



COMING SOON | REPORT

COMING SOON: Report on Black Girls' Experiences with Policing and Safety in Miami Schools, in Collaboration with NWLC and SPLC

"I think school safety for me... goes two ways. One is like physical safety as in like not being afraid of being bodily hurt in school and then an emotional safety, like having a safety net with the teachers, administrators, and overall the school itself, where you feel comfortable to be a person." – A.F., former Miami-Dade County Public School (M-DCPS) student

The experiences of Black girls are rarely centered in conversations about school safety.

Black girls encounter specific barriers, stereotypes, and harms based on their race and gender, in addition to their various other identities, such as LGBTQI+ status or disability. In schools, Black girls far too often have to learn in environments that are not affirming or supportive of their identities. Instead, they are subjected to school policies that were developed without their input and make school settings less safe for them. This is especially true with school policing and other school hardening policies.

In our forthcoming report, the National Women's Law Center, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and youth co-authors uplift the perspectives of Black girls and young women from Miami-Dade County Public Schools on school policing and what they say school safety means to them.

School climates that criminalize and surveil young people in the name of keeping students “safe” and in class are harming Black girls in Miami. The girls and young women told us their experiences include:

- Surveillance, body-policing, and harassment by security guards and school-based police officers;
- Lost class time and public humiliation caused by on-campus police and K-9 searches;
- Invasive bathroom-policing and restrictions;
- Prison-like exclusionary discipline; and
- Lack of trust in school administrators to believe and resolve reports of sexual harassment and assault.

“...I just feel like they’re just waiting for us to make one small, minor mistake, and they’re ready to arrest us because like, I’ve only seen my school resource officers... arrest students... It makes us not want to go to school because we feel like we can’t make one minor mistake or just have one off day. And we can go from a perfect straight-A student to now, what do they call, a ‘juvenile.’” – D.B., M-DCPS student

Instead, the girls featured in this report offer a vision of holistic school safety, where schools invest in students’ psychological and emotional safety in addition to their physical safety, and students feel included and affirmed.

“I would define safety at school as having a community that you feel comfortable speaking out to... that they’re asking what makes you comfortable, that they’re reaching out to make sure that they’re making you feel comfortable. Feeling that you can move freely throughout the space.” – P.J., former M-DCPS student

Our report will demonstrate how critical insights can come from centering Black girls in the school safety conversation. With Black girls’ educations and livelihoods at stake, it is essential that school leaders and policymakers talk to Black girls and incorporate a diversity of perspectives to create safe, inclusive, and affirming schools for all students.