



Youth
First
Justice
Collaborative

#NoKidsInPrison

IMPACT REPORT

2024-2025



ROOTS &

DEAR SUPPORTERS & FRIENDS,

As leadership within this organization, we recognize that we are writing from a moment fraught with legislative and media tension around nearly every issue, including youth justice. In only a few months, we've seen focused attacks on some of our most deeply held values, leading to rollbacks on hard-fought policy wins from previous decades. We've also seen a resurgence of the "super-predator myth" and increased budgets for incarceration, despite overwhelming evidence that prisons do nothing but harm children.

Yet, at this very moment, people all across the country are organizing for the safety and sanctity of their communities.

We know from experience that

organizing works, even in—*especially* in—tough times.

Youth First Justice Collaborative's (YFJC) State Partners have made significant progress in the last few years, keeping youth carceral facilities closed in Kansas, Louisiana and New Jersey and defeating efforts to open new (or re-open previously closed) facilities in Pennsylvania and Connecticut. We have supported reinvestment campaigns advocating for diversion, placed limits on detention and incarceration and strengthened community alternatives in Minnesota, Texas and Pennsylvania.

We can still end youth incarceration. Look at what we've already accomplished.

As the only national resource hub engaging youth in the movement to end mass incarceration, YFJC has an extraordinary history. We have been unafraid to boldly name challenges, engage in honest conversations and commit to learning from each other across generations.

WINGS

00

We are stewards of the future, building on the efforts of those who have come before us in the interest of those who will come after.

Communities at the ground level must keep challenging the structural roots of violence—not just imagining new alternatives to incarceration, but also investing in and piloting them.

That's why, although YFJC began as a time-limited initiative, we're now in it for the long haul.

In 2024 and 2025, YFJC refreshed our vision to support state campaigns and model best practices in youth justice organizing. We forged new national partnerships, convened learning communities and invested in rigorous organizing training to strengthen state campaign strategies. We also onboarded a new Advisory Board and welcomed two new State Partners into the network. We are continuing to learn from our State Partners through peer learning exchanges, and we're responding to the resurgence of the super-predator

myth with truthful and uplifting storytelling.

On a personal level, what drives us most in this report are the stories from the field: young people who formed intersectional coalitions and found community in organizing. These stories shape the foundation of our movement and remind us that what we're building is infinitely more powerful than what we're dismantling.

We are honored to be part of this effort, and look forward to continuing to organize alongside the next generation of abolitionists working toward ending youth incarceration once and for all.

With gratitude,

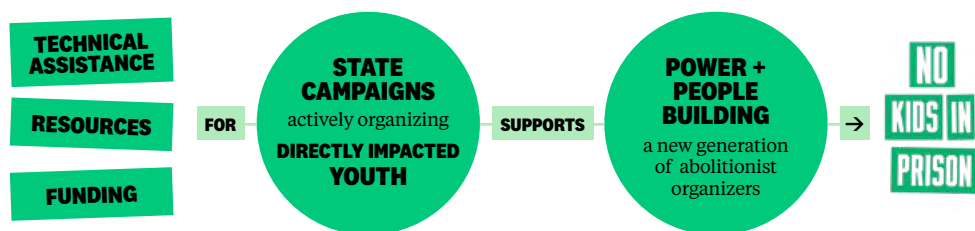


Michaela Pommells
Executive Director, YFJC



Pamela Fong
YFJC Advisory Board Chair

INTRO



The Theory of Change above guides our work. In practice, it means we support campaigns in which young people who have experienced the carceral system are taking the lead to dismantle it through organizing. It means we emphasize the importance of collective learning, offering campaigns access to expertise that will help them create change at the legislative, economic and interpersonal levels. And it means we provide the tangible resources needed to fuel and sustain that change.

This report outlines the successes YFJC has had over the last two years enacting our Theory of Change. It also highlights key components of our strategic vision for the future as it relates to building power with state campaigns, collaborating with youth, communicating our message and evaluating and modifying our approach.

