

RESOURCE GUIDE - S4E1

WHERE JUVENILE DETENTION LOOKS MORE LIKE TEENS HANGING OUT



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ONE JAIL AT A TIME.

story

A brief introduction to **juvenile justice** in the United States ...

According to the Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice, the youth incarceration rate in the U.S. is higher than any other country in the world, "with approximately 50,000 youth in custody." Children can be punished for non-crimes such as running away or skipping school, or in one case in 2019, a six-year-old girl was arrested in her Orlando school for kicking a school officer.

Further, youth of color are disproportionately affected by this system. A policy brief by The Sentencing Project states that "While non-Hispanic whites comprise 53 percent of the juvenile population, they comprise 33 percent of incarcerated youth. Black youth are 14 percent of all youth, but 40 percent of incarcerated youth. Hispanic youth are 24 percent of all youth and 23 percent of incarcerated youth." Francis Guzman shares in *Open Society Foundations* his experience as an incarcerated youth:

There were unconscionable levels of violence and corruption. Many of the youth committed to the CYA had long histories of abuse, abandonment, and neglect; many more suffered from developmental disabilities. The guards, who lacked the resources, training, and human capacity to deal with such a high level of need, often resorted to violence to deal with youth who displayed problematic behaviors. [...] There wasn't a day that passed when there wasn't some sort of physical or sexual abuse among the wards.

On an optimistic note, big changes can happen anywhere, including in rural communities and communities thought to be conservative about social issues. As we saw in the episode, The Loft in Arizona is an example of imagining and building a new space for youth to flourish, which renders imprisonment an unnecessary alternative and transforms communities by intervening at root problems. This aligns with the studies that show that incarceration is less effective and cost-efficient than community interventions.



RICHARD 'RITCHIE' GWINN STANDS OUTSIDE THE LODGE WHICH IS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, EAGER, ARIZONA. PHOTO BY RICHARD GWINN.

"The old model was sort of spare the stick, spoil the child. that's sort of how we viewed it, as if you punish a kid enough, then they'll learn to correct the behavior. But the premise of that argument is assuming that these kids have good family lives... The truth is that's not what we deal with."

- JUDGE MICHAEL LATHAM

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How has adult incarceration affected/influenced our views on youth corrections?
- How can juvenile justice reform inform adult criminal justice reform efforts?
- What are alternative approaches to addressing harm, accountability and safety for youth?

Get Involved

WHAT IS A CONTINUUM OF CARE AND CONTINUITY? FROM THE URBAN INSTITUTE

LOCAL SUPPORT

Look into your area's efforts to curb juvenile detention and invest in youth welfare. This could look like legal aid for youth, movements to get cops out of schools, and expanding and improving youth community centers, activities, and education - but it could also look like a lot more! This diagram to the right comes from The Urban Institute's *Financing Juvenile Justice in the COVID Era* Fact Sheet and depicts the many areas in our community which when cultivated benefit juveniles (and adults alike).

You can also look into the [National Conference of State Legislatures' Juvenile Justice Bills Tracking Database](#) and see if similar movements are happening in your area that you can discuss at a town/city hall and/or vote on.

CHECK OUT THESE ORGS

[Campaign for Youth Justice](#)
[Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice](#)
[The Sentencing Project Youth Justice](#)
[Young Women's Freedom Center](#)
[Coalition for Juvenile Justice](#)



Please note this visual was redesigned for the purpose of this guide. To view the original from The Urban Institute, click [here](#).

Learn More

THIS WEEK'S MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Reading



[How Can We Fund a Continuum of Care and Opportunity?](#) by Chloe Warnberg, Samantha Harvell, Leah Sakala, and Constance Hull

Film & Videos



[Jim Crow Juvenile Justice](#)
[They Call Us Monsters](#)

Audio



[Caught: The Lives of Juvenile Justice](#)

Website



[Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice](#)

Related Topic



[superpredator myth](#)



PAUL HANCOCK, HANNAH WILKINSON AND VICTOR CHAVEZ STAND IN FRONT OF BASKETBALL HOOPS OUTSIDE OF THE LOFT, ST. JOHNS, ARIZONA. PHOTO BY AMY MARTIN.

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