



SEXUALIZATION NOT SAFETY:

Black Girls, Trans and Gender Nonconforming

Youth's Experiences of Police Presence in Schools

IC INTERRUPTING
CRIMINALIZATION

in our names
NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence by law enforcement officials is a systemic and pervasive issue – it is reported to be the second most frequent subject of complaints about police after use of force.¹ An analysis of over 700 cases over a 10-year period found that a cop is caught in an act of sexual violence every five days on average and concluded that “Out of the many sexual misconduct acts law officials were caught in, more than 70% of cases involved motorists, crime victims, informants, students and young people in job-shadowing programs.”² A comprehensive review of police arrest data found that a quarter to half of reported instances of police sexual violence involve people under the age of 18³ and often take place in the context of police-youth engagement programs.⁴ Twelve to 20% of young people in heavily policed neighborhoods in New York City report sexual harassment by officers,⁵ while 40% of young women of color in one study recounted unwanted sexual attention from police.⁶ These figures likely represent a gross underestimate of the prevalence of police sexual violence given that they are based on media

reports, arrest data, and self-reports – which depend on a survivor coming forward, being believed, and their story being deemed worthy of being reported or prosecuted.⁷ According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, two-thirds of survivors of sexual violence do not report to anyone, and that proportion is likely much greater when the sexual violence is perpetrated by police – the very people we are told to report it to.⁸ Given that some sources suggest that police commit sexual assaults at more than double the rate of the general population,⁹ what we know about police sexual violence is likely just “the tip of the iceberg.”

Schools are an often-overlooked site of police sexual violence – even though, according to recently released data from the Advancement Project and Alliance for Educational Justice, from 2011 to 2023, the third most frequent type of assault of students by police stationed in and around schools was *sexual assault* – representing over 13% of documented cases of police violence against students.¹⁰ In the 2022–2023 school year, sexual assault was the *second most frequent type*

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- 1 Andrea Ritchie, “Shrouded in Silence: Police Sexual Violence: What We Know & What Can We Do About It,” *Interrupting Criminalization*, 2022, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee39ec764dbd7179cf1243c/t/609b0bb8fc3271012c4a93c5/1620773852750/Shroud-ed+in+Silence.pdf>.
 - 2 Matthew Spina, “When a Protector Becomes a Predator,” *The Buffalo News*, November 22, 2015, <https://s3.amazonaws.com/bncore/projects/abusing-the-law/index.html>.
 - 3 Philip Matthew Stinson, Sr., John Liederbach, Steven L. Brewer, Jr., and Brooke E. Mathna, “Police Sexual Misconduct: A National Scale Study of Arrested Officers,” *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 26, no. 7 (2015): 665–690, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887403414526231>.
 - 4 Samuel Walker and Dawn M. Irlbeck, “Police Sexual Abuse of Teenage Girls: A 2003 Update on ‘Driving While Female,’” University of Nebraska at Omaha, 2003, <https://samuelwalker.net/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/dwf2003.pdf>.
 - 5 Johanna Miller and Simon McCormack, “Shattered: The Continuing, Damaging, and Disparate Legacy of Broken Windows Policing in New York City,” New York Civil Liberties Union, 2018, https://www.nyclu.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/nyclu_20180919_shattered_web.pdf; Brett G. Stoudt, Michelle Fine, and Madeline Fox, “Growing Up Policed in the Age of Aggressive Policing Policies,” *New York Law School Law Review* 56, no. 4 (2011): 1331, https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_pubs/588/.
 - 6 Michelle Fine, Nick Freudenberg, Yasser Payne, Tiffany Perkins, Kersha Smith, and Katya Wanzer, “‘Anything Can Happen with Police Around’: Urban Youth Evaluate Strategies of Surveillance in Public Places,” *Journal of Social Issues* 59(1) (2003): 141–58, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-4560.t01-1-00009>.
 - 7 Ritchie, “Shrouded in Silence.”
 - 8 Ritchie, “Shrouded in Silence.”
 - 9 Molly Smith and Juno Mac, *Revolted Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers’ Right* (London: Verso Books, 2018).
 - 10 Tyler Whittenberg, Russell Skiba, Britany Beauchesne, and Angela Groves, “#AssaultAtSpringValley: An Analysis of Police Violence against Black and Latine Students in Public Schools,” Advancement Project and Alliance for Educational Justice, 2022, <https://advancementproject.org/resources/assaultatreport/>.

of assault, representing a quarter of reported incidents of violence by police against students.¹¹ What follows are just two examples of documented cases from the report.

● September 2022 |

#AssaultAtKIPPNavigateCollegePrep (San Jose, CA) – A former KIPP Navigate College Prep school resource officer was arrested for sexually assaulting a young girl. It was discovered that the school resource officer sent multiple inappropriate text messages and sexually assaulted the minor on several occasions. The survivor confirmed the assaults in an interview with the San Jose Police Department.

● April 2023 | **#AssaultAtNewBern** (New Bern, NC) – A former deputy sheriff with the Craven County Sheriff's Office was arrested for felony sex act with a student and felony indecent liberties with a student for actions committed while he was a school resource officer at New Bern High School. The mother of the student was very saddened and expressed concerns about how this assault will impact her daughter psychologically for the rest of her life.¹²

Despite this growing evidence of systemic police sexual violence targeting young people, the voices of Black young women, girls, and trans and gender non-conforming youth who experience or witness sexualization, sexual harassment, and sexual assaults by law enforcement agents are rarely heard. There are many reasons this is the case. For one, discussing sexual violence is difficult to begin with. In fact, most adults avoid discussing it at all, making it all the more difficult for young people to identify and report when they experience sexual violence. Despite the recent

increase in public awareness thanks to the “me, too.” movement and #MeToo, conversations about any kind of sexual harassment and violence remain highly stigmatized. It is even more difficult to talk about sexual violence by law enforcement given that police are promoted as protectors against sexual violence rather than recognized as perpetrators of it. Discussing police sexual violence *in schools* is even more difficult because police presence has been framed as essential to maintaining school safety, including when it comes to sexual harassment and violence against and among students. Additionally, conversations about police violence focus on fatal and physical violence and rarely reference sexual violence. As a result, survivors of sexual violence by police often feel that there is no one they can turn to, and police sexual violence is often illegible to sexual assault advocates and organizers.

The sobering truth is that police do not keep Black young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth safe from any type of violence, especially sexual violence.¹³ In fact, increased police presence in schools contributes to more violence of all kinds against students, teachers, and administrators, including sexual harassment, assault, and violence. According to the recent Advancement Project and Alliance for Educational Justice report:

Rather than make schools safer, research demonstrates that school police negatively impact school climate and student safety, do not avert school shootings, and do not prevent deaths or injuries when there is an active shooter.¹⁴

11 Whittenberg et al., “#AssaultAtSpringValley.”

12 Whittenberg et al., “#AssaultAtSpringValley.”

13 See e.g., Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie, *No More Police: A Case for Abolition* (New York: The New Press, 2022); Andrea J. Ritchie, *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017).

14 Whittenberg et al., “#AssaultAtSpringValley.”

The presence of law enforcement on and around school campuses is associated with increased profiling, police violence, and criminalization of students.¹⁵ This is particularly true for Black girls, who make up 16% of girls in schools, yet 37% of girls arrested in school and 43% of girls referred to law enforcement.¹⁶ Black girls as young as five or six have been arrested for “inappropriate behavior” in the classroom.¹⁷ The Advancement Project and Alliance for Educational Justice summarize existing research as follows: “Black girls are four times more likely than their white peers to be arrested, three times more likely to be referred to police, and two times more likely to be physically restrained.”¹⁸ Data independently gathered by AP and AEJ found that Black girls make up nearly a third of all police assaults at schools.¹⁹

The experiences of the young people we spoke with in the course of our research were unfortunately consistent with statistics summarized above. Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth described feeling unsafe, surveilled, and sexualized in schools due to the presence of police, school resource officers (SROs), and other law enforcement agents.

Overall, our research found that:

- Schools are sites of violence, sexualization, sexual harassment, and sexual assault by police and other authority figures.
- Police don’t create safety for Black young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth in schools.
- Survivors of police sexual violence need specific forms of support.

Based on these findings, we offer the following policy and process recommendations:

- Support campaigns for #PoliceFreeSchools to increase safety for Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming students.
- Ensure access to comprehensive sex education that normalizes conversations about consent and sexual violence, including sexual violence by law enforcement officers, to support prevention and create opportunities to make it easier for survivors to come forward and seek support.
- Create multiple pathways for coming forward to report sexual violence by law enforcement officers to protect students from stigmatization and retaliation and to ensure their immediate safety without educational or social repercussions.
- Engage youth in conversations and research on sexual violence by police stationed in and around schools, recognizing that it will require significant investments of time, resources, relationships, and healing justice support.

15 Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.

16 Ritchie, *Invisible No More*; Misha N. Inniss-Thompson, “Summary of Discipline Data for Girls in U.S. Public Schools: An Analysis from the 2015-2016 U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights Data Collection,” New York: National Black Women’s Justice Institute, October 2018, https://www.nbwji.org/_files/ugd/0c71ee_9506b355e3734ba791248c0f681f6d03.pdf.