In the next five years we will:

- Launch a 12-month paid organizing fellowship for eight young and emerging leaders who have been directly impacted by the legal system that helps them develop organizing and power-building skills to sustain the movement to end youth incarceration
- Launch the #NoKidsInPrison Magazine as a groundbreaking platform for directly-impacted youth to reshape the national narrative around justice
- Expand to a 20-state strong YFJC network, and continue to strengthen that ecosystem
- Train 200+ youth and young adult organizers across the country to organize to end youth incarceration

By the Numbers

3

New State Partners added to our network in Mississippi (People's Advocacy Institute), California (Communities United for Restorative Justice CURYJ) & Tennessee (Southern Movement Committee)

4

Members joined the first-ever Youth Leadership Advisory Board

\$500k

Subgranted to State Partners to support their campaigns

70+

Attendees at the 2024 Grassroots Assembly in Philadelphia

2

Youth Curatorial Apprentices enlisted to oversee creation of the first-ever #NoKidsInPrison Magazine

“ ”

“What’s so powerful about [the Grassroots Assembly] is the young people, and how we’re passing the baton on to the new faces of the movement.”

— Antonio, Grassroots Assembly 2024 attendee from Louisiana

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#NoKidsInPrison



STATE OF THE SYSTEM

01

Our #NoKidsInPrison mission is up against significant obstacles in the face of rising authoritarianism. Lawmakers across multiple states are eager to charge more of our kids as adults and arrest them at younger and younger ages. Conditions continue to degrade in detention facilities nationwide, with reports of violent abuse, staffing shortages, extended use of solitary and lockdowns, lack of educational programming and more.

In a climate strikingly similar to what we saw in the '90s, a resurgence of tough-on-crime narratives fueled by misinformation and sensationalized crime data has led to calls for harsher treatment of young people. This sets the stage for policymakers to “play hero” by proposing regressive policies or incremental adjustments that distract from the long-term, transformative changes and reinvestments that we know are necessary.

Right now, as many as 34,000 kids are locked up, according to data collected by The Sentencing Project. At a cost of more than \$200,000 in taxpayer dollars per child—1250% more than what we spend on education—this system is a money pit siphoning resources that could be better invested in our communities. Lawmakers and juvenile justice departments make promises of ‘nicer’ facilities that will be

‘trauma-informed’ and ‘won’t even feel like a prison.’ But from Angola to Attica, we know the purpose of incarceration has always been about control and capital, not healing or rehabilitation.

At the same time, we’re making progress. **The number of youth locked up has decreased by an incredible 75% since 2000.** Arrest rates have plummeted by more than 80% since their peak in 1996 due to the tireless work of countless activists and grassroots organizers.

Finish the 5 campaign organizers successfully mobilized last year to kill a \$300M “trauma-informed” prison project in Austin, Texas. In Pennsylvania, years of grassroots organizing and activism from the Care, Not Control campaign have staved off the reopening of the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center, which the District Attorney shut down following an investigation into horrendous abuse allegations.

We continue to advocate for life-affirming institutions and community-based solutions because we know, with the right support, every kid is capable of change regardless of their mistakes. Our work is a testament to the fact that when we invest in our kids, our communities become safer.

Three Years of Wins

2025

- \$825k & \$1.1 million moved toward diversion programs in Pennsylvania
- \$22.5M moved toward a community-based diversion center in Chicago, legal services, therapy, a gym and more

2024

- New Jersey committed to timeline for the closure of two youth prisons & New Jersey Institute for Social Justice secured seat on official state work group that will offer recommendations for repurposing those facilities
- YFJC’s Texas State Partner—the Finish the 5 campaign—organized to support the passage of House Bill 3186, the Texas Youth Diversion and Early Intervention Act, which allows judges to decide earlier in the judicial process if a teenager should be part of a youth diversion program

