

# BLACK GIRLS MATTER

COMMUNITY ACTION TOOLKIT

ORGANIZING FOR A  
GENDER-INCLUSIVE  
RACIAL JUSTICE  
MOVEMENT

# THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POLICY FORUM

AAPF is an innovative think tank that connects academics, activists and policymakers in dismantling structural inequality and engages new ideas and perspectives to transform public discourse and policy.

The work of AAPF promotes frameworks and strategies that address the bases of discrimination as they relate to the intersections of race, gender and class.

## **BLACK GIRLS MATTER: PUSHED OUT, OVERPOLICED AND UNDERPROTECTED**

A report on the criminalization of Black girls and other girls of color in our nation's public schools

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# ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit was developed to help individuals, communities and organizations educate themselves about the experiences of Black girls and other girls of color in school, and the various factors that push them out and place them on pathways to criminalization, economic marginalization and other forms of social inequity. It seeks to provide the tools necessary to effectively advocate for the inclusion of girls within racial justice movements and efforts to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

By elevating a conversation on the need to advance an intersectional approach to racial justice, we hope to push back against the narrative that suggests that only boys of color are impacted by racial disparities. The recent surge in male-exclusive racial justice initiatives has contributed to the longstanding and incorrect assumption that women and girls of color are not also at risk. We hope that this toolkit assists individuals and organizations in their efforts to re-frame the dominant racial justice discourses in order to build equitable and inclusive responses to disparities.

We hope to enable individuals and groups to provide their own communities with information about the lives of women and girls of color across the nation, as well as the damage that a male-exclusive racial justice frame imposes upon the movement as a whole.



# ABOUT #BLACKGIRLSMATTER

Girls of color face disproportionately harsh school discipline in comparison to their white peers, just as boys of color do in comparison to their white classmates. Yet efforts to address the school-to-prison pipeline focus almost exclusively on boys and young men of color.

*Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected*, a new report from the African American Policy Forum and Columbia Law School's Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, seeks to push back against the dominant discourse by elevating national data and personal narratives of young women of color in Boston and New York public schools. With #BlackGirlsMatter, we hope to inspire conversations in communities across the country about the need for an intersectional approach to racial justice that prioritizes all members of the community.

In our nation's schools, Black girls and other girls of color experience discriminatory disciplinary policies and disproportionately high suspension and expulsion rates. In fact, contrary to popular framing, the relative disparity in disciplinary punishments between Black girls and white girls is greater than the one between Black and white boys. Nationally, Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than white girls, whereas Black boys are three times more likely to be suspended than white boys. In New York City during the 2011-2012 school year, 90 percent of girls expelled were Black and none were white. In Boston that same year, Black girls were ten times more likely to be suspended than their white female counterparts, while Black boys were 7.4 times more likely to be suspended than their white male peers. So while Black boys face higher rates of suspension and expulsion in terms of absolute numbers, Black girls face a greater racialized risk.

Alarming statistics like these highlight the need for inclusion of girls of color in the discourse around racial justice. While we applaud efforts to address the crisis faced by boys and young men of color, we cannot forget that girls and young women of color are also in crisis and need targeted intervention. Our communities are stronger when everyone, both boys and girls, have access to the resources they need. Our youth are suffering together in the same failing schools and impoverished communities; the commitment to lifting their prospects should be inclusive of all children. The inclusion of girls and young women in our work strengthens our efforts by shifting away from an individualistic belief that boys of color are the problem, toward a structural understanding that racial inequities impact our entire community. Racial justice advocacy at its most powerful has always emphasized the shared fate of communities - we must not depart from this tradition by abandoning women and girls now. We look forward to working together to make #BlackGirlsMatter.

# MESSAGING

## TALKING ABOUT THE CRISIS FACING BLACK GIRLS

Building talking points on the crisis facing Black girls is essential to advancing an advocacy agenda based on their needs. We must push back against the popular narrative that advocating for our girls means taking something away from our boys, and emphasize the shared fate of our young people. We know that none of us will be free until all of us are free, and we hope these talking points help you manage pushback when advocating for our young women.

**BLACK GIRLS ARE NOT DOING JUST FINE.** It is a myth that girls of color are doing better than boys of color across the board.

**CONTINUED INVISIBILITY HARMS BLACK GIRLS.** Black girls face gaping racial disparities in suspension and other punitive measures. According to DOE data Black girls are 6 times more likely to be suspended than white girls. Their continued invisibility in the discourse on the school-to-prison pipeline allows their suffering to go on at the margins of our collective attention.

**BLACK GIRLS ARE CRIMINALIZED MORE THAN OTHER GIRLS.** The criminalization of Black girls in school leads to long term economic and social consequences for them and their families.

