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# Are (Juvenile) Prisons Obsolete?: The ‘American’ Criminalization of our Youth

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## [The Future is Light](#)

[Click link] This shared Spotify playlist serves as a soundtrack to this article; it allows readers to read, share, and celebrate expressive music and audio. As a mini project, I have asked family, friends, peers, classmates, community members, locally and abroad, for song and audio suggestions. “The Future is Light” compiles podcasts and music from multiple genres including rap, R&B/soul, gospel, pop, Caribbean/Reggae that express the vigor and sentiments that stem from the uprisings against racial and police violence in America 2020. The playlist also gives ‘space’ for young individuals to share old and new music and overall inspire them for a restorative and ‘lighter’ future. Many of the songs hold thematic messages of revolution and express the value of younger generations in the fight against oppressive Western/American values. Additionally, many of the songs speak specifically about the Black experience and the notions of ‘freedom’ in the Black community. Being young in America becomes exceptional as we see many young individuals, activists, students, and more become connected through the American experiences, both positive and negative. Therefore, as this paper critiques and questions measures of juvenile delinquency for American youths, the playlist complements the work and gives a positive

and inspirational message to all readers, especially the younger generation.

## **Introduction**

A 17-year-old girl and an adult female, separately, enter the gas station past midnight. A police officer follows them in shortly, addressing one of them. Someone has committed a crime. Can you guess who and what crime? This is not a set up to a stand-up joke or riddle, rather the reality of low-offending young persons under the American juvenile justice system.

Prisons are inadequate and obsolete. Angela Davis has illustrated this notion through the racist, sexist and overall oppressive underpinnings of the American criminal justice system while asking readers to imagine a world with rehabilitation and healing versus imprisonment. When young individuals would rather be subjected to the dangers of war by joining military service to avoid imprisonment, what does that say about the American criminal justice system?<sup>1</sup> The American criminalization process is a unique practice that typically impacts marginalized communities, and this is evident in the courts and even in schools. Davis posits that schools are the most powerful alternative to jails and prisons, and while an educational setting is an appropriate approach for rehabilitation, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Angela, Y. Davis, (2010). *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press.

imperative to examine and critique how the American institution has also perpetuated the criminalization and incarceration of young boys and girls. In other words, juvenile delinquency has been defined by institutions built or structured on systemic oppression.

### **What is “Delinquency”?**

Delinquency encompasses a range of criminal offense behaviors which are subject to legislative and administration changes over time. Acts such as alcohol consumption and school disciplinary offenses in young people are tolerated in varying degrees globally, sometimes with historical and cultural factors being the main contributors as to who and what offense(s) is/are targeted in the respective jurisdictions and how justice is served.

In the U.S, status offenses are noncriminal acts that are considered a law violation due to the youth’s status as a minor; the behavior would be permissible for adults but criminalized for children. Primary examples of status offenses include truancy, running away, curfew violation, alcohol consumption, and ungovernability (the inability for the parents to ‘govern’), and the consequences/punishments vary across states’ jurisdictions. According to the Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the most recent 2015 data shows that nearly a quarter of ~48,000 juveniles held in facilities were confined for status offense of technical violations, meaning that at least 10,000 young individuals were detained due to their age

status.<sup>2</sup> Prior to the 2014 legislation change in Kentucky for example, the state’s juvenile justice system aggressively prosecuted and detained nearly 800 minors for breaking curfew or underage drinking as a means to deter crime. Practices such as valid court order exceptions enable courts to incarcerate status-offending juveniles for violating court orders.<sup>3</sup> The American judicial system has displayed a trend of criminalizing specific behaviors especially when regarding minors. Thus, the contentious questions are how and why does the US juvenile justice system criminalize specific acts committed by minors? Are juvenile prisons obsolete? What is a rehabilitative alternative to confinement?