17 See Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.; Monique Couvson [Morris], *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* (New York: The New Press, 2016).

18 Whittenberg et al., “#AssaultAtSpringValley.”

19 Whittenberg et al., “#AssaultAtSpringValley.”

While the scale and scope of our research was severely limited by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, our hope is that the research process and tools we developed through this project will inspire and serve as a resource for others to

engage in conversation and research with Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth on the prevalence and prevention of sexual violence by police stationed in and around schools.

WHAT IS POLICE SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

For the purposes of this study, we relied on existing research to define police sexual violence as:

any act taking advantage of police authority and power to engage in sexually harassing, degrading, discriminatory, violative or violent acts. It includes any sexual harassment, extortion, assault or violence perpetrated by law enforcement officers – whether on-duty or “off-duty” – facilitated by the power of the badge, police equipment (including service weapons and patrol cars), or access to information obtained by law enforcement.²⁰

Police sexual violence encompasses a broad range of behaviors including flirting with young people, commenting on their physical appearance, taking photographs, asking students for their phone numbers, conducting inappropriate and invasive searches, and extortion of sex and forcible sexual assault. The research literature emphasizes the importance of recognizing the full spectrum of police sexual violence in order to prevent and address its most serious forms.²¹

20 Ritchie, “Shrouded in Silence.”

21 Ritchie, “Shrouded in Silence.”

OUR GUIDING FRAMEWORKS

Our research was shaped by the guiding principles of the In Our Names Network – we are a Black feminist network of organizations and individuals working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people. We know that this requires an end to all systems of surveillance, policing, and punishment that intersect in our lives, and that we build relationships, skills, and structures that can prevent, heal, and transform violence of all kinds – in other words, that we work toward abolition of the prison-industrial complex (PIC). And we know that we need to care for ourselves and each other, and be transformed as we do this work through a healing justice framework.²²

What Is a Black Feminist Approach to Research?

Black feminist theory and practice served as the foundation for our project design, research methods, trainings, and practices; our healing justice spaces; and our analysis of research data.

A Black feminist framework takes as its starting point the experiences and expertise of Black women, girls, and trans people with the interlocking systems of oppression operating in our lives. Our analysis is shaped by Black women and trans and gender nonconforming people's specific experiences of racism, colonialism, imperialism, racial capitalism, ableism, cisheteropatriarchy, sexism, homophobia, and

Mission

In Our Names Network works to prevent and demand accountability for individual cases and systemic police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people. We do this by supporting and amplifying calls to action, resources, and local campaigns of network members and by leveraging our collective power through nationally networked campaigns to bring about systemic change.

Vision

We believe that safety from all forms of violence for Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people lies in a world without policing where all of our needs are met accessibly and abundantly; in which our communities are not just a place, but a way

Our members engage in visionary organizing aimed at dismantling systems of policing as they operate on Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people's bodies and life chances and build new ways of preventing, interrupting, and ending gender-based violence so that all Black women, girls, trans people, and gender nonconforming people can not only survive but thrive free from all forms of violence.

of being committed to violence prevention, intervention, healing, and transformative justice; and where we nurture a luscious imagination and live into the maintenance of safety, liberation, and freedom.

²² Cara Page and Erica Woodland, *Healing Justice Lineages: Dreaming at the Crossroads of Liberation, Collective Care, and Safety* (Berkeley, North Atlantic Books, 2023).

transphobia and the ways these systems of oppression are structured and upheld by policing and punishment. These interlocking oppressions form what Patricia Hill Collins and Beth Richie call an “overarching matrix of domination”²³ that Black women, girls, and trans people struggle within for the power to determine their own lives. This matrix is shaped and reinforced by widespread, entrenched, and pervasive stories and stereotypes about Black women – which Black feminists name as “controlling narratives” – that inform individual and institutional perceptions of and interactions with Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people.²⁴

In this study, we employed a Black feminist framework to think and learn about police sexual violence against Black girls and gender nonconforming youth in schools. In so doing, we drew on the existing Black feminist body of work on Black women, girls, and trans youth’s experiences of policing in schools, including Monique Couvson’s groundbreaking book *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools*;²⁵ Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jyothi Nanda, and Priscilla Ocen’s “Black Girls Matter” report;²⁶ and Andrea J. Ritchie’s *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*.²⁷

This body of work reveals that, instead of being places where Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth feel safe to learn, schools are often sites of multiple forms of violence

and punishment. In *Pushout*, Monique Couvson argues that Black girls’ schooling experiences are shaped and defined by harmful stereotypes about Black femininity and are constructed by a “hierarchy that favors [w]hite middle-class norms” of piety, docility, and obedience.²⁸ This normative femininity is constructed and premised on the exclusion of Black girls, women, and trans and gender nonconforming people – who are framed through stereotypes rooted in chattel slavery as inherently sexually promiscuous, deviant, violent, and dangerous – and controlling narratives that construct the only possibility for Black women and girls as “Mammy” – submissive caregivers without boundaries, limits, agency, or lives of their own. Similarly, Black girls experience “adultification” based on historic and present-day denial of Black childhood dating back to slavery’s forced child labor. As a result, police, teachers, and administrators are more likely to adultify and criminalize Black girls and gender nonconforming youth.²⁹ Couvson, Ritchie, and others demonstrate through a multitude of instances how these controlling narratives persist in present-day perceptions and treatment of Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth in schools, informing the ways in which teachers, administrators, police, security personnel, and other authority figures interact with Black girls.

Based on these controlling narratives, Black girls are more likely to experience violence in schools, including sexual violence and other forms of police

23 Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Beth E. Richie, *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation* (New York: NYU Press, 2012).

24 Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*.; Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.

25 Couvson, *Pushout*.

26 Kimberlé Crenshaw, Jyoti Nanda, and Priscilla Ocen, “Black Girls Matter: Pushed Out, Overpoliced, and Underprotected,” African American Policy Forum and Center for Intersectionality and Social Policy Studies, 2015, https://www.aapf.org/_files/ugd/b77e03_e92d6e80f-7034f30bf843ea7068f52d6.pdf.

27 Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.

28 Couvson, *Pushout*.

29 Rebecca Epstein, Jamilia Blake, and Thalia González, “Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood,” Georgetown Law, 2017, <https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3000695>.

violence, and less likely to be believed or supported when they do.³⁰

Taking a Black feminist approach addresses the erasure of these experiences from mainstream discourse around policing and gender-based violence by bringing those stories and histories directly to the forefront of study and analysis. In other words, adopting a Black feminist framework meant that we started with young people's stories, contextualized Black girls and gender nonconforming youth's experiences of sexualization, violence, and safety – both inside and outside of the classroom – within the larger matrix of violence shaping their lives, and examined how controlling narratives shaped those experiences.³¹ This rendered gender-specific forms of policing, such as police sexual violence, more visible and illuminated how policing is a form of racial, sexual, gendered, structural, anti-Black violence that limits the possibility of safety and community for *everyone* and particularly for Black women, girls, trans people, and gender nonconforming people.

What Is an Abolitionist Framework?

Adopting an abolitionist framework for this research project meant that we proceeded from the assumption that policing cannot produce safety and instead produces harm.

As extensively documented in Black feminist abolitionists Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie's *No More Police: A Case for Abolition*, police and prisons are ineffective at preventing all forms of violence, including sexual violence, and in fact are primary perpetrators and sites of the sexual violence that they claim to address. Policing, prisons, and criminalization also consume an ever-increasing share of the resources needed

to create safer communities through prevention, intervention, healing, and accountability while disproportionately incarcerating Black and Indigenous people, other people of color, poor people, disabled people, migrants, and queer and trans people.³²

Therefore, if we want to end sexual violence, we must end policing and prisons.

As many abolitionists have stated, abolition is about world-making as much as it is about dismantling systems of violence. Abolitionists are committed to creating a world in which the conditions that contribute to violence in our communities are no longer present and we are able to address harm that occurs within our communities without state intervention. The path to safer communities lies in relationship-building and holding ourselves responsible for each other's individual and collective wellbeing.

A central goal for this project was to seek out and listen for approaches that would keep Black young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth safe in schools without policing of any kind.

This included not turning to law enforcement to solve the problem of law enforcement violence – in other words, not focusing on reporting and accountability for individual police officers while leaving the systems that produce police sexual violence in place. Using an abolitionist framework helped us to analyze the stories we collected with a view toward **seeking solutions that did not fuel the very system that was creating the harm.**

Our hope is that this work will contribute to youth-led organizing for #PoliceFreeSchools and to the larger movement to abolish surveillance, policing, and prisons, known as the prison-industrial complex (PIC) abolition movement.

30 Ritchie, *Invisible No More*; Couvson, Pushout.; Epstein et al., "Girlhood Interrupted."

31 For a more in-depth analysis, please see Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.

32 Kaba and Ritchie, *No More Police*.

Healing Justice as a Framework

We also adopted a healing justice (HJ) framework for the project, best defined by Black feminist leaders who have been deeply involved in developing and articulating it for decades:

Healing justice [...] identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds.³³

In their 2023 book, Cara Page and Erica Woodland lay out the key elements of an HJ approach:

- HJ is a community-led response to interrupt, transform, and intervene on individual and collective trauma to sustain our emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, psychic, and environmental well-being.
- HJ is an emergent process to address trauma, grief, crisis, and violence (both historical and current).
- HJ is a spiritual framework seeking to remember lineage and models of integrative and holistic care that are rooted in ancestral traditions of resiliency and survival.
- HJ is a cultural strategy that seeks to create models of holistic care and safety that are rooted in creation, desire, transformation, and cultural design as a tool for building power and political strategy.