**BLACK GIRLS EXPERIENCE SCHOOL PUSH OUT THROUGH STEREOTYPES AND DOUBLE STANDARDS.** One young woman we spoke to stated: "You can be the father of three in the 9th grade, and then at the end of the day no one really cares. But if you're a girl, you know, those children are with you, they are seen." Another young woman recalled an instance when she got suspended for defending herself: "This boy kept spitting those little spitballs through a straw at me while we were taking a test. I told the teacher, and he told him to stop, but he didn't. He kept on doing it. I yelled at him. He punched me in the face, like my eye. My eye was swollen. I don't remember if I fought him. That's how it ended. We both got suspended. I was like, 'Did I get suspended?' I was, like, a victim."

**THE CONDITIONS OF OUR COMMUNITY CANNOT BE IMPROVED BY FOCUSING ON HALF OF US.** Girls live in the same impoverished communities and attend the same failing schools as boys, while also suffering from distinctive gender-specific racial disparities. Across the board, Black girls face social outcomes that are closer to their male peers than to girls of other races. Compared to all boys, Black boys have the worst rates of suspension, incarceration, and homicide. Likewise, compared to all girls, Black girls have the worst rates of suspension, incarceration, and homicide. Boys and girls endure these problems together and thus, we should confront them together. All our youth need our schools to that make them feel safe, encouraged, and valued.

# WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

## USING DATA & RESEARCH TO SHOW BLACK GIRLS ARE IN CRISIS

It is a myth that girls of color are doing better than boys of color across the board. All Black children and youth face systemic racism as they seek to graduate school and improve their lives. Girls of color also face uniquely gendered and racialized barriers to staying in school. It is the environment that is not conducive to success: if the air is toxic for our boys, it must also be toxic for our girls.

*Black Girls Matter* utilizes an intersectional data framework to highlight the educational, social, and economic factors that funnel Black girls and other girls of color onto pathways to nowhere and render their academic and professional vulnerabilities invisible.

To achieve this, we separated males from females in each racial/ethnic category so that we could compare all groups against one another and examine the disparate data within genders. This is a process that could be duplicated throughout the country in an effort to uplift the particular, local challenges facing girls of color in other cities. We utilized data from the 2011–2012 school year released by the Office of Civil Rights Data Collection (OCRD) in 2014 to calculate disparities in rates of suspension, expulsion and school discipline.

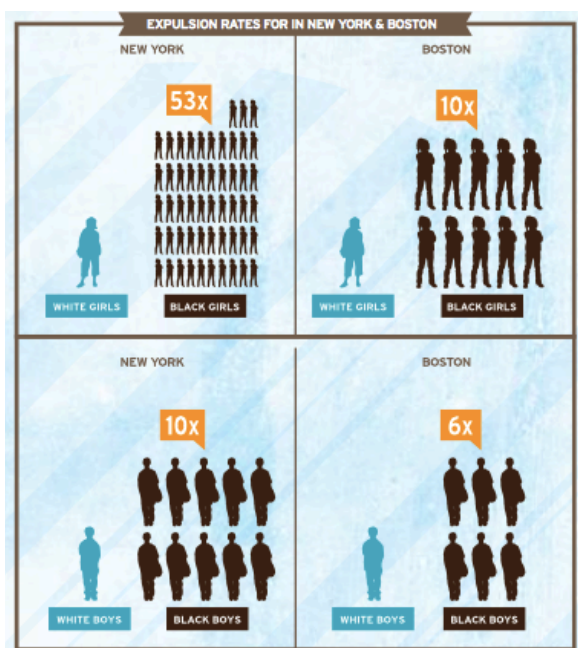
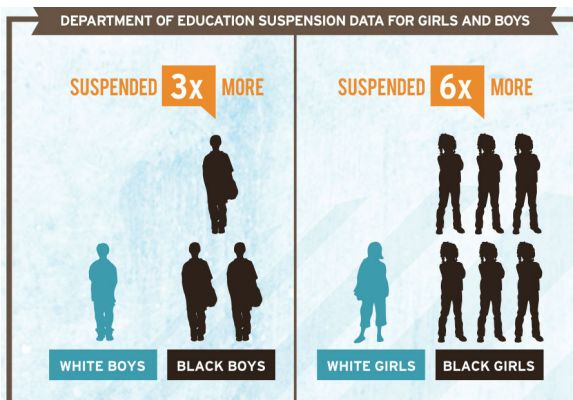




## FINDINGS

When compared to their white counterparts, it becomes visible that race is a substantial risk factor for Black girls. In fact, in some cases, the relative racial disparity in punitive punishment between girls is even greater than the relative disparity between boys.