The definition of ‘juvenile delinquency’ under the American context is obsolete as it originates from and encapsulates oppressive historical and social contexts. Children are detained from homes, family and community support as the juvenile court system implements punitive and controlling policies on nonviolent crimes and status offenses. Through judicial decisions, legislative amendments and administrative changes, the juvenile court transformed from a nominally ‘rehabilitative’ social welfare agency to a dehumanizing inferior criminal court for the young. The juvenile justice system is failing

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<sup>2</sup> Juveniles in Custody for Non Criminal Acts. (n.d.). Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/data-visualizations/2018/juveniles-in-custody-for-noncriminal-acts>

<sup>3</sup> Corley, C. (2019, July 31). Kentucky’s Turnaround On Prosecuting Minors For ‘Status Offenses’ Like Truancy. Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://www.npr.org/2019/07/31/746855303/kentuckys-turnaround-on-prosecuting-minors-for-status-offenses-like-truancy>

the youth in the United States as it is wrought with racial and class disparities, operates in inhumane capacities and fails to directly empower and reform the affected youth. The use of secure detention exposes troubled youth to an environment that resembles adult prisons and jails, rather than provide the necessary support and rehabilitation. Therefore, juvenile detention centers are not only obsolete, but these institutions were never necessary as they permeate oppressive and punitive ideals, and the institutions overall fail to reform the most vulnerable and affected youth.

### **Juvenile Delinquency and the Effects of Incarceration**

'Juvenile delinquency' is a commonly known term in the justice system and academic literature referring to a young person who has committed a criminal offense, and its precise definition varies based on the local jurisdiction. While there remains a lack of agreed international standards regarding what constitutes delinquency, the United Nations General Assembly Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice, also known as the Beijing Rules, is a resolution adopted in November 1985 that defines juvenile as a "young person who under the respective legal systems may be dealt with an offense in a manner which is different from an adult".<sup>4</sup> The minimum age of criminal responsibility varies internationally between ages 6 and 18 years with 18 years being the

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the ... - OHCHR. (n.d.). Retrieved November 28, 2020, from <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/beijingrules.pdf>

maximum age of criminal responsibility. Thus, a distinct court system was established with the goal of serving and aiding juvenile offenders by implementing rehabilitative aid that would differ from adult courts. Through exploring the American concept of juvenile delinquency, we can also examine how the US justice system along with various institutions administer punishment versus rehabilitation and how the concept of 'control' plays a role in the juvenile court system.

Generally, incarceration has detrimental effects on the incarcerated physical and mental health, economic and social status, and the family and surrounding community relationship. Similar to adult offenders, incarcerated youth are subjected to the concept of 'social death.'<sup>5</sup> As prisons alienate adults from their families and society, and subject them to humiliation and systemic violence, juvenile facilities administer similar treatment although to a more vulnerable group; incarcerated children and adolescents are condemned to social death. So if imprisonment is considered detrimental to adult offenders, why would the justice system subject children to a similar environment? The youth are even more vulnerable as their early experience of incarceration can transition into their adulthood, well beyond their time in the juvenile justice system. Instead of being surrounded by supportive members of the community, the youth who is guilty of delinquency is casted away into restrictive and secure detention centers that negatively impact their health and status; and

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<sup>5</sup> Joshua M Price, *Prison and Social Death* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015)

in most cases the family members support the decision as they hope it will teach the youth a lesson on good behavior.<sup>6</sup> Instead of judges and prosecutors of the juvenile justice system working to provide restorative justice through communal support, a punitive system is imposed for these young individuals, believing that detainment will induce good behavior. Moreover, the process of incarcerating youth will likely reduce their ability to remain in the workforce and their educational attainment.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, incarceration does not deter crime. The act of incarcerating youth may facilitate increased crime and violence by aggravating the recidivism of the detained youth. Studies show that long-term incarceration does not reduce the likelihood that serious young offenders will reoffend.<sup>8</sup> Extensive stays in detention facilities for lower-level offenders will increase reoffending rates following institutional placement.

In addition to increased rates of recidivism, as kids and adolescents become more immersed in the criminal justice system and diverge from prosocial development, incarceration might limit the opportunity to naturally age out of criminal behavior.<sup>9</sup> A study conducted by Lane et. al reported that many juveniles who were incarcerated felt

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Gordon. Attorney at the Legal Rights Center. 1611 Park Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55404

<sup>7</sup> Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg, "The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities - Justice Policy Institute," Justice Policy Institute, accessed December 10, 2019, <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/1978>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ian Lambie, Isabel Randell, The Impact of Incarceration on Juvenile Offenders, *Clinical Psychology Review*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 2013, Pages 448-459, ISSN 0272-7358, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.01.007>.

their childhood aspirations and goals were taken away from them, which can interfere with the development of a positive lifestyle. Young kids and adolescents are being removed from families and supportive communities and placed in a highly structured and confining environment. These high structure settings remove decision-making opportunities, which are essential to the youth's agency and overall development, thus making it more difficult for young offenders to grow out of criminal behavior. Another major impact is the exacerbation of mental health issues for young offenders, and the prevalence of behavioral and emotional problems.<sup>10</sup> Stressors during incarceration such as bullying, the physical and sexual victimization of young inmates, and isolation contribute to the adverse effects on a young person's self and self-concept. The mental health problems are not addressed within these institutions and the mental health services that do exist within the juvenile justice system are not well integrated or well equipped to cope with preexisting or exacerbated mental health issues.