- HJ is a political strategy to decriminalize communal practices and ancestral traditions and seeks to end the persecution of practitioners who center community-led strategies and structures of care outside of the state and Western-based models.
- HJ is challenging the medical industrial complex (MIC) by intervening on the harms and abuses of the MIC and the pervasiveness of ableism, capitalism, and curative models in our health, healing, and spiritual care systems.³⁴

Adopting a healing justice framework supported us in approaching this research with individual and community care and an understanding that it is critical to center healing in every aspect of our work. The entire research team learned about and engaged healing justice practices in our regular meetings, recognizing the interconnectedness of physical, emotional, spiritual, and environmental well-being and the understanding that healing for ourselves was an integral part of this research too.

A healing justice framework was particularly important given the subject matter of our research; talking about sexual violence can be triggering or traumatic for both researchers and research participants, a reality that is often overlooked or unaddressed in research and organizing around police violence. We knew it was important to ground healing justice in every aspect of the project so that survivors would feel supported, seen, and heard. Healing justice also allowed our research team, many of whom had experienced sexual violence themselves, to process their own experiences and to approach the work with clarity, intention, and care.

³³ Cara Page, "Reflections From Detroit: Transforming Wellness and Wholeness," INCITE!, August 5, 2010, <https://incite-national.org/2010/08/05/reflections-from-detroit-transforming-wellness-wholeness/>. See kindredsouthernhijcollective.org to learn more.

³⁴ Page and Woodland, *Healing Justice Lineages*.

DOCUMENTING POLICE SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

In 2019, Interrupting Criminalization gathered sexual assault advocates and organizers resisting police violence and criminalization for a one day convening to discuss the issue of police sexual violence. How do we document it? How do we respond to it? How do we prevent it? One of the main conclusions participants came to is that little to no organizing or supportive services exist that specifically identify or meet the needs of survivors of sexual violence by police, particularly when it comes to young people who are disproportionately impacted by this gender-based form of police violence. In order to fill this gap, Interrupting Criminalization and Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) agreed to pursue a project documenting girls and young women’s experiences of police sexual violence in New York City schools.

Later the same year, In Our Names Network (IONN) – of which Interrupting Criminalization, GGE, and the Advancement Project are members – reconvened at the Highlander Center for Research and Education to build community and discuss the network’s goals. There, over 20 organizations and individuals from across the country coalesced around four shared campaign goals, one of which was to document police sexual violence (PSV) against Black young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth by law enforcement officers stationed in and around schools.

The goals of the documentation project were twofold: 1) to generate information about Black

young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth’s experiences of police sexual violence, which are often left out of conversations about both police violence and sexual violence, and 2) to bolster youth-led fights for #PoliceFreeSchools by highlighting one of the many ways police presence in and around schools contributes to less safety, not more, including safety from sexual violence.

We originally envisioned a youth-led, community storytelling project documenting police sexual violence in schools in seven cities across the country.³⁵ The research process would support young people from IONN member organizations in each of these cities to develop research, healing justice, and organizing skills while offering mentorship and financial support during the project. Our methods would include in-person trainings, collection of survey data, youth-led interviews and focus groups, and convenings during which we would work with youth researchers to analyze the data, write a report, and develop and support ways to integrate the information gathered into #PoliceFreeSchools campaigns. Throughout, we would rely on the power of storytelling to challenge dominant narratives, surface structural violence, and support healing.

Storytelling is a powerful way of surfacing systematically obscured experiences of violence. As stated by author Arundhati Roy, “There’s really

³⁵ We felt it was important to name our project as a youth-led, community story collection project rather than as “youth participatory action research” (YPAR) because ideally the impetus for conducting participatory action research comes directly from the community in which the research takes place. In this case, while several of the adults involved in conceiving of the project had experiences with police sexual violence as young people, and we had all heard directly about the issue from young people, the project was initially conceived and designed by adults, who continued to shape the process throughout the research, even as young people who were current and recent high school students were invited to co-lead the project early in the research process.

no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."³⁶ By gathering and publicizing stories of sexual violence by law enforcement agents stationed in and around schools, we hoped to make it more difficult to ignore the issue and highlight the necessity of #PoliceFreeSchools.

Then, just as the project was getting underway, the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything, precipitating a public health emergency and unprecedented levels of economic uncertainty and collapse. Across the country, youth navigated fear, loss of family members, school closures, and a move to online schooling, as well as multiple environmental disasters from forest fires to freezing temperatures. Later that summer, horrific instances of police violence against George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and hundreds more since then produced historic uprisings for racial justice.

We scrapped our original research design and developed a new virtual research plan we hoped could hold the project with the same rigor and care under these drastically changed conditions. Despite the hardships and restrictions we faced over the past three years, we were able to create a community of researchers who were deeply invested in the research and to support Black girls and gender nonconforming youth working to end police sexual violence.

Recruiting Research Partners

We had originally hoped to partner with seven organizations working in seven different cities across the country in order to get a sense of how sexual violence by police stationed in and around schools was playing out across geographies, school districts, and communities. We intentionally focused on organizations working with young people in the South, where racial disparities in

school discipline and pushout are highest and had hoped to include groups from the Midwest, where there has been powerful student organizing to remove police from schools.

However, capacity concerns that intensified exponentially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the number of organizational partners to three.:

- Girls for Gender Equity in New York City
- Young Women's Freedom Center in California
- EveryBlackGirl in Columbia, South Carolina, the site of the #AssaultAtSpringValley

Black Swan Academy in Washington, D.C. also participated in the research project for a six-month period before capacity concerns led them to withdraw. All four organizations are led by Black women and members of the In Our Names Network.

When recruiting research partners, we asked ourselves:

- Does the organization have a significant membership/constituency of middle and high-school aged Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth?
- Is the organization youth-driven? Do young people play a significant role in leadership, decision-making, and developing and implementing the organization's campaigns?
- Does the organization have an adult who can play a strong supervisory and supportive role for individual youth researchers, attending all research meetings and meeting weekly with youth researchers to debrief, integrate, discuss how research tasks would be completed, and participate in interviews and focus groups?

36 From Arundhati Roy's 2004 Sydney Peace Prize lecture, <https://sydneypeacefoundation.org.au/peace-prize-ipients/2004-arundhati-roy/>.

- Does the organization adopt a healing justice approach? Will it be able to offer researchers emotional and other forms of support as they move through the project?
- Is the organization part of the national campaign for #PoliceFreeSchools?

Each research partner received \$30,000 a year for two years to support participation of youth researchers and supervisors in the project. The In Our Names Network entered into Memoranda of Understanding with each of the partners outlining our expectations of participating organizations, youth researchers, and supervisors, and met periodically with supervisors and organizational leadership periodically to check in around capacity and expectations.

Please see Appendix A for a sample Memorandum of Understanding.

Recruiting Researchers

We asked research partners to recruit one to two youth researchers from their membership and constituencies to participate in the project, prioritizing Black cis and trans girls and gender nonconforming youth who have been directly impacted by police violence and presence in and around schools, including Black youth with darker complexions, disabled youth, and trans youth.

Researchers were expected to commit to attending all virtual meetings and trainings, to devote up to 10 hours a week to the project, and to participate for the full length of the research project. If a researcher was not able to continue with the project, the expectation was that research partners would recruit, train, and bring a new researcher up to speed. Ideally youth researchers would have some prior research and organizing experience.

Please see Appendix B for researcher recruitment materials.

Research Design and Training

Our research training and design process unfolded as follows.

Introducing the Issue

We began weekly research trainings by introducing the concepts of police sexual violence, sharing the findings of existing research, and exploring researchers' knowledge and experience of the issue. We shared and collaboratively developed goals for the project and placed it within the larger context of organizing efforts toward #PoliceFreeSchools by having researchers attend the annual #PoliceFreeSchools campaign convening.

Please see Appendix C for project goals and researcher training materials.

Introducing Research Questions and Methods

Our research team then introduced youth researchers to research design, worked with them to develop research questions, and trained them in practical research methods including surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Please see Appendix C for research training materials.

Research Design

Through multiple meetings over a period of nine months, we discussed, brainstormed, and fine-tuned the research questions we wanted to pursue. While young people believed the issue of sexual violence by police was an important one, they broadened the research questions to include a focus on school safety overall and to incorporate experiences of sexualization at school by a range of adults and authority figures, including security guards.

We asked the researchers to brainstorm a list of 15 questions that they wanted to ask participants.

From there, we asked researchers to review each other's list of questions, find the overlap, and discuss the differences. We had healthy discussions about what questions should be included, why those questions should be included, and what types of language should be used. Once we had one longer list of questions, we asked the researchers and supervisors to work together in their organizations to choose their top 10 questions. We continued this process until we developed a list of approximately 10 questions all sites approved of and that guided our research process.