**NATIONWIDE** Black girls are 6 times more likely to be suspended than their white female counterparts, while Black boys are 3 times more likely than their white male peers



## EXPULSION IN NY AND BOSTON

Black girls are 53 times more likely to be expelled than their female counterpart in NY, and 10 times more likely in Boston.

Black boys are 10 times more likely to be expelled than their male counterpart in NY, and 6 times more likely in Boston.



## SUSPENSION IN NY AND BOSTON

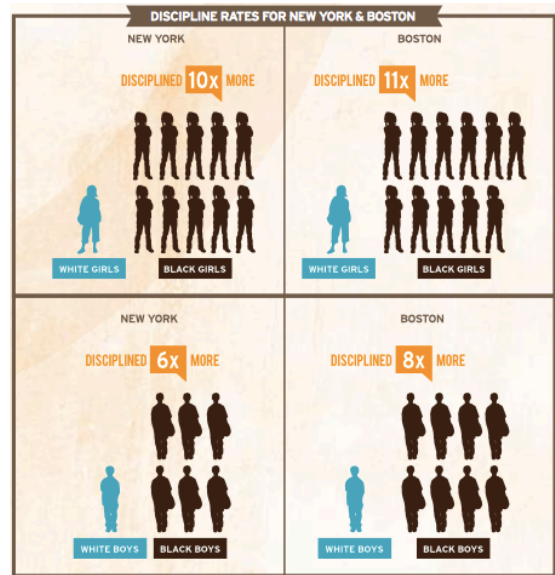
**Black girls are 10 times more likely to be suspended than their female counterpart in NY, and 12 times more likely in Boston.**

**Black boys are 5 times more likely to be suspended than their male counterpart in NY, and 7.4 times more likely in Boston.**

## DISCIPLINE IN NY AND BOSTON

**Black girls are 10 times more likely to be disciplined than their female counterpart in NY, and 11 times more likely in Boston.**

**Black boys are 6 times more likely to be disciplined than their male counterpart in NY, and 8 times more likely in Boston.**



## **MORE INDICATORS ON THE STATE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR**

The push-out crisis facing girls of color is deeply connected to a variety of inequities they experience at the intersections of race and gender across their lifespan. The following data indicators can be used in conjunction with the data from *Black Girls Matter* to inform decision makers and the public about the mass injustices facing women and girls of color:

**DIRE CONSEQUENCES FOR BLACK FEMALE DROPOUTS** Numerous studies have found that dropping out of high school is linked to serious long term consequences, many of which are greater for Black women than Black men. For example, a Black woman who has dropped out will make about \$7,000 less a year than a high school graduate. Additionally, children of female dropouts are more likely to drop out than children of male dropouts.

**HIGH HOMICIDE RATES** In 2010, the homicide rate among Black girls and women ages 10-24 was higher than for any other group of females, and also higher than that of white and Asian men. The rate of firearm deaths for Black girls and women ages 10-24 from 2008-10 was more than 6.5 times higher than white women and girls, more than 3.5 times higher than Hispanic women and girls, and more than 9 times higher than Asian/Pacific Islander women and girls. In 2011, 94% of Black female murder victims were killed by someone they knew.

**HIGH INCIDENCE OF EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES** Black girls have a higher incidence of emotional difficulties than other girls, including depression. A 2009 national survey found that 67% of Black girls indicated that they had felt sad or hopeless for two or more weeks straight, compared to 31% of white girls and 40% of Latinas.

**GENDER AND RACE DRIVE UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE WAGE GAP** Black women ages 18-24 have the highest unemployment rate amongst women nationwide and, during the recent Great Recession, lost more jobs than their male counterparts. Statistics from the Insight Center for Economic and Community Investment illustrate that, as of 2007, Black women earned only 64 cents per dollar earned by a white man, compared to 78 cents on the dollar earned by white women.

**NET WEALTH GAP** Single Black women have the lowest net worth amongst all racial and gender groups, at only \$100, as compared to \$7,900 for single Black men, \$41,500 for single white women, and \$43,800 for single white men.

**HIGH INCARCERATION RATE** Like Black men, Black women are incarcerated at far higher rates than their white peers. Black women are incarcerated at nearly 3 times the rate of white women. An estimated 1 in 18 Black women will be incarcerated at least once in her lifetime, compared to 1 in 111 white women, and 1 in 45 Latinas.

# USING STORIES

## TO ILLUSTRATE THE CRISIS FACING GIRLS

Stories from women and girls of color reveal the dire need for systemic solutions to the disparities they confront, both those that impact them specifically as girls, and those that impact all youth of color who live in their communities with them. These stories can be shared with decision makers to promote a deeper understanding of the lives of women and girls of color, which despite the tragic nature of the circumstances they face, are rarely broadcast in media or dominant narratives about school push out.