### **Historical and Social Conditions of 'Juvenile Delinquency'**

To explore the question of the obsolescence of juvenile courts, we must first understand the historical and social contexts of the current American juvenile systems and institutions. In the late 1700s, prior to an established justice system, it was the family's responsibility to 'control' their children,

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

commonly by placing the troubled youth with another family as an indentured servant. This was a form of social and institutional control and directly affected youth from impoverished communities.<sup>11</sup> In this case, behavior from impoverished and neglected children were vulnerable to being categorized as juvenile delinquency. As the upper-class ruled, many of the youth in poverty were viewed as delinquent and were exploited for labor thus subjected to an oppressive society. The indentured servitude relatively benefitted the upper class while punishing and failing to reform the vulnerable youth. With the lack of Child Labor Laws during the period, poor children from European descended families became exploited laborers and casted away from their homes along with other children of color.

The first system that ‘reformed’ troubled youth was the use of almshouses and houses of refuge.<sup>12</sup> During colonial times, almshouses were one-room buildings that housed different “troubled” individuals, including children. It became an alternative if a family is unable to care for a troubled youth. This period marked the beginning of a trend where youth who needed support through the community are being cast away and detained. Houses of refuge emerged in the 1800s with the goal to discontinue the use of adult jails and almshouses to help the troubled youth.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher A. Mallett and Miyuki Fukushima Tedor, *Juvenile Delinquency: Pathways and Prevention* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2019))

<sup>12</sup> Robert Hamlett. Bremner, *Children and Youth in America: A Documentary History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

<sup>13</sup> Christopher A. Mallett and Miyuki Fukushima Tedor, *Juvenile Delinquency: Pathways and Prevention*

However, they did the opposite. Houses of refuge became popular institutions in which wealthy conservatives placed a growing impoverished class in out of fear of social unrest, These facilities housed and grouped many young people such as the delinquent, neglected, orphaned or independent, where they suffered through a punitive environment and solitary confinement. Reform schools emerged in the 1850s in hopes that they would be an improvement from houses of refuge.<sup>14</sup> Like the house of refuge, reform schools became punitive institutions for the vulnerable. Racial biases led to a spike of white children and adolescents in houses of refuge and reform schools, while Black, Native American and Latinx children and adolescents were confined in adult jails and prisons. The adultification of youths of color is a historical phenomenon that results in the disenfranchisement of vulnerable communities. Criminality and justice were based on race. By the end of the nineteenth century, in response to the increase in neglected, dependent, and delinquent youth, the juvenile court system was created to have jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to the youth. They attempted to perform in the best interest of the child’s welfare; however, they ultimately failed after juvenile delinquency rocketed in the nation. Vulnerable children became institutionalized and confined into detention centers. The juvenile court system has historically derived from oppressive and racist values. Instead of receiving support and effective rehabilitation through the juvenile court system, the delinquent and vulnerable

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid

youth became an outcast, was punished, humiliated and confined by an oppressive, high-class White-centered society.

### *Race, Gender, and Delinquent Behavior*

In addition to the historical factors, social factors such as race and gender play a role in what constitutes delinquent behavior. Youths of color are criminalized at a heavier rate than White youth; thus, they are more vulnerable to being subjected to systemic violence. Historically, since the juvenile justice system's origination, minority youth have been disproportionately represented in juvenile courts. 43% of boys and 34% of girls in juvenile facilities are Black; 3% of girls and 1.5% of boys in juvenile facilities are Native American.<sup>15</sup> America being built on the foundation of white supremacy creates a racialized system that punishes Black and Brown boys and girls. Racialized social control has deep roots in American history beginning with the institution of slavery and punishment to modern day policing and surveillance. Oppressive police practices and punitive crime legislation contribute to the disproportionate representation of youth of color in the juvenile justice system. Police practices that patrol and target low-income urban communities and the 1990s "tough on crime" laws contributed to the increase of minority youth infiltrated in the justice system. Many states enacted policies that criminalized and moved youth from juvenile court to adult court, exposing the youth to