2023

- Franklin County, Kansas juvenile detention facility closed
- The End Youth Prisons - MN campaign supported omnibus bill SF 2909 (passed during the 2023-24 session), which included more than \$20 million in near-term funding for community-based alternative services & supports for youth
- Youth removed from the West Feliciana Center for Youth at Angola Prison in Louisiana & center closed

PEOPLE & POWER BUILDING

02

“ ”

Community power is the ability of those most impacted by structural inequity to join together and set agendas, shift public discourse, influence decision-making and cultivate relationships that reinforce mutual accountability. Put simply, community power is the collective strength to shape the decisions and systems that affect our daily lives.

— Lead Local & The Culture & Community Power Fund

Organizing and movement-building are critical to ending youth incarceration and improving material conditions in our communities. These actions build people power—the most potent force for systemic change there is.

Through organizing, people most impacted by injustice reclaim power from corporations, ineffective politicians and the wealthy few,

shifting agency and decision-making capacity into the hands of citizens and community members.

The pathways to effective organizing aren't always accessible or clear—unjust systems rely on people feeling powerless. We stay organized to codify the positive cultural and political shifts we've made. Our goal is to orient people to their own power.

39

Lab participants

04

Labs

YFJC Learning Labs 2024 & 2025

The YFJC Learning Labs, established in 2024, were workshop-style sessions that provided capacity-building support to State Partners. These Labs deepened campaign strategy and infrastructure by providing spaces to develop a shared vision, strengthen collective narratives and build power together.

Reinvestment Lab

Partners developed materials and messaging to guide their reinvestment strategy in alignment with political and fiscal context in their states.

21

People

07

States

04

Facilitators

Organizing and Base Building Training

Facilitated by the George Jackson Organizing School, this Lab incorporated theory, action and reflection to strengthen participants' campaigns and organizing practices with a strong focus on campaign development strategy, base building, leadership development and political education.

23

People

10

States

02

Facilitators

Building Narrative Power

Partners developed a narrative systems approach to their communication strategies that works in tandem with other power-building strategies including organizing, civic engagement and public advocacy. This Lab also supported collaboration among partners, bolstering a unified messaging approach.

16

People

09

States

01

Facilitator

Transforming Conflict in Practice

State Partners developed the tools to create cultures, policies and structures more conducive to their abolitionist values, while learning more about the root causes of conflict and how to lead and mediate through it.