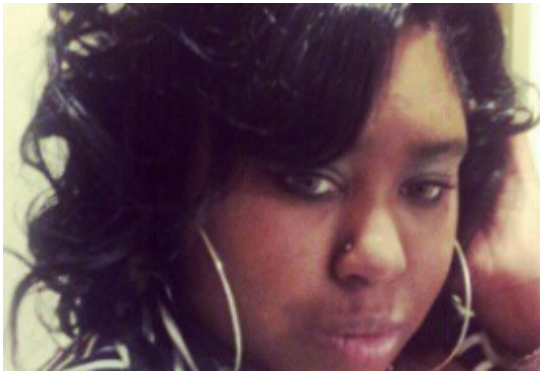
The following stories can be used to help give depth and breadth to our understanding of how girls are impacted. Local communities should work to uplift the voices of girls and women in advocacy efforts to advance their needs:

**MIKIA HUTCHINGS** In 2014, 12-year old Mikia Hutchings faced expulsion and criminal charges after writing “hi” on a locker room wall of her Georgia middle school. At the time, Mikia was with a white child, whom was handed down a far less severe punishment.



**ATIYA HAYNES** In October 2014, a Detroit honors student was threatened with expulsion during her senior year for accidentally bringing a pocketknife to a football game. The Dearborn Heights District 7 Board of Education eventually chose a less severe punishment for the honor student who was initially expelled, allowing her to take online classes and still graduate in 2015. Yet, regardless, of the punishment, Haynes was pushed out of school for an act that could have garnered a range of restorative, rather than punitive, responses.





**ASHLYNN AVERY** In May 2013, Ashlynn Avery, a 16-year-old girl in Alabama who suffers from diabetes, asthma, and sleep apnea was hit with a book by her teacher after she fell asleep in class. The student was later arrested and hospitalized due to injuries she sustained in her interaction with the police.



**SALECIA JOHNSON** 6-year-old Salecia Johnson was handcuffed by Georgia police officers with her arms behind her back and removed from school after she threw a tantrum in class. The police chief defended the action as a safety measure. The kindergartener was accused of tearing items off the walls and throwing books and toys in an outburst Friday at Creekside Elementary School.

# RE-FRAMING PUSH OUT

## THE GENDERED CONTOURS OF THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

On top of experiencing racial inequities like boys experience, girls of color also face unique challenges in schools as a result of their gender. Gender-specific factors function as part of, and in conjunction with, systemic racism and can lead to girls being pushed out of school altogether. However, the existing school to prison pipeline discourse consistently ignores these concerns.

In order to understand the environments that girls must navigate, it is important that we listen to them directly. As such, AAPF held focus groups with girls of color and developed the following framework to understand school conditions from their vantage point. Our report includes quotes from girls talking directly about their experiences. Girls' voices should continue to be leveraged in local advocacy efforts to dismantle the school to prison pipeline.

### **ZERO TOLERANCE ENVIRONMENTS ARE NEITHER SAFE NOR CONDUCTIVE TO ACHIEVEMENT**

The heavy emphasis on discipline rather than learning communicates to girls that school is not about learning. Girls who dropped out indicated that the disciplinary routines discouraged them from investing in school.

Moreover, zero tolerance wasn't always zero tolerance, according to the young women. Some reported that there was a gender-norm enforcement in how punishment was handed out; fighting and aggression might be expected from boys, but girls report receiving swifter punishment for behavior regarded as anti-feminine or hostile.

Stakeholders theorized that Black girls were disproportionately subjected to punishment because of perceptions that they were defiant, hard to control and needed to be reigned in. These perceptions reflect unique ways that gender and race norms place Black girls at risk.

### **INCREASED LEVELS OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND SECURITY PERSONNEL WITHIN SCHOOLS OFTEN MAKE GIRLS FEEL LESS SAFE AND THEREFORE LESS LIKELY TO COME TO SCHOOL**

Metal detectors dissuaded some from physically entering school as some viewed the rituals around metal detectors to be humiliating, exhausting or bringing up past trauma. One girl remarked that being forced to strip down and submit to being searched on a daily basis made her feel like she was in jail.