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<sup>15</sup> W., Sawyer, (n.d.). Youth Confinement: The Whole Pie 2019. Retrieved December 7, 2020, from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/youth2019.html>

the dangers and abuse of the carceral system. A powerful label such as "superpredators" from political figure, Hillary Clinton, and the mass media of impoverished Black and Brown communities that ensued, displayed the government's initiatives for punishment over rehabilitation and the racialization of crime.<sup>16</sup> Juvenile delinquency continues to be viewed as a force needed to be controlled socially and institutionally. Differential rates of poverty and social conditions are one of the main contributors to the levels of racial disparity seen in the justice system with youth of color more likely to live in less advantaged environments. This leads to the issue of whether the common juvenile nonviolent crimes or status offenses that are committed are indications of survival such as theft or staying past curfew. Without understanding the social contexts and racialization of the American justice system, the courts continue to punish and detain youth from underprivileged communities and criminalize Black and Brown youth.

Young girls are also vulnerable to the juvenile justice system. Girls who enter the system range from as young as 11 to 18 years old. In 2009, girls accounted for almost 50% of all status offense cases petitioned to the court, compared to 28% of all delinquency cases.<sup>17</sup> The differential and disproportionate treatment girls receive from the courts stem

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<sup>16</sup> Anne Gearan, A. (2019, April 28). Clinton Regrets 1996 Remark on 'Super-Predators' After Encounter with Activist. Retrieved December 5, 2020, from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/02/25/clinton-heckled-by-black-lives-matter-activist/>

<sup>17</sup> Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. (n.d.). Retrieved December 14, 2020, from <https://juvjustice.org/our-work/girls>

from the socialization and paternalistic attitude of girls within American society. For example, behaviors that are both common in adult men and young boys such as using profane language, are viewed as delinquent behavior from girls and thus the system puts girls at greater risk of being adjudicated. Western societal institutions such as school, the home, the church etc. push girls into the juvenile justice system in an attempt to reinforce gender norms, while the needs, attitudes and identities of young girls are dismissed and/or criminalized. Young girls are socialized to behave a certain way and inadvertently continue the perpetuation of American oppressive systems, practices, and control; any form of deviance is viewed as a threat to the power and status quo of American patriarchy and social control. Black girls are 20% more likely to be detained than White girls their age, while American Indian girls are 50% more likely to be detained.<sup>18</sup> Nearly 90% of the young girls who enter the system are victims of abuse and neglect (physical, emotional, and sexual) from either family or community members.<sup>19</sup> Based on evidence of juvenile detainment and racial group makeup, it's not surprising that girls of color face a double jeopardy of punishment due to their intersectionality. For girls who are survivors of abuse and trauma, running away or truancy is more of an act of self-preservation and survival more than

delinquency and a need for detainment according to the court's stance. This leads to a retainment of trauma that has not been addressed coupled with the administration of unjust punishment. These young girls are confined and demonized rather than receiving proper assistance and treatment.

It's imperative to recognize how the court system identifies who needs to be rehabilitated and who needs to be controlled-- those who are more vulnerable face more punishment than the advantaged.

### **The Link between Schools and the Prison System**

Another mechanism the juvenile court system uses to constitute delinquency is the education system. Being one of the first institutions a child is subjected to, the school operates in a manner that both contrasts and mirrors the institutions of independent adults. For instance, schools have their own norms, procedures, and modes of discipline if certain expectations are not followed or the 'social contract' is violated. A school's social contract is typically agreed upon by teachers and students within the classroom and enforced by teachers, parents, administrators, school staff/officers and other adult professionals who either deliberately or inadvertently criminalize specific youth behavior. American school disciplinary policies such as the Zero Tolerance Policy and school police presence show the link between the juvenile justice court system and the education system and how both institutions are oppressively similar in defining delinquency. Schools administrators and teachers have been active

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<sup>18</sup> W., Sawyer, (n.d.). Youth Confinement: The Whole Pie 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Katie Thompson, "Hidden from View: The Plight of Girls in Juvenile Detention," Shared Justice (Shared Justice, October 20, 2016), <http://www.sharedjustice.org/domestic-justice/2016/10/20/hidden-from-view-the-plight-of-girls-in-juvenile-detention>)

referral sources for status offense petitions brought against the youth, many of the offenses including truancy and/or ungovernability.<sup>20</sup> The underfunding, lack of mental health support and staff, increased school police surveillance, racist and sexist school environment, and the lack of skilled and compensated teachers in American public schools reflect the neoliberal austerity measures of the overall society.