14

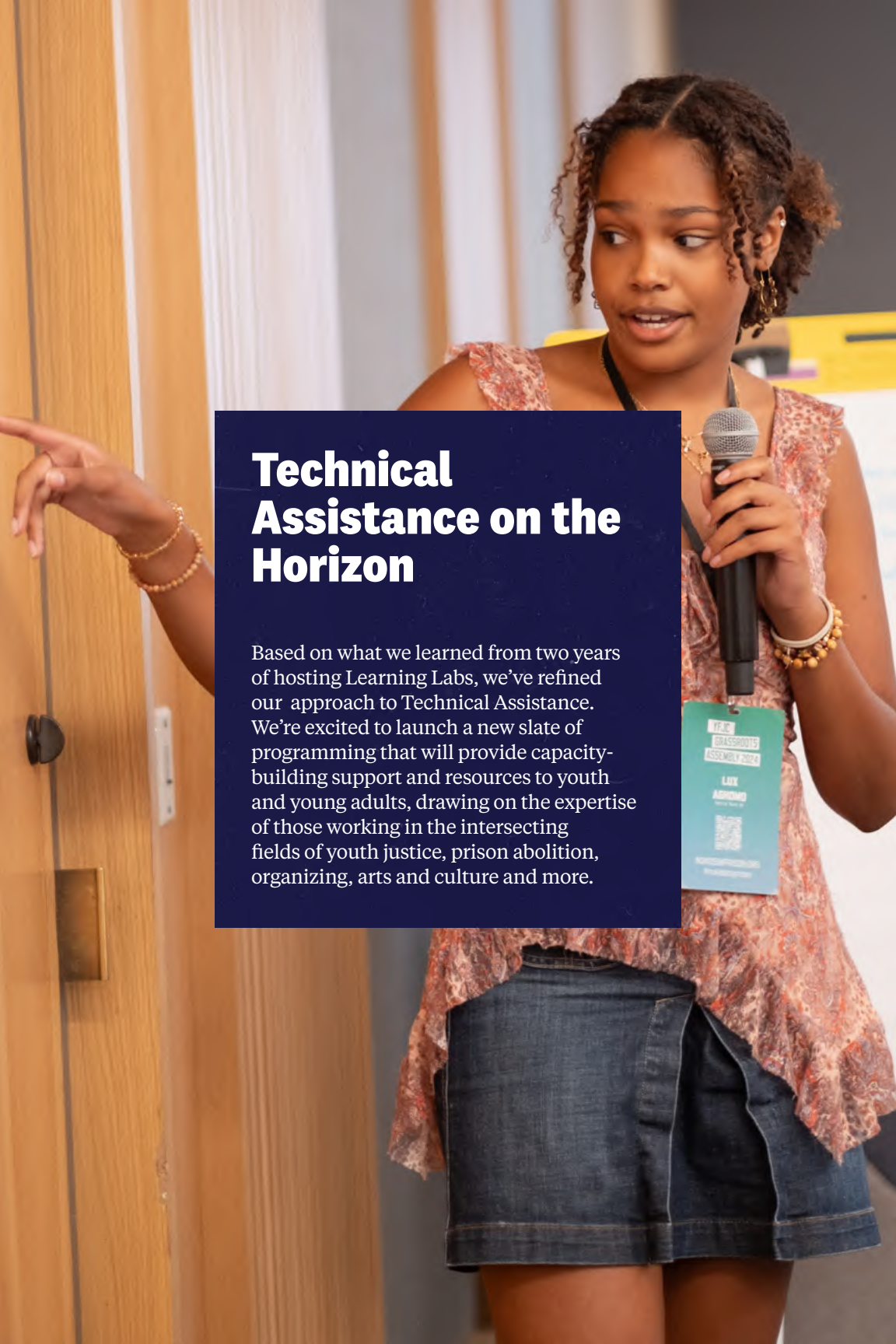
People

06

States

01

Facilitator



Technical Assistance on the Horizon

Based on what we learned from two years of hosting Learning Labs, we've refined our approach to Technical Assistance. We're excited to launch a new slate of programming that will provide capacity-building support and resources to youth and young adults, drawing on the expertise of those working in the intersecting fields of youth justice, prison abolition, organizing, arts and culture and more.

GJOS Training

We continue to sponsor members of our network to participate in organizing training through the George Jackson Organizing School (GJOS). We offer limited slots to attend the biannual eight-week school and occasionally host in-person trainings.

Peer Cohorts

Peer learning cohorts will bring people together across campaigns in our network, providing the opportunity to learn from one another, sharpen our strategies and build stronger intergenerational organizing campaigns.

Organizing Fundamentals

Refresher courses and introductory trainings will strengthen our movement and campaign infrastructure. Courses will include such topics as "How to Develop Campaign Principles," "Steps to Starting a Coalition" and "Power-Mapping."

1:1 Direct Support Offerings

We will offer direct facilitation and coaching support to strengthen campaign infrastructure, youth and adult partnerships, youth decision-making and coalition building.

Convenings

Quarterly calls with members of our network will take place in January, April, July and October. The next Grassroots Assembly will bring together campaign partners from across the U.S. for intensive base-building workshops and a celebration of our movement. It will take place in April 2026.