### **THE FAILURE OF SCHOOLS TO INTERVENE IN SITUATIONS INVOLVING THE PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT OF GIRLS CONTRIBUTES TO THEIR FEELINGS OF INSECURITY IN SCHOOL**

Zero tolerance also leaves girls at risk of aggressions that are gendered, such as harassing behavior. Teachers and administrations tend to let such behaviors go with boys, chalking it up to “boys will be boys” while at the same time, subjecting both boys and girls to suspension when girls defend themselves. A girl who was suspended along with a boy who punched her in the eye expressed disbelief that she was suspended for defending herself. Another stakeholder revealed that harassment was not taken seriously by teachers in her school, as represented in their response to a father who threatened to remove his daughter because of continuous harassment by boys. When the girl was finally transferred, teachers expressed relief that she was gone and would no longer distract male students.

### **DETACHMENT FROM SCHOOL CAN BE ENCOURAGED BY THE FAILURE TO CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GIRLS IN SCHOOL**

Stakeholders reported that girls are dissuaded from investing in high achievement when their performance is marginalized. Efforts to encourage the singular achievement of boys can inadvertently send the message that achievement for girls isn’t a big deal. Young people want to be valued in some way, so a tepid response to academic achievement may prompt girls to achieve distinction and recognition elsewhere through other behaviors, many of which are neither healthy nor conducive to long term well being.

### **UNTREATED TRAUMA MAY CONTRIBUTE TO THE RISKS THAT GIRLS FACE IN ZERO TOLERANCE ENVIRONMENTS**

In fact, acting out may be a strategy that some girls use to get the attention they need. Girls talked about going to their counselors to “give face,” but counselors are not always equipped or given adequate time to address the challenges Black girls encounter, such as sexual abuse or harassment.

## **BLACK AND LATINA GIRLS ARE OFTEN BURDENED WITH FAMILIAL OBLIGATIONS THAT UNDERMINE THEIR CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THEIR ACADEMIC GOALS**

Factors from outside school can affect girls' attachment to school, including teen parenting and other familial obligations, factors that girls are far more likely to face than boys. Parenting burdens are far more likely to adversely impact girls than boys, both in terms of increased responsibilities and the time this takes up, as well as the stigma attached to teen parenting.

Young mothers report few programs that allow them to parent while attending school, and the safety concerns they have for themselves extend to their children. Caretaking more broadly also affects girls, particularly in an era of shrinking programs to care for disabled, chemically dependent, mentally ill, incarcerated, and/or other family members whose needs the state no longer addresses.

## **STAKEHOLDERS HAVE INDICATED THAT THESE AND OTHER BURDENS ARE NOT FREQUENTLY INCLUDED IN DISCOURSES THAT ADDRESS UNDERACHIEVEMENT AND DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

Conversations on racial opportunity gaps are often limited in the sense that they do not reflect the ways that gender intersects with race for girls of color. Stakeholders noted that educators in zero tolerance schools often fail to provide Black girls with the tools and opportunities needed to mature into a healthy, productive adulthood. Girls need gender-specific opportunities to work and learn with other girls, both inside and outside of schools



# ADVOCATING FOR OUR GIRLS

## DEMANDING ACTION FROM KEY DECISION MAKERS

### WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?

Advancing the needs of women and girls of color requires action at various levels. Policy makers, foundations and the civil rights community each hold unique positions of power and have influence over various aspects of the system. In developing a comprehensive local strategy, it is essential to conduct a power map to identify campaign targets, influencers and stakeholders that you and your constituency base can engage to demand change

(Please see: <http://www.moveon.org/organize/campaigns/powermap.html>). This exercise will help you understand each group's role in advancing the needs of women and girls of color, and identify specific targeted goals.

#### Local Municipalities and Elected Officials:

Have any local municipal leaders, such as mayors, school districts, or counties, signed onto a male exclusive racial justice initiative? Have they committed resources, such as policy development, data analysis or funding?

Can we advocate for an expansion of this effort to include women and girls?

#### Women and Girls of Color: How do WGOC understand their own condition?

How can we leverage their  
voices to influence change?

What spaces can be made for  
WGOC to come together to  
develop strategies towards  
their liberation?

#### Civil Rights Community:

How does the community talk about racial justice? Are women and girls included in the narrative? Are organizations using an intersectional lens?

How are organizations that serve women and girls being impacted by male-exclusive initiatives?

Who are your allies on this issue?

#### Funders:

Have local funders, both public and private, developed targeted funding strategies to support men and boys of color?

What existing funding is available for women and girls of color?

Have funding priorities changed? How is this impacting racial justice organizing and services?