In the guise of doing good, multiple American institutions have done harm to the youth and their development. Instead of referring to or providing physical and mental health services thus aiding in the positive development of the youth, the public education system plays a role in the mass incarceration of American individuals and the institutionalization and confinement of youth.

### **What Do We Need?**

Even though juvenile crime has been declining since the late 1990s, the legacy of legislation, administration changes, oppressive social wealth gaps and institutionalization has led to the ingrained images and practices of criminalized youth and distorted definition of 'delinquency'. Consequently, the current failure of juvenile detainment stems from flaws of the juvenile court system and its emphasis on control and confinement. These institutions are devoid of

the essentials for healthy youth and adolescent development such as models for prosocial behavior, communication and problem-solving skills, and developing decision-making and critical thinking skills.

Additionally, youth incarceration was found to be the least cost-effective approach to recidivism, while alternate approaches such as mentoring and multisystemic therapy are more constructive and cost-effective.<sup>21</sup> Alternatives to juvenile confinement and detention include house arrest, shelter care or group homes, and day or evening community-based treatments that provide cost-effective and adequate care, attention, and edification.

In Florida, my home state, juvenile justice approaches have ranged from detention to court diversion programs and alternatives. For example, AMIKids is a non-profit day treatment program based in cities throughout Florida that serves both boys and girls deemed 'delinquent' by the court for misdemeanors or minor offenses. They provide services based on their research-driven approach titled the Personal Growth Model; these services include academic and extracurricular education, behavior modification using positive reinforcement, and a treatment component which encapsulates therapy for both youth and families.<sup>22</sup> AMIKids has been recognized by both the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the U.S.

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<sup>20</sup> GIRLS, STATUS OFFENSES AND THE NEED FOR A LESS PUNITIVE AND MORE EMPOWERING APPROACH. Coalition for Juvenile Justice: SOS Project (Fall 2013). <https://juvjustice.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/SOS%20Project%20-%20Girls,%20Status%20Offenses%20and%20the%20Need%20for%20a%20Less%20Punitive%20and%20More%20Empowering%20Approach.pdf> Retrieved November 20, 2020.

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<sup>21</sup> Ian Lambie, Isabel Randell, The Impact of Incarceration on Juvenile Offenders, Clinical Psychology Review  
<sup>22</sup> AMIKids Programs and Services. (n.d.). Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <http://www.amikids.org/about-ami-kids/our-story>

Department of Justice for their holistic and strength-based approaches that help with the wellbeing of at risk youth. This program encapsulates many of the qualities necessary for a youth development program and keeps low and at-risk youth from detainment. Vulnerable youth should be provided with these educational and developmental opportunities instead of confinement as detention centers are not deterrence from crime.

There is a growing need for development programs that counteract the impact of negative peer influences, violence, feelings of isolation and negative images in television media and music for marginalized youth. There is a need for youth programs and alternatives to juvenile detention that work to develop prosocial behaviors and attitudes in youth that lead to critical thinking and responsible decision making. The principles for effective and rehabilitative treatment should focus on the level of risk posed by the offender and ensure it matches the level of intensity of the treatment. In other words, is it necessary to *imprison* youth for being out in public later than 11 pm?<sup>23</sup> What are the alternatives for children and adolescents who break curfew? Moreover, the treatment should be rehabilitative in nature and should match the young person's learning style and identity-based experiences. Research shows that community based programs that use evidence-based practices such as cognitive behavior and social learning approaches also

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<sup>23</sup> Juvenile Curfew Laws: The Basics. (2019, January 17). Retrieved December 9, 2020, from <https://criminal.findlaw.com/criminal-charges/juvenile-curfew-laws-the-basics.html>

incorporate the principles and tools of effective treatment such as mental health and substance abuse services.<sup>24</sup> Family-centered and community-based intervention programs are comprehensive approaches to bridging 'identity' with Western institutions such as the justice and education system. The programs view youths as whole individuals who need both guidance and agency, rather than need to be controlled.

