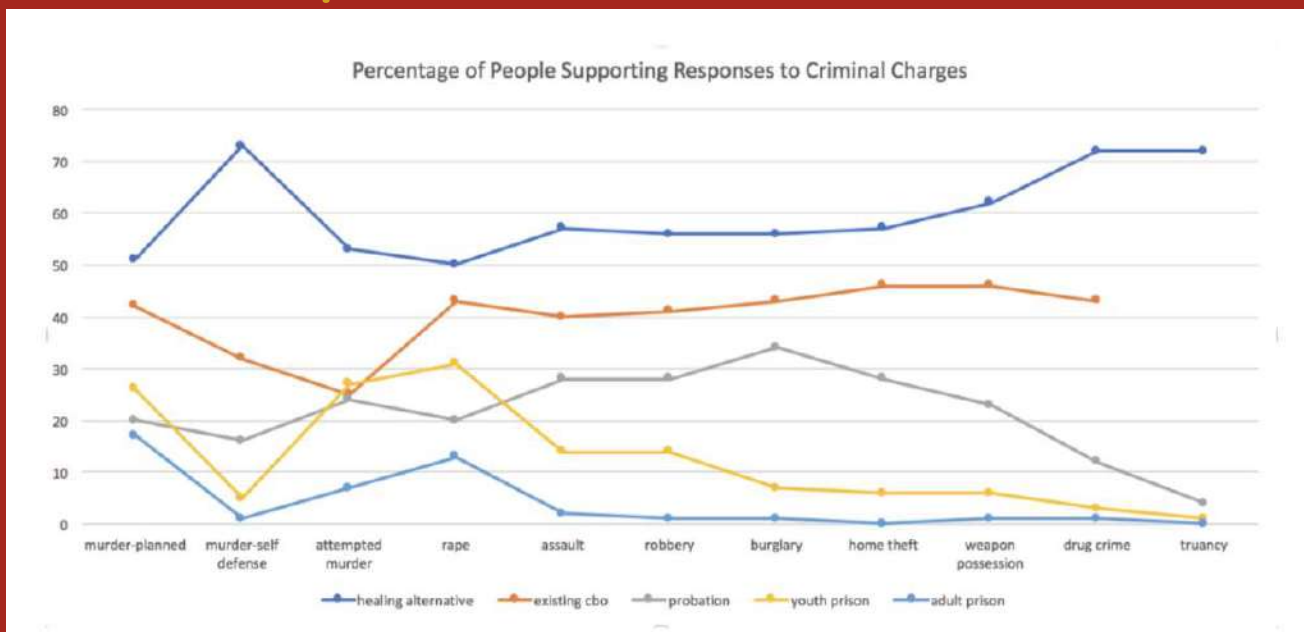
**Age:**

**46.1% of respondents were under the age of 30 while 53.9% were older than 30.**

**Victims of Crime:**

**66.7% of respondents have been a victim of an assault, robbery or rape.**

The table below reports the percentage of respondents who support a healing alternative, an existing community based organization (CBO), probation, youth prison, or adult prison as a response to each of the listed crimes.



A higher percentage of respondents support a healing alternative or community program over probation, youth prison, or adult prison for almost every crime. This is true for nonviolent and violent crimes—with the one exception of attempted murder where the same percentage of people support community based programs, probation, and youth prison. While there were not any statistically significant differences across most of the groups who were surveyed, there were two exceptions: In contrast to the dominant discourse, people who reported being the victims of a serious crime were slightly more likely to support the development of healing and community-based alternatives to incarceration

**(99% of people who reported being the victim of a crime compared with 93% of others).**

Similarly, women and gender queer/non-binary respondents were more likely than men to want to see a healing alternative to incarceration for accidental murder, murder for self- defense, or attempted murder compared with men.

# What are community-based solutions?

## The cost of incarceration

The cost of incarcerating a youth are **\$240 a day** in Alameda County

## The cost of community programs



Community programs on average are **\$75 a day**

We define community-based solutions or community involved programming as solutions that address the harm caused to and by youth so that healing can take place outside of confinement, as well as address and create solutions to the circumstances that caused the individual to get arrested or detained. Additionally, our community-based solutions aim to reduce and eradicate the incarceration of youth entirely. This is the stark difference between system co-opted programs (such as group homes or ankle monitoring) and our community-based solutions. This is a direct departure from the “community-based alternatives” that are associated with government-designed and implemented programs that are an extension of the cradle to prison pipeline. In other words, community-based solutions refers to programming arising out of communities, not imposed onto them.