Researchers then weighed the benefits and challenges of using different types of methods to answer our research questions. We originally envisioned that data collection would take place in person, in schoolyards, on the way to and from school, and during private conversations among young people. Once school went online due to pandemic restrictions and youth researchers were physically isolated from their peers and often confined to spaces shared with parents and family members where privacy was at a premium, making conversations about sexual violence by police difficult and potentially dangerous, we had to adjust our research design accordingly. As the pandemic unfolded, we continued to ask ourselves: What does school look like now? How do we conduct this research remotely when people can't speak candidly in their homes/spaces? How do we maintain confidentiality over Zoom and social media? How do these conditions impact issues of consent/assent? How do we support young people as they navigate the pressures of online schooling and increased family responsibilities brought about by the pandemic? Do we engage their caregivers?

The research team decided to shift from a goal of collecting hundreds of in-person surveys to conducting a smaller number of one-on-one

interviews and focus groups to create a more intimate container in which to explore questions of police sexual violence in schools. The researchers revised the survey they previously developed to create an interview protocol. Reflecting the broader frame youth researchers brought to the project, the interview questions included questions about safety in schools, experiences of discrimination based on identity, including feeling uncomfortable with how school law enforcement personnel treated them, and how schools can be safer for them.

Please see Appendix D for example interview guide.

Within the interview protocol, the researchers, with guidance from the healing justice practitioners on the team, integrated scheduled breaks, check-ins, and healing justice practices to ensure that both interviewers and participants were taken care of as they were conducting and participating in virtual interviews. During the breaks, interviewers practiced different breathing techniques with participants. Additionally, interviewers previewed certain sections of the interview guide by letting participants know what types of questions would be asked next. We also made sure that people had water, snacks, and comfort items at the start of the interview.

So that the researchers and participants had a shared language, the researchers explained certain terms during the interviews. When asking about participants' identity, researchers referenced not only physical body characteristics, but also self-presentation (e.g., clothing). When asking about law enforcement personnel on campus, interviewers clarified that they were referring to SROs (school resource officers), police, immigration, probation, and private security. As we developed questions, we discussed what we meant by sexualization and sexual violence, and researchers defined those terms to include

sending sexual and/or flirty text messages, making sexual comments, and doing a search that made them feel uncomfortable, along with other forms of physical and sexual violence such as rape, touching/groping, and sexual assault.³⁷

Piloting the Interview Protocol

Before recruiting participants to the study from within their organizations and local schools, we decided to follow the best practice of piloting the interview protocol among the research team first to offer researchers the opportunity to observe interviews by experienced researchers, to experience both asking the questions they had developed and being asked them, and to practice offering and receiving healing justice support during the interview. Researchers were assigned to interview each other in pairs, and a member of the research team and healing justice team was present for each interview to offer feedback on interview techniques and healing justice support.

We piloted the questions multiple times; although researchers may sometimes believe they have crafted some of the best questions that get right to the purpose of the research, if researchers don't sit on the other side of the recording device and try to answer the questions they have developed, they don't quite understand how well the questions work. Thus, we asked the youth researchers to sit in both roles to ensure the questions we created as a team worked for our research purposes.

After all pilot interviews were completed, members of the research team assessed whether the researchers were ready to recruit additional participants to interview. Given capacity constraints of researchers and research partners to support them in conducting interviews of their peers around issues of safety and sexual violence, the research team decided not to

continue with individual interviews rather than risk harm to researchers and prospective research participants.

Therefore, our pilot interviews formed a primary source of data for this report. Each of the researchers who participated in the interviews identified as a cisgender or transgender Black girl or woman or a Black gender nonconforming person. They were not asked to define their sexualities. They all agreed to be interviewed using Zoom where they were recorded and the interviews transcribed.

In addition to the interviews conducted by our youth researchers, research team members conducted focus groups with attendees at the 2023 EveryBlackGirl Conference held in Columbia, South Carolina. We divided participants into three groups: one for youth ages 10-13, one for youth ages 14-17, and the other for adults 18 and above, each of which was assigned a member of the research team and a healing justice practitioner. Focus groups were asked a simplified version of the questions contained in the interview protocol. These conversations contributed greatly to the data collected for this report.

Adapting to Conditions

Recruiting youth researchers who live at the intersections of multiple structures of oppression and who were therefore most likely to be impacted by police presence in schools meant that they were also more likely to be impacted by changing conditions as the pandemic unfolded. It is well known that Black families experienced the highest rates of sickness and mortality – and of police enforcement of pandemic restrictions – in the early days of the pandemic and bore the brunt of the economic crisis it precipitated.³⁸ Black youth

³⁷ See Ritchie, "Shrouded in Silence."

³⁸ Timothy Colman, Pascal Emmer, Derecka Purnell, Andrea J. Ritchie, Hiram Rivera, and Tiffany Wang, "Divesting from Pandemic Policing

were also profoundly impacted by the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and hundreds more since May 2020 and were highly engaged in the uprisings for racial justice that unfolded in the summer of 2020. The pandemic brought tremendous academic disruption to students, and virtual schooling presented a number of challenges, including intense Zoom-fatigue which affected youth researchers as the virtual research project wore on. While researchers were compensated for their time, many needed to

pick up extra work or responsibilities to support their families, limiting their capacity to fully participate in the project. While the research team continued to dream up new ways of doing such important, yet painful, work virtually by increasing flexibility in scheduling meetings and incorporating playful check-in questions, mindfulness-based activities, and individual healing sessions led by healing justice practitioners, these conditions presented significant barriers to executing the original vision for the project.

and Investing in Just Recovery,” Interrupting Criminalization, May 2021, <https://www.interruptingcriminalization.com/resources-all/divesting-from-pandemic-policing>.

FINDINGS

Finding: Schools Are Sites of Sexualization, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence by Police and Other Authority Figures.

Dress Code Enforcement

One form of institutional violence that particularly affected our participants' experiences of sexualization instead of safety at school was dress code enforcement, a process that many youth participants noted happened unevenly across lines of race and gender. They reported being "dress-coded" – meaning being punished for wearing clothing deemed "inappropriate" for the school environment – much more often than their white peers. Perceptions about their personality and their sexual availability – for example, "Black girls are fast" and "Black girls are combative" – often influenced how administrators, teachers, and security personnel punished Black girls and gender nonconforming youth for their clothing choices. Previous reports by the National Women's Law Center and Girls for Gender Equity detail the way adults in schools enforce racialized gender norms through dress code enforcement, exploring the impacts on young people and particularly on trans and gender nonconforming young people.³⁹

In our study, one participant Zahra talked about how dress code enforcement at her school reinforced racial and gender norms about Black girls' bodies:

I had a friend, like, who was just, like, bustier than other girls, and we were allowed to wear free dress on, you know, Fridays. And she would always get told off for wearing a crop top or

something, when a girl that was smaller, not shapely, [could] wear a crop top. Like they were getting told by the dean how cute they looked. When the rest, the Black girls and the girls who were a little bit curvier, we're getting told like, oh, "You need to wear a sweatshirt. Don't wear this again."

Students who do not have a change of clothes are often punished for their "inappropriate" dress through in-school and out-of-school suspension.

Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth describe the adult attention to their bodies and clothing that accompanies dress code enforcement as one way they experience sexualization rather than safety in school.

Sexualization, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence

Black girls and gender nonconforming youth we spoke with also described sexually inappropriate conversation, sexual harassment, and sexual violence from a number of different groups in schools, including police and other security personnel, their peers, teachers, coaches, and administrators.

A number of participants named instances where they had witnessed or experienced sexualization and sexual harassment such as police or security guards "corner[ing] a student and [like] ask[ing] them questions sexually," making comments directly to them about their bodies, and/or engaging in conversations with male students about their bodies. These incidents were most likely to occur during security checks as students were searched before entering school, at sports

39 "Dress Coded: Black Girls, Bodies, and Bias in D.C. Schools," National Women's Law Center, 2018, <https://nwlc.org/resource/dress-coded/>.; Khadija Hudson and Brittany Brathwaite, "The School Girls Deserve: Youth-Driven Solutions for Creating Safe, Holistic, and Affirming New York City Public Schools," Girls for Gender Equity, 2017, https://ggenyc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/GGE_school_girls_deserveDRAFT6FINALWEB.pdf.

games, and in locations where other adults were unlikely to be watching.

For instance, one interviewee Imani described the lewd looks and comments that security personnel (along with educators and custodial staff) subjected student athletes to at her school: “Things like, ‘Oh, she really works out! Like look at those butt muscles!’” along with girls being sexualized as “stallions,” which is a slang term used to masculinize women’s bodies as both animalistic and sexually aggressive. She went on to say “I think that’s hella inappropriate! That was normalized.” These comments created an educational environment where sexual harassment and assault were pervasive. For instance, Imani described an incident in which an officer touched her “butt” and another where she witnessed another student being inappropriately touched by security personnel:

It looked like he was talking to her, but he was rubbing her back [...] I remember she was, like, trying to get his hand, like, away from her back, and he kept on, like, shaking his head. And then, after that happened [...] I came back out, and they were still there [...] It went far enough to where he was rubbing the side of her leg. And then she ran back to her coaches, and she was crying. And I know nothing happened because he was still there when we came back the next day.