### *'Lil Light of Mine'*

#### *Program Proposal Sample*

Community-based intervention programs would also serve as support systems for young offenders as changes in family factors and negative peer association can hinder treatment. Therefore, I propose the following program or components to be implemented through an existing educational program that caters to youth and their positive prosocial development. This program will be based in my hometown Miami, FL and will focus on the five Social and Emotional Learning Competencies 1) self-awareness, 2) self-management 3) social awareness 4) relationship skills and 5) responsible decision-making:<sup>25</sup>

*Lil' Light of Mine* is a non-profit after-school social, emotional, and

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<sup>24</sup> Lambie, Ian, Isabel Randell, The impact of incarceration on juvenile offenders, *Clinical Psychology Review*, Volume 33, Issue 3, 2013, Pages 448-459, ISSN 0272-7358, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2013.01.007>. (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027273581300010X>)

<sup>25</sup> SEL: What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where are they Promoted? (n.d.). Retrieved December 01, 2020, from <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>

behavioral learning program that is catered for low income 6th-8th grade students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida. Students will have the option of meeting in person or virtually to participate in practices that benefit their social and emotional well-being. The programs will focus on self-regulation skills, skills to build and maintain positive relationships, and decision-making skills. Students in *Lil' Light of Mine* will develop the traits and skills to recognize and manage their emotions, become active listeners and well-balanced critical thinkers.

According to a national survey of 148,189 sixth to twelfth graders, only 29%–45% of surveyed students reported that they had social competencies such as empathy, decision making, and conflict resolution skills, and only 29% indicated that their school provided a caring, encouraging environment.<sup>26</sup> There seems to be a disconnect with SEL for students who transition to high school, thus lacking the necessary skills to be socially and emotionally intelligent. Therefore, this program targets these specific students and instills the proper skills to improve behavior, attitude and academic performance.

The several practices that will be implemented within the program to

help students develop social and emotional learning skills include:

Self-Identity: The Self Identification is a student-led practice that builds upon the foundational competencies of self-awareness where students will be able to identify and communicate either social identities to themselves or with their peers. This practice promotes equity as students from all diverse backgrounds are able to self identify and share aspects of their lives with one another. This practice also builds upon relationships skills as students learn how to communicate and listen actively, while program educators monitor.

Additionally, this practice will foster an identity safe environment for students of all backgrounds. The Stanford Integrated Schools Project reported that identity safe classrooms lead to academic achievement such as higher standardized test scores, a sense of belonging, and setting realistic goals.<sup>27</sup> Using diversity for a resource of learning, the students will learn respect for others and how to collaborate as a community.

Mindfulness/Meditation: Mindfulness Practice will be led by a meditation

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<sup>26</sup> Durlak, Joseph & Weissberg, Roger & Dymnicki, Allison & Taylor, Rebecca & Schellinger, Kriston. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions. *Child development*. 82. 405-32. 10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x.

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<sup>27</sup> Cohn-Vargas, B., & Steele, D. (2015, October 21). Creating an Identity-Safe Classroom. Retrieved October 20, 2020, from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/creating-an-identity-safe-classroom-becki-cohn-vargas-dorothy-steele>

teacher/expert that provides these students with one healthy practice to regulate their emotions and effectively manage stress. As Self Awareness plays a central role in the ability of self-management, students are taught how to identify and manage their emotions and thoughts all while motivating oneself.

Peer Mediation: Students will be able to resolve conflicts amongst themselves through peer mediation. This practice builds upon the ability to develop positive and healthy relationships and teaches students how to communicate their needs and negotiate conflict constructively. Peer Mediation also promotes problem solving and conflict resolution skills that build upon making responsible and ethical decisions.

### **Conclusion**

Obviously, there are some concerns regarding the abolition of prisons and the ability to rehabilitate serious young offenders and reoffenders. We demand a balance between public safety and rehabilitation for serious offenders where restorative justice approaches are used in a community-supportive environment. Evidently, imprisonment is not a deterrence for crime and does more harm than good, especially for young individuals. The US needs to evaluate the definition of ‘delinquency’ for youths, as its oppressive origin continues to harm youth from marginalized communities and subject vulnerable individuals to

punishment instead of help. Children need identity, support and love from family and/or surrounding community members. The detainment of the low-offending youth through juvenile facilities promotes historically and socially oppressive ideals all while failing to reform the vulnerable youth. Juvenile delinquent behavior is defined by the social, economic, and political climate of the nation; the criminalization and incarceration of youths in America is dependent on an already oppressive system. Hopefully, we will see the insurgence of preventive at-risk youth programs, the decrease in juvenile detention and the overall growth of independent well-balanced responsible citizens. In addition to resolving the issue of juvenile detainment, the US must reevaluate their standing on juvenile delinquency as it holds historical and oppressive precedents. Young Black and Brown boys and girls suffer adverse consequences when criminalized by both the justice system and the education system and are exposed to an environment that fails to consider their development status and criminogenic needs. Angela Davis imagined a world without prisons. Nas and Lauryn Hill imagined that “if they ruled the world, they’d free all of their sons” [and daughters]. Now, we imagine a world of restoration and healing beginning by keeping the light of the future generation aflame.