# ORGANIZING TO WIN

## WHAT DOES GENDER INCLUSION LOOK LIKE?

Dismantling patriarchy and racism are overwhelming goals but there are incremental campaign wins that are possible as we build momentum towards the cultural and structural change needed to achieve liberation for all people of color. Potential campaign targets and wins include:

### **TARGET: Local Municipalities and Elected Officials**

- Develop uniform processes for collecting, analyzing and reporting data by race and gender
- Expand My Brother's Keeper and other local male exclusive initiatives through an implementation that utilizes a structural and gender inclusive approach to combatting racial injustices
- Implement targeted policy, research and programmatic initiatives to support the needs of girls and women of color

### **TARGET: Funders**

- Expand male-exclusive funding opportunities to equitably support women and girls
- Report dollars allocated by race and gender
- Leverage funding to support research and data collection on girls of color

### **TARGET: Civil Rights Community**

- Expand the movement against state violence in a way that equitably acknowledges Black women and men as targets of racialized violence
- Implement an intersectional racial justice lens to support groups in identifying the specific ways in which women and girls are impacted by organizational, programmatic, and advocacy approaches
- Distribute community resources in a way that equitably serves everyone



# BUILDING OUR STRATEGY

There are many strategies that individuals and organizations can use to advance the #BlackGirlsMatter dialogue and advocacy agenda in your local community.

## COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Check out our #BlackGirlsMatter social media guide for sample tweets and images (available [here](#))
- Like and share media coverage of *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected*
- Send a 30 second video to [info@aapf.org](mailto:info@aapf.org), either of you or a group, telling America why #BlackGirlsMatter
- Send a letter to your local paper, and let us know when it's published. We'll make sure it is seen.

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZING AND EDUCATION

- Join AAPF's town hall series by hosting a hearing in your community to elevate the voices and experiences of girls and women of color
- Host a discussion at home, at church, over a meal, at the salon or beauty parlor, to talk about girls and women of color in your community. What challenges and issues do they face? What should be done, and how can we serve both our boys and girls? This will integrate girls and women into conversations about what we need and want as a community.
- Work with community groups to analyze how male-exclusive funding impacts local organizations and how you can collectively further your ability to advance change for women and girls, as well as men and boys.
- Host a teach-in, using the #BlackGirlsMatter curriculum

## ADVOCACY

- Send a letter to local politicians demanding targeted efforts to support women and girls of color. You can use the sample letter in this packet!
- Call your elected representatives and local advocacy groups and tell them to raise the question about girls and women of color. Ask them what they've done to support women and girls of color, and what they can do to bring their issues out of the shadows.
- Is your city one of eleven cities working in partnership with the National League of Cities and Open Societies Foundation on their Campaign for Black Male Achievement? Has your City signed onto My Brother's Keeper? If you live in one these cities, contact your mayor and other city leadership to demand inclusion of women and girls of color in new programs, along with systemic solutions to the inequities experienced by everyone in our communities.

# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

## ENGAGING WITH AAPF

AAPF is available to provide technical assistance and support to local communities interested in advancing a campaign to call attention to the needs of women and girls of color. If you have additional ideas for engagement, not listed below, please reach out to us. We are flexible in the ways we can provide technical assistance and support.

Opportunities for engagement and support from AAPF include, but are not limited to:

- Work with AAPF to host a town hall in your local community focused on elevating the challenges facing women and girls of color
- Conduct quantitative and qualitative data analyses, including hosting focus groups with girls and women, to gain a deeper understanding of the the issues impacting women and girls of color in your community
- Conduct a power map of decision makers to support the development of a localized campaign to advance the needs of women and girls of color
- Facilitated dialogue among intersectional racial justice leaders working to advance an agenda for women and girls of color in cities throughout the country
- Provide training and technical assistance on the importance of building an intersectional racial justice movement to assist local groups, who are trying to build an organizing base in their local communities
- Connect national feminist Black male leaders to Black men and boys who need to be moved on the issues of patriarchy in our communities
- Support gatherings of women and girls of color that promote healing and our liberation



# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

## SAMPLE LETTER TO SEND TO LOCAL POLITICIANS

Dear [Your local politician]:

Following the creation of male-exclusive racial justice programs, such as President Obama's My Brother's Keeper Initiative (MBK), we recognize that here in [insert location], there is likely pressure to gear resources for racial justice initiatives toward men and boys of color. While we applaud much needed efforts toward combating societal inequities, it is critical that all efforts to do so also include women and girls of color.

There is a common misconception that Black men and boys are doing far worse than any other group in American society, including their female counterparts, and therefore that they should be the sole focus of targeted interventions. This narrow focal point on men and boys ignores the needs of Black women and girls, who also have the worst rates of suspension, juvenile incarceration, and homicide compared to all other groups of females. Black boys and girls both grow up in a society where they face systemic inequality including poverty, failing schools, the school-to-prison pipeline and a lifelong achievement gap. Leaving girls out of solutions to these problems makes no sense.