Participants also reported instances in which security personnel would taunt girls and follow them around campus.

One participant Laila, a teacher in a public school, described a particularly horrific incident of sexual violence in which a male teacher was looking at a student’s “private parts.” When confronted, the teacher, who was not a medical professional, said that the young girl said that she was experiencing

issues with her “private parts,” so he decided to look. Although this happened 10 years before Laila began teaching at the school, the teacher in question remained on staff. When Laila expressed concern about this, she experienced hostility from fellow teachers rather than any recognition of the harm that had occurred, demonstrating how normalized this kind of behavior was at the school.

Laila also reported that students at her school commonly experienced groping during the daily body scans they were required to undergo before entering the school. Touted as safety and security measures meant to prevent violence with deadly weapons, as documented by Ritchie and others, these body searches are often routine sites of sexual violence for students.⁴⁰

Finding: Police Don’t Create Safety for Black Young Women, Girls, and Trans and Gender Nonconforming Youth in Schools.

The belief that police presence in schools protects students, faculty, and staff from violence has contributed to increased funding, making school-based policing the fastest area of growth for law enforcement. Since 1998, the federal government has invested over \$1 billion to increase police presence at schools. In their 2015 report on Public School Safety and Discipline, the National Center for Education Statistics found that over 43% of schools had at least some kind of security personnel⁴¹ on their campuses at least once a week. While security personnel are presumed to increase safety for students and staff and to serve as the first line of defense against unwelcome intruders, research overwhelmingly demonstrates that **the presence of police and private security personnel has no positive impacts on safety in schools and actually can produce more unsafe schooling environments for students.**⁴²

40 Ritchie, *Invisible No More*.

41 These security personnel included security officers, school resource officers, and other law enforcement officers.

42 Chelsea Connery, “The Prevalence and the Price of Police in Schools,” University of Connecticut, October 21, 2020, <https://policy->

The young people we spoke with shared experiences that were consistent with this research. As one participant put it, “There’s a lot of things that do happen. And even when teachers or, like, adults always say, like, ‘go tell somebody,’ they never do nothing. [...] at the end of the day, it doesn’t go and become fixed.” Instead, police and other security personnel *contribute* to school environments that are not safe for students, particularly Black trans and cis girls and gender nonconforming youth. Participants emphasized that no amount of police presence made them feel protected from violence, especially sexual violence.

Finding: Survivors of Police Sexual Violence Need Specific Forms of Support.

Survivors of sexual violence hold the answers to what support they need and what will keep them and us safe. To that end, we asked our participants what type of support they wanted and needed to prevent police sexual violence and other forms of harm from happening at and around schools.

Often, efforts to address sexual violence of any kind focus on encouraging survivors to come forward and report it to authorities in the hopes that individual perpetrators can be identified and presumably held accountable. Yet, when youth experienced sexual violence and other forms of violence on campus, they did not feel safe reporting it to school resource officers, security personnel, or other adults due to racial and gender discrimination by law enforcement. Though they are told to report violence and other issues to adults and school-based security personnel, participants felt that adults routinely failed to address their safety concerns. Additionally, the young people we spoke with expressed concern that coming forward would lead to retaliation, stigmatization, minimizing, being disbelieved, or — worse yet — blamed for what happened, increasing

the perceived cost of reporting with little benefit.

These barriers to reporting are only likely to be higher when it comes to reporting sexualization, sexual harassment, and sexual violence by police and security. As a result, strategies focused solely on encouraging students to come forward to report sexual violence by police and security are unlikely to be successful in addressing the issue. Additionally, a focus on reporting after the fact and investigating individual officers on a case-by-case basis does nothing to prevent sexual violence from occurring in the first place, nor does it address the systemic conditions of sexualization, racialized gender policing, surveillance, and police power over young people that make it possible.

As we listened to research participants speak about what they needed, what we heard from survivors is summed up from a powerful statement from Imani:

I know from personal experience that what survivors need [is] to just have someone say it’s not their fault.

Other participants spoke of the need for counseling and support for survivors as well as prevention through comprehensive sex education which specifically addresses issues of consent and sexual violence by law enforcement. They also identified a need for education and therapy for people who commit the violence. As one participant stated, “Instead of just having healing for victims, you need to heal the perpetrator.” And, while participants did not believe police to be a solution to school safety, they still believed that adults in their schools needed to work with students to stop violence through prevention, education, and intervention to keep them safe from people in the schools as well as the surrounding community.

CONCLUSION

Our goal in undertaking this research project was to amplify the experiences of Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming youth with police presence in schools. We hope that these findings and stories will be helpful to organizers working toward #PoliceFreeSchools and to hold schools, police, and security personnel responsible and accountable for the ways they are actively harming young people and failing to keep them safe from violence in educational settings.

Our hope is that the tools we created can be used to support further research on the impacts of police presence in so that many more Black girls and trans and gender nonconforming young people's stories can be heard, and adults can be held accountable for the serious harm they have caused and are causing.

Community-based storytelling and research is a way to deepen the conversation about sexual violence in the U.S. and to surface stories of sexualization, not safety, experienced by Black trans youth, girls, and gender nonconforming youth in schools.

Additionally, we offer the following recommendations.

Policy Recommendations

We believe one of the best ways to address the experiences raised in this report is to recognize that police and security do not make schools safer and instead contribute to violence students experience and to organize toward #PoliceFreeSchools.⁴³ We support the demands of the #PoliceFreeSchools campaign:

Grounded in the belief that removing police from our schools is the seed to removing police from our communities, the campaign centers the leadership of young people and organizers who are using a series of strategies, the "6 D's," to advance abolitionist fights from Oakland to New York: Decriminalize. Deprioritize. Divest/Invest. Demilitarize/Disarm. Delegitimize. Dismantle.⁴⁴

Accordingly, we recommend the following.

- **Remove security guards, school resource officers, and law enforcement of any kind from schools.** As we have stated, police presence and security officers do not keep schools safe. Instead, they place young people, especially Black girls, trans youth, and gender nonconforming youth, in danger.
- **End punitive discipline.** Punitive discipline, especially for arbitrary infractions, including dress code violations, talking in the halls, or other minor infractions "...such as refusing to present identification, using profanity with a school administrator, or 'misbehaving,'"⁴⁵ does not create a productive or safe environment for young people, and instead creates a prison-like environment that stifles creativity and education.⁴⁶ It also creates conditions conducive to surveillance, sexualization, sexual harassment, and police violence against young people.
- **Prioritize education over surveillance and violence.** Students deserve to have schools where they can thrive as learners and people. They deserve safety, and a place where, in the words of Judith Browne Dianis, Executive

43 See the #PoliceFreeSchools campaign website: <https://policefreeschools.org/>.

44 See the #PoliceFreeSchools campaign website: <https://policefreeschools.org/>.

45 Couvson, Pushout.

46 Ruth Nicole Brown, *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward a Hip-Hop Feminist Pedagogy* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

Director of the Advancement Project, “Black and Brown students are afforded the presumption of childhood that they deserve,”⁴⁷ instead of being subjected to racialized, gendered policing of their bodies and actions.

- **Foster spaces where young people can dream, imagine, and experiment.** So often, young people are asked to complete assignments and tasks that are laid out for them. While schoolwork is important, it is equally important to have space to imagine a better world. How can we move towards a world with reduced violence, no policing, and safer communities if we don’t allow people, especially young people, the space to dream this world into reality?

Process Recommendations

Unsurprisingly, conducting this type of research is difficult work. Conducting this research during a pandemic, racial uprisings, and economic crisis, was more than challenging. We not only started this research during a pandemic and at a time of greater precarity for Black people, but we also asked young people to talk about very difficult, emotionally taxing topics and asked them to be vulnerable with people they hadn’t met in-person. Each team member experienced different levels of precarity and vulnerability throughout the project that we tried to support with varying success.

Based on these experiences, we offer the following recommendations for people considering undertaking similar research projects.

- **Focus on building relationships and doing healing work together.** The COVID-19 pandemic and the rising economic crisis impacted the research team in varying ways. To mitigate the risk of catching and spreading COVID, the team shifted to virtual meetings on Zoom. We

did not have the privilege of being able to build relationships in-person, to feel each other’s energies as we engaged heavy research topics. Not being able to meet in the same physical space impacted the morale of the team in addition to greatly extending the time of the study. We suggest the following.

- **Collectively develop expectations for organizations, supervisors, researchers, and members of the research team ahead of time.** Ensure collective buy-in around research project goals, tasks, and expectations. Set up regular check-ins to discuss expectations, shifts in capacity, and how to share the burden of picking up pieces of the work.
- **Institute robust accountability practices for the research team.** Engage the entire team – lead researchers, youth researchers, supervisors, and administrative support – in practicing rigorous accountability to ensure the team stays on track. Establish clear pathways for communication around what happens when expectations aren’t met and self-and mutual accountability mechanisms. Provide space for the youth to hold adults responsible for missteps as adults typically hold youth responsible for their own. We view accountability differently from punishment, which means as a team, we approach accountability practices with grace, generative discussions, and the belief that we come to this work with good intentions. We focus on supporting people, not punishing them.
- **Spend six months to a year on relationship building and healing justice work** at the beginning of the study as a way to get to know one another before beginning the research training and going into the field. Continue the healing justice work as an integral part of the

47 “We Came to Learn: A Call to Action for Police-Free Schools,” Advancement Project, May 3, 2021, <https://advancementproject.org/wecame-to-learn>.

research.

