

Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Building Bridges to Opportunity

From: Kids in Common <vicky@kidsincommon.ccsend.com> on behalf of Kids in Common <dbunnett@kidsincommon.org>
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To: Karen Scussel
Subject: Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Building Bridges to Opportunity



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Dear Karen,

Enjoy this interview with Tia Martinez, who was our afternoon keynote speaker, sponsored by the Santa Clara County Probation Department, at the 10th Annual Children's Summit held on February 24, 2017. We'll also be sending out an announcement soon when the Summit workshop materials are available on our Kids in Common website.

Tia Martinez Discusses Dismantling the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Building Bridges to Opportunity

Interviewed by: Courtney Macavinta, Co-founder and CEO of the Respect Institute



Did you know school suspension increases double the likelihood of dropping out and triple the chance of juvenile justice involvement? And that dropping out of high school doubles to quadruples the probability of going to prison?

Moreover, when a juvenile is incarcerated it increases the likelihood of ending up in the adult system by age 25 by 22 percentage points -- jumping from a 1-in-10 chance to a 1-in-3 chance. In California alone, a black male who drops out of school faces a 90% chance of going to prison over his lifetime.

My family is living proof of these statistics. My father (a man of color) and both of my older brothers all dropped out of high school-and all went to prison under age 25. Were the men in our family just a bunch of bad actors? Or were they trapped in a system we couldn't see? Now I know this cycle indeed represents something deeper -- the school-to-prison pipeline.

When Tia Martinez, co-founder of [Forward Change Consulting](#), shared the story behind these numbers (and many more) in her groundbreaking keynote at this year's Children's Summit, she clearly mapped how the inter-generational school-to-prison and prison-to-school pipeline truly functions.

In addition to the strategies she shared at #KICSummit17, here Tia shares three key actions that youth influencers can take to break this pipeline and to help our most vulnerable youth (and their parents) thrive:

1. **Know and spread this story.** This negative pipeline has been "running at full tilt for 30 to 40 years with up to three generations effected," Martinez says. "It's criminalizing young people's behavior in public schools, funneling them to the streets and the juvenile justice system, and ultimately condemning them to prison and the burden of a felony record. The fact is that the vast majority of these young people caught up in this cycle will go on to have their own children by their mid-20s. And when they have kids, all of the parent's trauma and disadvantage gets transferred to their children. Much of this transfer of disadvantage and trauma shows up in how their kids behave in class. Which in turn leads to the next generation getting suspended. And the cycle begins again. This cycle targets the most vulnerable youth, it compounds their disadvantage, and ensures that it is passed across generations."

You can review excerpts of "A Life Course Framework for Improving the Lives of Disadvantaged Populations," to understand better how this pipeline really works. Also, you may contact Forward Change to learn how you can be trained to deliver the presentation to adults and youth at your site. For more information, see [Tia's presentation](#) and also the video: [How to break this cycle](#).

2. **Increase your empathy.** So how can we break these system traps and negative feedback cycles that pipeline our vulnerable youth into jails and prisons? For starters: "Small interventions and empathy-building," Martinez says. In other words, as adults working with vulnerable youth (or creating policies and programs that impact them), we need to increase our capacity for empathy. A [Stanford University study](#) led by Dr. Jason Okonofua that was released this April, found that middle school teachers who took an "empathic mindset" to student discipline reduced the rate of students who got suspended by 50 percent over the school year. Martinez underlines that policy change -

- such as adopting restorative and equity practices and positive discipline -- within schools is the linchpin: "The small interventions and empathy building only work if someone else is pushing for structural change," she says.

For example, at The Respect Institute we emphasize that the root meaning of the word "re-spect" is "to look again" and that respect looks like: *I matter. You matter.* Protective factors for youth are built through caring connections, empathic listening, and mutual respect. To keep youth connected to school, those on campus benefit from radical self-care and self-compassion to boost our capacity for respect. (To get our tools and curricula, Respect 360™, [click here](#). If you didn't get a free toolkit at the Summit, [email me](#).)

3. **Drive systems' changes.** We must also change the conditions (and remove barriers) confronting not just boys and men of color, but girls of color -- who are the fastest growing juvenile justice population, according to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In his presentation at last year's Children's Summit, Tia's partner, Arnold Chandler, advised that we focus on policy and systems' changes at the federal, state, and local levels and "tie savings from punishment reform to 'reinvestment.'" Support and dual-generation interventions are key -- "tying interventions together that change outcomes for children and parents simultaneously," along with preventing disconnection from positive pathways and providing recovery pathways back.



Many thanks to Courtney Macavinta, Co-founder and CEO of The Respect Institute, who interviewed Tia (also a 2017 Respect Institute Fellow) for this article. A nationally recognized youth development expert and award-winning journalist, Courtney is co-author of the best-selling book, RESPECT, and led the creation of groundbreaking self-respect building tools, such as The Respect Basics, used by more than 50,000 youth and their influencers in schools, jails, and prevention/intervention programs around the globe for the past decade. She's been featured by CNN, ABC, National Public Radio, USA Today, Teen Vogue and tapped as a resource by the White House and the Clinton Global Initiative. Courtney Macavinta is also a Juvenile Justice Commissioner for Santa Clara County.



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