We believe community based solutions should only be implemented by the community based organizations, service providers and community partners that best understand the trauma inflicted on the young person and create the right opportunities for them. Positive and trusting relationships between community based solutions and a youth who caused harm must exist before we restore the lives of our young people. To truly heal the young people in our communities, we must first address the harm done to them and the harm they've inflicted, see their potential, and provide accessible opportunities. People old and young do not change learned behaviors over night, so it is imperative that community based solutions consistently show compassion, structure, accountability and understanding.





# Understanding the Trauma

By Xochtil Larios

True justice for wounded youth means strengthening them to be restorative influences in the community rather than wounding them further and exacerbating anti-social behaviors as juvenile offenders and eventually adult criminals. I must say that I do agree that I was an exception to the oppressive juvenile justice system, but far too many youth are being re-traumatized by being sentenced to incarceration in locked facilities for symptoms and manifestations of childhood trauma: There is a bigger problem going on.

Most detained youth are psychologically traumatized by the experience of having to be confined in a locked facility away from society. Remember, psychological trauma is defined in many ways and contexts but a good way to summarize these different definitions is that trauma is “extreme stress that overwhelms a person's stability to cope (Giller, n.d.)”.

The effects of such trauma may look different in different youth, but trauma is likely to result in some type of change. One could say that criminalizing emotionally damaged youth for behavior associated with childhood traumatic experiences is like detaining a kid with a cold for sneezing. Therefore, to end the cycle of criminal recidivism into adulthood, they must be strengthen community-based solutions that have support services, mentors, and programs that heal them emotionally and build their capabilities.





CURYJ, Oakland, CA Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice interrupts cycles of violence and poverty by motivating and empowering young people who are impacted by the criminal justice system to make positive change in their lives and become the community leaders of today. CURYJ is a local member of the Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County and leads the California Alliance for Youth and Community Justice which is made up of partners from across the state uniting to stop youth incarceration.

## Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice

Urban Peace Movement, Oakland, CA The mission of UPM is to transform the culture and conditions that lead to urban violence. We build the leadership of communities hit hardest by street violence through fostering non-traditional leaders who are the key to ending this crisis. Through community organizing, youth leadership development, and culture change events, UPM empowers young people to overcome internalized oppression and work towards Justice and Social Transformation.



## Urban Peace Movement

# What are examples of community-based solutions to the justice system?



RYSE, Richmond, CA RYSE creates safe spaces grounded in social justice for young people to love, learn, educate, heal, and transform lives and communities. RYSE envisions a movement led by young people that ensures dignity for youth, their families, and communities. Programming at RYSE is anchored in the belief that young people have the lived knowledge and expertise to identify, prioritize, and direct the activities and services necessary to thrive.

## RYSE Center

La Plazita, Albuquerque, NM La Plazita Institute, Inc. is a non-profit grassroots organization in Albuquerque, NM. La Plazita engages New Mexico's youth, elders and communities in a comprehensive, holistic and cultural approach. Designed around the philosophy of "La Cultura Cura" or culture heals, La Plazita programs engages New Mexico's youth, elders and communities to draw from their own roots and histories to express core traditional values of respect, honor, love, and family.



## La Plazita Institute





## SCBU

Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos, Santa Cruz, CA promotes multicultural social justice, nonviolence and economic equity through cultural healing, civic leadership and youth & community development. In 1977, Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos (BU) set out to heal our communities, build sustainable peace and end interpersonal, community and structural violence. For forty years, Barrios Unidos has provided culturally-driven and spiritually-informed services to youth and adults within our most marginalized communities. Our services are both preventative and restorative, which has called us to environments from middle schools to maximum security facilities. Barrios Unidos is considered a vestige of the Civil Rights movement as it manifested in California.

Young Women’s Freedom Center, San Francisco, CA Young Women’s Freedom Center creates leadership pathways for system involved and formerly incarcerated women and girls of color to inform and lead our work and to lead the movement for social justice - advocating on behalf of themselves, their sisters, and leading the way towards freedom and liberation of all women and girls. We meet young women where they are at: on the streets, in jail, and in the community. We work with them over time providing support, advocacy, and opportunities for healing. We provide economic opportunities coupled with progressive leadership development through internships, employment and engagement in advocacy and organizing work.



## Young Women Freedom Center



MILPA Collective, Salinas, CAMILPA uses healing-informed, relationship-centered approaches to incubate next generation leadership and infrastructure while striving for racial and social justice. MILPA works with local, state, and national institutions through trainings, technical assistance, and the establishment of best practices. MILPA is a mission-driven, formerly incarcerated cadre committed to supporting next-generation infrastructure and leadership within community, organizations, institutions, and systems.