● **Start off with a two to three day in-person training.** Introduce the project, the origins of the project, and start/continue the healing justice work necessary to support the young people – and adult allies – in talking about traumatic subject matter. Beginning the study with an in-person meeting will help the young people bond together and begin to trust each other as they move forward with the work.

● **Co-create and co-manage a rigorous schedule.**

This research is difficult to undertake on a national scale because people are far apart. The distance necessitates more frequent contact among the research team in the learning phases as well as when the team is in the field. Our team was scheduled to meet twice a week for 90 minutes at a time; the first meeting would focus on research while the second would focus on healing justice practices. Normally these meetings would take place in person and facilitate relationship building; hosting all of them virtually led to significant Zoom fatigue. Some suggestions for improvement include:

- Make meetings more interactive.
- Have the youth researchers co-create agendas and co-facilitate meetings throughout the entirety of the project.
- Engage all parts of our bodies as we move through meetings.

● **Be nimble.** As many youth workers know, it is important to be able to move, change, think, and act quickly. Young people's lives, especially those of Black girls, trans youth, and gender nonconforming youth, can be difficult even when there aren't multiple crises of epic proportions unfolding. Throughout the project, our youth researchers worked multiple jobs and held

responsibilities across many areas of life. Some of them experienced housing insecurity and unemployment during the four-year period this study was conducted. The stress of living as a young Black person during these tumultuous times affected their involvement and investment in the project. Because we didn't always have the capacity or level of participation we needed to move the work forward, the team shifted gears often to maintain the integrity of our work. We recommend the following.

- Build in a flexible research design and time frame. Try to account for the ways life will intervene, and incorporate space for rest, reflection, integration, healing, and celebration into the research design. In this case, we extended the time of the research project by a year in order to do so.
 - Give people space and grace to take care of themselves. People understand their own capacity.
 - Have many layers of back up; engaging multiple supervisors and researchers (at least two) at each research site. Not only will the researchers and supervisors have a person to back them up and support them through the project, but they will also be able to work using a buddy system when conducting interviews and going out in the field.
 - Ensure that young people have all of the support they need to participate, which can be different for every young person. For some, it's access to a computer, high speed internet, or a quiet place to work; for others, it's reliable cell phone service, healing support systems, etc.
- **Hire experienced researchers in the cities where research will be conducted.** Youth researchers will benefit from the mentorship of

their supervisors in their organizations as well as mentorship as they undertake difficult research.

● **Fund this work!** Spaces in which Black young women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming youth are meaningfully supported and resourced to share their stories as experts in their own experiences and solutions to the problems they face are few and far between. Building these spaces – and the relationships they require – is resource intensive. In addition to financially supporting youth researchers, we regularly provided them with healing justice supplies

and support; ensured COVID safety through testing, masking, and safety precautions; created inviting and comfortable spaces for in-person meetings; and compensated adult members of the research team to be available for training, practice, and support. It is critical for funders and organizations to recognize and resource the multiple and varied needs of young people engaged in projects like this one. This is particularly true for young people who face greater structural challenges to participation, who are also often most likely to experience police violence in schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was a collaborative effort between the In Our Names Network and Interrupting Criminalization. The In Our Names Network (IONN) is a network of over 20 national and local organizations, campaigns, and individuals working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people. Interrupting Criminalization is a movement resource hub offering information, cross-movement networks, learning, and practice for organizers, practitioners, and advocates on the cutting edge of efforts to build a world free of criminalization, policing, punishment, and violence. We hope this provides youth with information and tools to build power as part of local campaigns for #PoliceFreeSchools across the country. The report is authored by Deana Lewis, Brendane Tynes, and Andrea J. Ritchie.

We thank the brilliant organizations that make up the In Our Names Network and all of the brilliant young people that helped make this report and this body of work come to fruition while continuing the everyday fight toward liberatory freedom and safety for Black girls and queer and trans students in schools.

Special thanks to Andrea J. Ritchie for conceiving of and resourcing this project; to Dr. Connie Wun for initial research design and training; to Deana Lewis for steadfastly and skillfully leading the

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For more information, please visit the In Our Names Network website at www.inournamesnetwork.com.

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APPENDIX A: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

We asked partnering organizations to sign the following Memorandum of Understanding:

The partnership is between the Allied Media Projects, as IONN's fiscal sponsor, and your organization. We are not contracting directly with any researchers on the project beyond those on the research team (Deana Lewis and Connie Wun).

Research partners are responsible for recruiting, supervising, supporting, and evaluating youth researchers. Partners are also responsible for recruiting and training a replacement researcher should the original researcher become unable to participate in the project for any reason.

Research partners are responsible for the researcher's active participation in the project.

Researchers should ideally have some previous research experience. Researchers must be able to devote a minimum of 10 hours a week to the project, including full participation in virtual research meetings without conflicting demands on their time. Supervisors and researchers will be responsible for watching videos of research trainings and completing a discussion/workbook regarding the

trainings by the end of August.

Supervisors and researchers will be responsible for accessing a virtual healing justice space weekly beginning in early August.

Supervisors and researchers will be asked to attend a virtual training at the end of August which will focus on reflections and questions from watching the videos, as well as orientation to the platform we will use for storing documents/group discussions.

Supervisors and researchers will receive a weekly calendar outlining daily required activities and practices following the Network Gathering including a weekly research meeting, weekly meeting with supervisor, weekly healing justice office hours, and weekly completion of tasks assigned at research meeting.

Supervisors must be available to attend all research meetings and trainings with youth researchers and to meet with them regularly (weekly) outside of research project meetings to offer supervision and support in completing assigned tasks between meetings. Supervisors should be present at all focus groups and interviews held by youth researchers.

APPENDIX B: RESEARCHER RECRUITMENT MATERIALS

Each of the organizations recruited researchers from young people who were involved in the organization's activities or were connected to the organization. Sample recruitment materials are included below:

In Our Names Network (IONN) Research Project Application

[ORGANIZATION] is excited to announce our participation in a new national research project focused on young Black women and Black girls, trans youth, and gender nonconforming youth in collaboration with the In Our Names Network (IONN).

We are hiring a youth Research Assistant for a paid position on a 12-month project starting in June 2021. We are looking for imaginative youth who are interested in developing their leadership, community organizing, and research skills. Youth leaders will receive \$8,000 each. This opportunity is open to Black girls, young women, and trans and gender nonconforming youth. LGBTQIA+ youth encouraged to apply.

Youth researchers will be engaged in and leading Youth Participatory Action Research to explore issues impacting young Black women and Black girls, trans youth, and gender nonconforming youth in schools, with a particular focus on sexual harassment and violence by law enforcement in and around schools, including touching and inappropriate and invasive searches, trying to talk to or date students, questions about sexuality or gender, comments about your body, or anything else that harms youth or makes youth uncomfortable.

Youth will develop and hone existing leadership and research skills by learning different research styles, building research skills, participating in healing justice sessions, and building community with people across the United States, among other tasks. As the research progresses, youth will work within their organizations to create and lead a campaign based on the outcomes of their research.

This project prioritizes the participation of youth most directly impacted by police presence in and around schools, including darker skinned, trans, gender nonconforming, disabled, and migrant Black youth.

Youth researchers must:

- Commit to attending weekly virtual meetings and three virtual trainings (two trainings July 14th-15th and July 28th-29th from 2-pm ET; one in Fall 2021)
- Commit for the entire 24 months of the project
- Be willing to work with other youth within your city and county
- Submit a resume and/or application by June 4, 2021

Youth researchers will be compensated \$8,000 each, plus tech supplies and office space. As needed, travel and transportation costs will be covered by [ORGANIZATION].

Please fill out the application below to be considered for this position. We will get back to candidates close to June 4, 2021. Please contact [NAME] with questions.

Application Questions

- What does social justice mean to you?
- Can you write about one or two issues or problems in your community or your school that you want to change?
- How have you worked to help change some of the problems in your community, school, or neighborhood?
- Have you had experience talking about police in schools? Please describe what you discussed.
- Do you have any experience engaging in research or collecting information to better understand issues affecting you/your peers? Please describe these research experiences if you have them.
- What is your experience and/or comfort level talking to your peers about potentially difficult issues?
- Please describe your strengths.
- Tell me about a time when you had to keep yourself on track while working independently.
- What would you need to be supported in doing this work?

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH TRAINING MATERIALS

The initial research training agenda was designed as an introduction to the project overall, timeline and history of police sexual violence, and conducting community-based research. As the project continued, we went into further depth on the research methods, conducting research, analyzing research, and more.

In addition to the initial training, researchers attended Advancement Project’s annual weeklong workshop on the history of police in schools.

Andrea J. Ritchie Training Materials

View [Andrea’s training presentation](#).