### **“The Future is Light”- Playlist**

1. “Alright”- Kendrick Lamar
2. “Optimistic” - Sounds of Blackness
3. “Stand” - Sounds of Blackness

4. "So This is Our Revolution" - Sonia Sanchez
5. "To Be Young, Gifted and Black" - Nina Simone
6. "Formation" - Beyoncé
7. "When the Revolution Comes" - The Last Poets
8. "On Becoming An Activist" - Angela Davis
9. "U.N.I.T.Y." - Queen Latifah
10. "If I Ruled the World (Imagine That)" - Nas, Ms. Lauryn Hill
11. "Real People" - Common
12. "A Change is Gonna Come" - Sam Cooke
13. "I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel" - Nina Simone
14. "Sunshine" - Pusha T, Jill Scott
15. "Soul Food" - Goodie Mob
16. "We The People" - A Tribe Called Quest
17. "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" - Nikki Giovanni
18. "Redemption Song" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
19. "Respect" - Aretha Franklin
20. "LAND OF THE FREE" - Joey Bada\$\$
21. "Keep Ya Head Up" - 2Pac
22. "Black Parade" - Beyoncé
23. "Ain't That Easy" - D'Angelo
24. "1000 Deaths" - D'Angelo
25. "The Charade" - D'Angelo
26. "Sugah Daddy" - D'Angelo
27. "Really Love" - D'Angelo
28. "Back to the Future (Part 1)" - D'Angelo
29. "Till It's Done (Tutu)" - D'Angelo
30. "Prayer" - D'Angelo
31. "Betray My Heart" - D'Angelo
32. "The Door" - D'Angelo
33. "Back to the Future (Part II)" - D'Angelo
34. "Another Life" - D'Angelo
35. "Institutionalized" - Kendrick Lamar, Bilal, Anna Wise, Snoop Dogg
36. "Hood Politics" - Kendrick Lamar
37. "The Blacker The Berry" - Kendrick Lamar
38. "How Much A Dollar Cost" - Kendrick Lamar, James Fauntleroy, Ronald Isley
39. "Do It" - Chloe x Halle
40. "The Kids Are Alright" - Chloe x Halle
41. "F.U.B.U." - Solange, The-Dream, BJ The Chicago Kid
42. "Blk Girl Soldier" - Jamila Woods
43. "FDT" - YG, Nipsey Hussle
44. "Weary" - Solange
45. "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised" - Gil Scott-Heron
46. "Get Up, Stand Up" - The Wailers
47. "Hills and Valleys" - Buju Banton
48. "Down With the Clique" - Solange
49. "BROWN SKIN GIRL" - Blue Ivy, SAINT JHN, Beyoncé, Wizkid
50. "War" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
51. "Fidel" - Zenglen
52. "Talkin' Bout a Revolution" - Tracy Chapman
53. "Hussle & Motivate" - Nipsey Hussle
54. "Grinding All My Life" - Nipsey Hussle
55. "Ex- Factor" - Ms. Lauryn Hill
56. "A Long Walk" - Jill Scott
57. "Golden" - Jill Scott
58. "Soul Sista" - Bilal
59. "Spiritual Thang" - Eric Benét
60. "Hey Young World" - Fashawn, Aloe Blacc
61. "Rise Up" - Andra Day
62. "Never Break" - John Legend

63. "So Much Trouble In The World" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
64. "Sun is Shining" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
65. "So Much Things To Say" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
66. "One Love/People Get Ready" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
67. "Concrete Jungle" - Bob Marley & The Wailers
68. "Lift Every Voice And Sing" - Bebe Winans
69. "Liberation" - OutKast, CeeLo Green
70. "Love's in Need of Love Today" - Stevie Wonder
71. "Africa" - D'Angelo
72. "Mad" - Solange, Lil Wayne
73. "Cranes in the Sky" - Solange
74. "American Oxygen" - Rihanna
75. "ALREADY" - Beyoncé

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