Youth Justice Coalition, Los Angeles, CA The Youth Justice Coalition (YJC) is working to build a youth, family, and formerly and currently incarcerated people’s movement to challenge America’s addiction to incarceration and race, gender and class discrimination in Los Angeles County’s, California’s and the nation’s juvenile and criminal injustice systems. The YJC’s goal is to dismantle policies and institutions that have ensured the massive lock-up of people of color, widespread law enforcement violence and corruption, consistent violation of youth and communities’ Constitutional and human rights, the construction of a vicious school-to-jail track, and the build-up of the world’s largest network of jails and prisons. We use transformative justice and community intervention/peace building, FREE LA High School, know your rights, legal defense, and police and court monitoring to “starve the beast” – promoting safety in our schools, homes and neighborhoods without relying on law enforcement and lock-ups, preventing system contact, and pulling people out of the system. We use direct action organizing, advocacy, political education, and activist arts to agitate, expose, and pressure the people in charge in order to upset power and bring about change



## YJC



Resilience Orange County, Santa Ana, CA The mission of Resilience Orange County is to promote resilient youth leaders that engage in the critical work of building youth-oriented institutions in Orange County. We are a youth oriented institution that works towards social-systemic transformation while promoting healing, trauma-informed and culturally relevant practices that are inclusive of all members of the community.

## Resilience Orange County



# Demands and Policy Recommendations

- 1 Eliminate probation, ankle monitors, group homes, and detention for minor offenses
  - a) Divert all 707(b) offenses prior to arrest
  - b) Create a network of service providers and organizations.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Probation, ankle monitors, group homes, and juvenile detention should be eliminated for all minor violations. Anything less severe than a 707(b) offense should be diverted prior to arrest. A network of service providers and organizations should be created to act as a point of first contact when a young person is diverted from the criminal justice system.

**RATIONALE:** There is a distrust between communities that have been marginalized and the justice system. Young people are criminalized and receive a harsh punishment for any behavior. However, few crimes that lead to incarceration are violent. Most crimes do not cause serious injury or harm. We must change our attitude from criminalizing young people when they behave in a way that is normal for teenagers and see it as an opportunity to help and change the aspects that made the individual commit wrongdoing.

- 2 Alternatives to Probation Violations

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Alternatives to violations of probation should be offered to young people all the way up to age 25. By alternatives we mean community-based organizations or service providers that specifically address the violation with life skill techniques.

**RATIONALE:** Probation violations further criminalize young people and pull them deeper into systems that, according to our research, lead to higher rates of recidivism and are dangerous.

- 3 Invest in Community-based solutions and organizations.
  - a) Create “soft landing” programs
  - b) Offer employment that pays a liveable wage
  - c) Open jobs that lead to careers

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Alameda County and the probation department need to invest in community-based solutions by scaling up already existent organizations that have relationships with impacted communities. There also needs to be long-term investment in employment that pays livable wages and employment that lead to careers. These employment opportunities need to be available for people before incarceration and people returning from incarceration.

**RATIONALE:** Alameda County is one of the most expensive places to live in the nation and we must offer opportunities for people to work and live comfortable lives without the stress factors of providing the basic necessities. Many crimes that the young people of Alameda County are committing are opportunistic crimes to get some income and young people in this county are forced to grow up faster because of financial pressure.

# Demands and Policy Recommendations

- 4** Stop out-of-state placements.
- Mileage caps
  - Opportunities for fresh starts

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Probation, ankle monitors, group homes, and juvenile detention should be eliminated for all minor violations. Anything less severe than a 707(b) offense should be diverted prior to arrest. A network of service providers and organizations should be created to act as a point of first contact when a young person is diverted from the criminal justice system.

**RATIONALE:** Out-of-state placement is expensive for the justice system and family members. The trauma inflicted on youth from being away from their loved ones is far worse than the benefits of being sent away. Keeping youth closer to home allows for restorative justice to begin with the youth offender their family and community a lot sooner than if they were sent away. Alameda County should stop the out-of-state placement of youth offenders as well as put mileage caps on how far the county can send a youth offender. The only time a youth should be sent far away is if they ask for it and if it is proven to be helpful.

- 5** End adultification of youth
- Develop a moratorium on adult transfer hearings
  - Create a separate court system for transitional-aged youth (TAY)

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Alameda County should end the adultification of youth by putting a moratorium on adult transfer hearings. As well as create a young adult court for ages 18-25 that addresses the harm done and focuses on fixing the actions that led to their incarceration. In young adult court, we are asking for less strict punishments and consequences that reflect the developing brain of a young adult. End adultification of youth. Develop a moratorium on adult transfer hearings. Create a separate court system for transitional-aged youth (TAY)

**RATIONALE:** The brain of a youth and even young adult make emotional decisions with the amygdala, a part of the brain which leads to more impulsive and emotional decisions. It is unfair to try and treat youth as adults when their physical biology is unlike an adult. By continuing these practices we are forcing youth to grow up faster which only has negative effects on youths psyche and--ultimately--society.