The African American Policy Forum's recent report, *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected*, calls attention to the racialized disparities Black girls face in school, and demonstrates that they are in a state of crisis as well. The report found that nationally, Black girls are six times as likely to be suspended as white girls, while Black boys are three times as likely to be suspended as white boys. In New York in the 2011-2012 school year, Black girls were 90 percent of girls expelled, while not a single white girl was expelled that year. Data like these show that in many cases Black girls in fact face a greater racialized risk of punitive punishment than Black boys, driving home the need for all youth of color to be included in initiatives aimed at creating equal opportunities for all Americans.

Any further public or philanthropic research efforts on how to best address racial inequality in [insert location] should include data disaggregated by race and gender for both girls and boys. Girls are often overlooked in programs geared toward youth of color because they are lumped in with boys, or because boys are viewed as having it worse and taking precedence. But analyses of data that include information on girls across races alongside their male counterparts—like Black Girls Matter—show that Black girls are suffering in ways similar to and different from their male peers. Those who wish to justify a gender-exclusive focus for racial justice programs often draw the analogy that male youth of color are like the miner's canary: their plight warns us that something is wrong in the mine.



Indeed, something is desperately wrong when so many of our youth are falling victim to the consequences of punitive discipline, underfunded schools, poor job prospects, decreasing access to higher education, and worsening prospects on the job market. Clearly American society continues to be a toxic environment for many of our young people. Yet male-exclusive initiatives seem to lose sight of the implications of the canary's distress: it is not a signal that only male canaries are suffering. It makes no sense to equip the canary with a mentor, a gas mask and or some other individual-level support while leaving the mine as it is and expecting the females to fend for themselves. If the air is toxic, it is toxic for everyone forced to breathe it.

We call for a racial justice initiative that has equitable funding opportunities for programs that service boys and programs that service girls; increased data on disciplinary matters that is disaggregated along both race and gender lines; and policy initiatives that address the systemic root causes of what both our boys and our girls are going through.

**We respectfully request a meeting at City Hall to discuss these concerns in more detail with you.** We stand ready to work together to realize the aspirations that we all share for our youth and for our community, but it is of crucial importance that girls of color are central to all efforts moving forward alongside their brothers. So, as you and [insert location] move forward with new initiatives—public or private –geared toward ending entrenched societal discrimination against youth of color, we urge you to include ALL youth in new research, data analysis, resources and programs.

Sincerely,  
[Your Name]

# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

## #BLACKGIRLSMATTER COMMUNITY TEACH-IN

### OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Define at least three key observations of *Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected*
- Identify at least three recommendations of *Black Girls Matter* or related reports
- Critically analyze and explore the meaning or implications of *Black Girls Matter* through a variety of identities and communities
- Identify next steps for advancing the needs of women and girls of color in your local community

### SUPPLIES

- Laptop
- Projector
- Chart Paper
- Markers
- Handouts
- Sign-In Sheets
- Beverages/Food
- Evaluations

### PREPARATION NEEDED

- Develop teach-in team
- Contact and confirm speakers
- Confirm location, date and time
- Outreach for attendees
- Confirm agenda
- Identify local goals for teach-in
- Identify women and girls of color who may be interested in sharing their stories, or stakeholders who work with women and girls of color

# DRAFT AGENDA

Welcome and Introductions (30 mins)

- Review introductions
- Icebreaker: One fear and one thing you're looking forward to about discussing #BlackGirlsMatter

Listening to Girls (30 mins) *Invite a student and an educator to share stories about the school climate facing girls.*

Watch Report Webinar (60 mins) Available at: [www.aapf.org](http://www.aapf.org)

Discussion (60 mins) *Break into groups of 5 and discuss the following*

1. *Black Girls Matter* examined the impacts of punitive education policies and the school-to-prison pipeline on girls in New York and Boston public schools. To start out, let's discuss some of the report's findings that we found most surprising, insightful or problematic.
2. How do we see the findings of the report mirrored here in [insert location]? What steps can we take to compile additional similarly minded data on how Black girls are doing in school at the local level so that we will have the relevant data at our fingertips?
3. How could we use that data to further our efforts for inclusion of girls and women in local and national racial justice programs, research, and initiatives?
4. How can we address patriarchy in our racial justice organizing?
5. *Black Girls Matter* was grounded in the perspectives of girls sharing their own experiences with school push-out and other forms of discrimination. What stories from the report, or related stories in the media, stood out the most and why?
6. Why is this grounding in personal narratives from those impacted so important?
7. Would anyone here this evening—a student, educator, stakeholder, or anyone else concerned—like to share an experience they had with an issue relating to unfairness girls of color face in school?
8. How are the challenges girls of color encounter while trying to stay in school similar to and different from those boys of color encounter?
9. What gender-sensitive programs could we see implementing locally to increase a successful, productive experience for girls in school here?