Transformative Research: A Workbook with Strategies on How to Conduct Community-Driven Research to Speak Your Community’s Truth to Power

by Connie Wun, PhD

Transformative Research was created to combine advocacy and organizing around issues of racial and gender justice with community-driven research. Through TR, we co-conduct research, train, and consult on racial and gender justice research projects that work towards ending racial and gender violence against Black and Indigenous communities and other communities of color. Contents from the workbook come from Dr. Connie Wun’s experiences as an organizer, teacher, professor, and researcher. It also draws from the historic work of multiple participatory action research groups and The Data Center, which existed for 40 years before it closed its doors. Dr. Connie Wun, founder of Transformative Research, had the great honor of learning from and being a Director of Research for the Center. For more information, please see transformativereasearch.org.

View [Dr. Wun’s workbook](#).

Police Sexual Violence (PSV) Research Training Agenda Example

Day 1: Introductions		
	Time	Who?
Opening up the space and grounding		
Check in Intro, name, gender pronouns What are the one to two moments that led us to this work? Use a Jamboard.		
Guiding principles		

<p>Overview of IONN</p> <p>History of the project</p> <p>Member organizations</p> <p>Discussion of other projects IONN is working on</p>		
BREAK		
<p>Guiding questions</p> <p>What does safety mean? Use Jamboard</p> <p>What does justice mean? Use Jamboard</p> <p>What do they look forward to creating via this research project? Use Jamboard</p>		
<p>Homework questions</p> <p>What sentence describes what you are feeling?</p> <p>What days and times work best for you for a weekly meeting?</p> <p>Tell your story: How has this played out in your communities? In your schools?</p>		
Check out		
Day 2: Getting on the Same Page		
	Time	Who?
Opening up the space and grounding		
Check in		
<p>Getting on the same page</p> <p>Examples: white supremacy, anti-blackness, misogynoir, patriarchy, sexism</p> <p>What is intersectionality?</p> <p>History of violence against Black girls</p>		
BREAK		

Getting on the same page (continued) What is the organizing against police violence led Black women and girls? What is community organizing?		
Homework question Tell your story: How has this played out in your communities? In your schools?		
Check out		
Day 3: What Is Research?		
	Time	Who?
Opening up the space and grounding		
Expectations for researchers Actively participate in weekly meetings Do the homework Communicate with us Attend local #PoliceFreeSchools campaign events Engage in healing justice and work with practitioners Expect 25-30 hours a month of work for researchers Fill out logs and journals Researchers and supervisors to check in at least one to two hours a week		
Warm up Contextualizing the ActionCamp: timeline activity Two to three things you got from the training		
Homework time Everyone spend time on the questions Debrief in breakout sessions		

BREAK		
Contextualizing research Share police sexual violence data – value of research Understanding PIC, police violence, sexual violence, justice		
Re-grounding		
Homework time Watch three workshops: They Never Loved Us: Black Youth & the History of Criminalization (GGE & Freedom Inc); Queer & Trans Liberation in the Struggle for Police Free Schools (GSA Network); Disability Justice & Police Free Schools: Connecting Freedom Struggles (Project LETS) How can they use research to help end police violence?		
Check out		

APPENDIX D: INTRODUCTORY SCRIPT

About IONN

In Our Names Network is a national network of over 20 organizations, campaigns, and individuals across the United States working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people. Since 2016, we have been creating, gathering, and sharing resources and calls for action for individuals, families, and communities responding to and demanding justice in cases of police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming folks through our website and on social media.

About the report

This report is part of a national study led by young Black femmes, women, and non-binary community researchers about sexual violence by police in and around schools against Black students. Sexual violence is a term used to include the many types of sexual harm including (but not limited to) sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, alcohol facilitated sexual assault, and sexual harassment. [Sexual violence](#) is a broad term that covers many actions.

Healing Justice Framework and Application

“Healing justice [...] identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence, and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds.”

Healing justice as a movement and a term was created by queer and trans people of color and in particular Black and brown femmes, centering working-class, poor, disabled, and Southern/rural healers. Before “healing justice” was a phrase,

healers have been healing folks at kitchen tables and community clinics for a long time – from the acupuncture clinics run by Black Panthers like Mutulu Shakur in North America in the 1960s and 1970s, to our bone-deep Black, Indigenous, people of color and pre-Christian European traditions of healing with herbs, acupuncture, touch, prayer, and surgery.

The research project has been conducted/held with a healing justice framework and integration throughout. The hope is to offer the same to anyone taking part in the interview process.

As such, we’d like to take time before we begin to discuss your needs, how you access care and to assure that we apply a healing justice framework throughout the time that we are doing this interview/will be together.

Procedure

This survey includes questions about experiences of discrimination, police/security officers, and sexual violence at your school. It includes questions about your personal encounters as well as ones you have witnessed. The survey will take about 20 minutes.

Risks and Discomforts

The focus group questions contain language that may be harmful or upsetting for some participants and may pose emotional risks depending on your situation. Please note that you do not have to answer all of the questions if you do not feel comfortable answering them. If you feel discomfort during any process of completing this focus group,

Some of these questions may be triggering. Please note that you do not have to answer all of the questions. We will do a healing justice practice

with options that you can use to center yourself when you feel triggered.

Benefits

Information from this study may benefit other Black girls, women, femmes, and non-binary students in the future. By highlighting the truth and weight of your stories, your participation will allow us to push movement leaders, policy makers, and educational administration to take the safety of our community seriously, return control to our communities, and lead us down the road to police-free schools.

Consent and Confidentiality

Your involvement in this study is voluntary and confidential. You may refuse to participate before the group begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable with no penalty and no effect on the compensation earned before withdrawing. You have control over the information that you share with us, and we encourage you to check in with yourself on what feels safe and comfortable to disclose. The report will not include any information that can identify you but will try to offer a summary of your responses once the research is completed. The information you provide will be unidentifiable and used in campaigns to make schools safer for everyone.

Compensation

Participants that complete this focus group will receive a gift card.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Do you feel safe at school?
- Who makes you feel the safest at school?
- What types of bias have you experienced and/or witnessed based on your identity, for example, race, gender, sexuality, clothing style, skin tone, hair style, etc., by SROs, police, or security officers?

■ PROBE: What about other authority figures?

Before we continue, is there something you need like a glass of water? Stretch? Some breathing? Are you ready to continue? I am going to ask you about sexual violence next.

- Can you briefly describe an encounter when SROs, police, or security guards made you feel uncomfortable or sexualized at school or around school? This can include sending sexual and/or flirty text messages, making sexual comments, doing a search that made you feel uncomfortable, or something else?
- FOLLOW-UP: Thanks for sharing. During this research project, we would call this sexual violence.
- PROBE: Knowing this, were there other encounters, like with authority figures, that you would like to share?

I know that we just talked about something that was difficult and brought up a lot of emotions. Why don't we take a moment and pause. We can take some time to pause, reflect, or get something to drink if you want.

We are going to continue to talk about sexual violence. Also, we can always take a break. We have plenty of time.

- Who commits sexual violence against students?
- Have you or anyone you know experienced sexual violence by these people?
- To who/m do students report cases of sexual violence (PROBE: principal, vice principal, deans, SROs, police, security, others)? What happens after any encounters of sexual violence at school are reported?

INSERT PAUSE + HJ NEEDS CHECK + SIGNAL THAT QUESTIONS TRANSITION TO HOW WE CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS (Shows that the interview will end with some relief.)

- What type of support did you receive after the encounter with the police occurred? What type of support would you have liked to receive after the encounter occurred?
- What are ways that your school, family, and/or other community members can help you to feel safe and comfortable without using the SROs/police/security guards?
- How can we prevent police sexual violence from happening at and around schools?

APPENDIX F: ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE RESEARCH

Black Swan Academy

Founded in 2013, the Black Swan Academy (BSA) is a nonprofit organization in the District of Columbia that concentrates its efforts on empowering Black youth through civic leadership and engagement.

The Black Swan Academy empowers Black youth in under-served communities through civic leadership and engagement, giving them a comprehensive set of tools needed to succeed in life and become active social catalysts in their communities. We are committed to creating a pipeline of Black youth leaders that are committed to improving self, as well as their communities.

EveryBlackGirl, Inc.

EveryBlackGirl Inc. was founded by Vivian Anderson as a response to the brutal attack of a Black girl by a school resource officer at Spring Valley High in Columbia, South Carolina in 2015. The resulting arrest of the student who was being assaulted and a classmate, Niya Kenny, who dared to record the incident and speak out, becoming one of the leaders at EveryBlackGirl, made the incident at Spring Valley High a perfect example of how school pushout was impacting Black girls. Joining with local organizers on the ground, EveryBlackGirl, Inc. allied against the arrests and demanded all charges be dropped against the arrested youth. EveryBlackGirl, Inc.'s efforts were recognized by local activists seeking to challenge the Disturbing the School law for South Carolina, which allowed for the students' arrests and age requirements for juvenile arrests.

EveryBlackGirl, Inc. creates opportunities for Black girls to become leaders for justice and thrive while

reducing the conditions leading Black girls to be harmed, arrested, confined, and jailed.