Closing and Next Steps

1. What concrete actions can we take to increase awareness around these issues and to change resource allocation to reflect the realities we have discussed?
2. Who is willing to commit to specific actions to further the concerns raised this evening? If so, what will those actions be?
3. What did you bring with you today? What did you take away?

# MEDIA COVERAGE

## #BLACKGIRLSMATTER IN THE NEWS

The Root—February 4

[Report: Girls of Color Disciplined Much More Harshly In School Than White Girls](#)

Ebony—February 4

[Black Girls Matter](#)

BET—February 4

['Black Girls Matter' Report Addresses School-to-Prison Pipeline in New Light](#)

Feminist.org—February 5

[Black Girls Matter: New Report Exposes Gendered and Racial Disparities in Education Too Often Erased](#)

Ms. Magazine Blog—February 5

[#BlackGirlsMatter: When Girls of Color Are Policed Out of School](#)

The Daily Beast—February 5

[NYC Schools Suspend Black Girls 10X More Often Than Whites](#)

New York 1—February 5

[Columbia Law Professor Weighs In On "Black Girls Matter" Report](#)

The Nation—February 5

[This Is How Black Girls End Up In The School-To-Prison Pipeline](#)

TakePart—February 5

[Suspended Six Times More Often? Nope, Some Kids Aren't All Right](#)

Bustle—February 5

[The Black Girls Matter Report Is An Eye-Opening Look At The Injustices African-American Women Face](#)

Bossip—February 5

[Race Matters: New Study Finds Black Girls 6 Times More Likely to Face Harsher Discipline at School Than White Counterparts](#)

Atlanta Black Star—February 6

[What New Stats Show About the School to Prison Pipeline for Black Girls is Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined](#)

Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting—February 6

[Craig Aaron on FCC Reclassification, Kimberle Crenshaw on Black Girls Matter](#)

Medical Xpress—February 6

[Girls of Color Face Harsher School Discipline Than White Peers, Study Finds](#)

Huffington Post—February 6

[Report: Black Girls Face Extreme Inequality at School, But Little Is Being Done About It](#)

Southern California Public Radio—February 6

[New Study Finds Young Black Women Have It Worse Than Black Men](#)

Education Week—February 6

[Changes in Seattle, Dispute Over Charter Expansion Costs in Philly & More](#)

National Newspaper Publishers Association—February 11

[Black Girls Should Matter Too When It Comes to School Discipline](#)

USA Today College—February 11

[Study: Black Girls Are Suspended 6 Times More Often Than White Girls](#)

Democracy Now!—February 12

[One Billion Rising Honors "Revolution" as New Report Highlights Threats to Black Girls in U.S.](#)

Mother Jones—February 12

[In the Nation's Capital, Fewer Than Half of Black Males Graduate from High School](#)

NPR—February 13

[Study: Black Girls Are Being Pushed Out of School](#)

The Baltimore Sun—February 13

[Pushed Out, Overpoliced and Underprotected](#)

Atlanta Black Star—February 13

[Author Behind “Black Girls Matter” Study Explains How Racially Biased Zero Tolerance Policies Are Failing Black Girls In School](#)

Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting—February 6

[Craig Aaron on FCC Reclassification, Kimberle Crenshaw on Black Girls Matter](#)

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[Girls of Color Face Harsher School Discipline Than White Peers, Study Finds](#)

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[New Study Finds Young Black Women Have It Worse Than Black Men](#)

Education Week—February 6

[Changes in Seattle, Dispute Over Charter Expansion Costs in Philly & More](#)

Hot 107.5 Detroit—February 7

[REPORT: Black Female Students Getting Much Harsher Punishments Than Classmates](#)

Hello Beautiful—February 7

[REPORT: Black Female Students Getting Much Harsher Punishments Than Classmates](#)

Vox—February 9

[Black Girls Are Suspended From School 6 Times More Often Than White Girls](#)

Salon—February 10

[Black Girls Are Suspended From School Six Times More Often Than White Girls](#)

The Grio—February 10

[Study: Black Girls 6 Times More Likely To Be Suspended Than White Girls In New York Schools](#)

Sputnik—February 10

[Black & White: Researchers Find Racial Bias in School Suspensions](#)

The Augusta Chronicle—February 10

[Rants & Raves](#)

The North Dallas Gazette—February 10

[Black Female Students Railroaded Into a School-To-Prison Pipeline](#)

[How Race, Skin Tone Affects School Discipline of Girls](#)