Girls for Gender Equity

Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) works intergenerationally, through a Black feminist lens, to center the leadership of Black girls and gender nonconforming young people of color in reshaping culture and policy through advocacy, youth-centered programming, and narrative shift to achieve gender and racial justice.

We recognize Black girls' joy, including their acts of resistance, as an extraordinary asset. While Black girls continue to persevere and demonstrate incredible brilliance despite deep structural violence across the United States, we are committed to working alongside them to dismantle these structures and make our country more equitable and just.

Young Women's Freedom Center

Young Women's Freedom Center was founded to empower cis and trans young women, trans young men and boys, and gender expansive young people of color who have been disproportionately impacted by incarceration, racist and sexist policies, the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and/or the underground street economy, to create positive change in their lives and communities.

YWFC meets people where they are at – on the streets, in jail and detention centers, and in the neighborhoods and communities where we/ they live. We create economic and leadership opportunities through internships, employment, and engagement in advocacy and organizing.

Together we build our personal and collective power, heal from trauma, advocate on behalf of ourselves and each other, and gain access to

education and work to transform the conditions, systems, and policies that lead to intergenerational cycles of violence, incarceration, and poverty.

APPENDIX G: BIOS OF RESEARCH TEAM

Co-Lead Researchers

Deana Lewis, In Our Names Network

Deana G. Lewis is an associate director at the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at the University of Illinois Chicago. Deana's scholarly and community work focuses on Black women and girls who have experienced different forms of state violence. Her research interests include Black girlhood studies, the school/prison nexus, and incarceration. Deana is a member of Love & Protect, a collective dedicated to supporting transgender and cisgender women of color, trans men of color, and gender expansive folks of color who are harmed and criminalized by interpersonal and state violence. She is also a founding member of the Just Practice Collaborative, whose purpose is to build communities' capacities to respond to intimate partner violence and sexual assault without relying primarily Movement for Black Lives. Her scholarship has received generous support from the Ford Foundation and Wenner-Gren Foundation. She was co-host of Zora's Daughters Podcast, a Black feminist anthropological take on popular culture and issues that concern Black women and queer and trans people. Outside of academe, you can find Brendane dancing, singing, writing poetry, and creating healing spaces for survivors of interpersonal violence. They sit at the center of her commitment to Black feminist, abolitionist, anti-oppression work.

Connie Wun, PhD, AAPI Women Lead

Connie Wun, Ph.D. is a co-founder of AAPI Women Lead. She has been working to end violence against women, girls of color, and non-binary communities for nearly 25 years. Dr. Wun leads national community-based research projects on race, gender, and violence. She is currently a Soros Justice Fellow, who is examining race, gender,

and the sex trades. She has received numerous awards and fellowships including from the National Science Foundation, American Association for University Women, and UC Berkeley Chancellor's office. Her research has been published in academic journals, book anthologies, and online publications including with Elle Magazine. She has also been featured in interviews with NPR Code Switch, Democracy Now!, The Reidout Show, and Politically Re-Active. Dr. Wun was born in Oakland, CA, and was raised by Vietnamese refugees. She is also a former high school teacher, college educator, and sexual assault counselor.

Brendane Tynes

Brendane A. Tynes is a Black queer feminist scholar and storyteller from Columbia, South Carolina. She received her Bachelor of Arts with Distinction in Cultural Anthropology with a minor in Education from Duke University. After graduating college, she taught high school science at a public high school in Charlotte, North Carolina, while working as a Student Engagement Organizer at Know Your IX, a nonprofit dedicated to ending sexual violence. She received her Ph.D. in Anthropology from Columbia University, where she studied the affective responses of Black women and nonbinary people to multiple forms of violence within the Movement for Black Lives. Her scholarship has received generous support from the Ford Foundation and Wenner-Gren Foundation. She was co-host of Zora's Daughters Podcast, a Black feminist anthropological take on popular culture and issues that concern Black women and queer and trans people. Outside of academe, you can find Brendane dancing, singing, writing poetry, and creating healing spaces for survivors of interpersonal violence. They sit at the center of her commitment to Black feminist abolitionist anti-oppression work.

Chinyere Okafor

Chinyere Okafor is a graduate student at The Graduate Center of the City University of New York in the critical social/personality psychology program. Her research interests center Black women's issues, including well-being and mental health within academia, the use of narratives in understanding Black femme struggles, and the spaces Black women traverse, insert, exit, and carve for survival.

Researchers

Enshalla Dunlop, Girls for Gender Equity

Enshalla Noelle Dunlop is a native Philadelphian and a rising junior computer science major at Barnard College of Columbia University. She chose computer science at Barnard because it was the fastest-growing major at Barnard and she wanted the ability to learn computer science at a liberal arts women's college. Outside of the classroom, she has a passion for diversity and equity and has been working for nonprofit organization Girls for Gender Equity for the past two years as part of the National Agenda for Black Girls Steering Committee then as a member of the Speaker's Bureau. Enshalla is not sure of what the future holds for her in her career goals but hopes to marry her interest in technology and experience in nonprofit work for a fulfilling career.

Averi Shanell Goss, EveryBlackGirl, Inc.

Averi Shanell is a Youth Mentor who specializes in the growth and development of mental health awareness in adolescent teens. In 2021, she joined the nonprofit organization EveryBlackGirl Inc. as a Youth Specialist facilitating self-identity and creative expression programs for young girls of color. Shanell also serves as a Researcher for the In Our Names Network Research Project, working to achieve Police Free Schools and safe learning environments. She currently works at a therapeutic

boarding school, combining therapeutic milieus with education in hopes to incorporate similar resources within public school systems.

Shakeema Koonce, Girls for Gender Equity

Shakeema Koonce, affectionately known as Jasmine by those who call her family, was snapped by New York City, her mother's Trinidadian values, and wide range music. This taught her two things: the world is a little bit easier to battle when everyone understands the concept of basic respect, and the balance of life is the understanding that balance isn't separate, or reactionary, or constant; it just is. With those two things in mind, she attempts to gather evidence to prove facts exist in a world where we look at just the remarkable exterior and not the microscopic cracks when both are important. Understanding, and constantly relearning this, she tells the stories of others in many different shapes and forms.

Tionni Townsel, Young Women's Freedom Center

Tionni Townsel is an organizer at Young Women's Freedom Center.

Site Supervisors

Jasmine Frye, Young Women's Freedom Center

Jasmine was born and raised in Oakland, and moved to Berkeley after her birth mother served a lengthy prison sentence when she was a child. Being a child of incarcerated parents fuels her passion and commitment to dismantling the criminal system. Her work with families, specifically with children of incarcerated families, started when she was a middle school student. Currently, Jasmine is the Oakland Director of Young Women's Freedom Center.

Breya Johnson, Girls for Gender Equity

Breya M. Johnson (she/they) is a cultural worker

and freelance writer living in Brooklyn NY. Her work looks at modes of disposability, Black health, reproductive justice, radical love, and abolition. She is interested in the inner workings of Black women and girls and is finding a location for healing in the writings of Black folks globally.

Tammaka Staley

Tammaka Staley is a native and resident of Columbia, South Carolina and the Founder and CEO of Youth Affirming Sex Education (YASÉ), LLC. YASÉ is a youth organization dedicated to teaching comprehensive, decolonized sex education to 12-19-year-olds. Tammaka has been a sex educator for over eight years. They have volunteered as a SafeSite with The National Great American Condom Campaign, South Carolina Contraceptive Access Campaign, and CareSouth Carolina in Society Hill, South Carolina. Additionally, she has also had training with Fact Forward, formerly known as the South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Tammaka was the 2019 lead sex educator for teens at Sowing Seeds into the Midlands.

Overall Coordination and Support

Andrea J. Ritchie

Andrea J. Ritchie (she/her) is a Black lesbian immigrant survivor who has been documenting, organizing, advocating, litigating, and agitating around policing and criminalization of Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people for the past three decades. She has been actively engaged in anti-violence, labor, and LGBTQ organizing and in movements against state violence and for racial, reproductive, economic, environmental, and gender justice in the U.S., Canada, and internationally since the 1980s.

Andrea is the author of *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color* and co-author of [No More Police. A Case for Abolition, Say Her Name: Resisting Police Brutality Against Black Women](#), and *Queer (In) Justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*. She co-founded [Interrupting Criminalization](#) and the [In Our Names Network](#), a network of over 20 organizations working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people, and led [INCITE!'s work on law enforcement violence](#). In these capacities and through the [Community Resource Hub](#) and [National Black Women's Justice Institute](#), she works with dozens of groups across the country organizing to divest from policing and secure deep investments in community-based strategies that will produce greater public safety.

Lauren Williams-Batiste

Lauren Williams-Batiste (she/her) has over ten years of experience working with key constituency groups, as well as reproductive justice, rights, and health coalitions and organizations throughout the country. In her most recent role with In Our Names Network, a national network of organizations, campaigns and individuals working to end police violence against Black women, girls, and trans and gender nonconforming people, Lauren serves as Executive Director. Lauren also followed in her great-grandmother's footsteps by starting her own business, Elle's Elixirs – a wellness brand that celebrates Black women, femmes, and wellness by offering culturally competent education on hemp and cannabis and curating handcrafted herbal tea, bath, and hemp products.