THE FOREVER⁰³ GENERATION

Historically, young people have been integral to movement-building and organizing, playing key roles as members and leaders of the Black Panther Party, Young Lords Party, American Indian Movement and Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. We continue to see youth at the forefront of social movements across the U.S., organizing to end genocide and violence overseas, in support of climate action, against police brutality and for the rights of immigrant and indigenous communities, to name a few.

At the same time, we are wary of instances where organizing has become transactional or one-sided. The core of our network is true partnership with young people that sees them leading, growing and sustaining campaigns. **Youth are the heart of our mission. There is no abolition without their leadership.** We continuously reflect on how well we're reaching and engaging with young people and we require any campaigns joining our network to do the same.

The Youth Leaders Network (YLN)

While we will sunset the program in 2025, the **Youth Leaders Network (YLN)** has been a key element of YFJC since its inception. **The YLN allowed systems-impacted youth leaders across state campaigns space to:**

- Share strategies and resources that supported their development as organizers—for example, a former YLN member became a Curatorial Apprentice in 2025 for the first-ever #NoKidsInPrison Magazine
- Take initiative to engage in opportunities that strengthened their leadership capacity, such as the 2025 22nd Century Conference in Atlanta, GA, which a YLN member attended
- Expand their knowledge to strengthen their organizing and base-building skills

08

Young Leaders

04

States

MN, NM, KS, TX

100%

Systems-impacted

The Youth Leadership Advisory Board (YLAB)

The **Youth Leadership Advisory Board (YLAB)** is a group of system-impacted young and emerging leaders from partner campaigns who work with YFJC to make decisions and contribute their thoughts about the opportunities we offer young people.

The YLAB convened for the first time in person in October 2024 and has continued to meet, largely virtually, once per quarter. The YLAB has been, and will continue to be, an integral thought partner on the development of Block x Block and other 2026 Youth Leader opportunities.

04

Youth Leadership
Advisory Board
Members

04

States

NM, LA, CT, TX



Coming Soon: Block x Block Fellowship

Abolition doesn't happen all at once, it's built block by block through people, relationships and organizing in our communities. Ending youth incarceration and creating better futures for our people starts with building power right where we are. Block x Block is a hybrid, 12-month, paid fellowship for eight young leaders who have been directly impacted by the legal system and are affiliated with YFJC.

This fellowship invests in the process of orienting young leaders with their own power through learning, assessment and practice. The cohort model allows for leaders with

common experiences to hold a space for collective learning, sharpening their political analysis and engaging in abolitionist practices.

Kicking off in Denver, CO, the fellows will meet eight times virtually over the course of 2026 and three times in person, culminating in a graduation in April 2027.

BLOCK X BLOCK

**November
3**

Application release

**April
2026**

Cohort launches





Story from the Field

Gabriel Arika

My challenges began as early as preschool, where I was labeled a “bad kid.” In high school in Minnesota, I was involved in athletics and advocated within my school—everything from getting us a homecoming dance to bringing up issues that ranged from staff treatment to students to athletics coordination. I was heavy on student empowerment and leadership. I held spaces with the Principal, Vice Principal, deans, social workers, the District Superintendent and the Athletic Director. Still, that early labeling followed me; I didn’t realize how deeply it tied into

broader systems of criminalization. I had multiple run-ins with law enforcement, often without knowing my rights or how to protect myself.

In 2023, my friend Aaliyah invited me to a storytelling workshop hosted by the Legal Rights Center (LRC). I didn’t know what to expect. I had never been in a space where complete strangers share vulnerable past trauma and experiences. I left with new friends and connections and soon applied for LRC’s youth justice fellowship, as well as Know Your Rights sessions, policy and advocacy work. As I began studying data, from



I didn’t know what to expect. I had never been in a space where complete strangers share vulnerable past trauma and experiences. I left with new friends and connections.

— Gabriel Arika

school suspensions to incarceration rates, it all started to make sense. The numbers told a story I had lived. I learned about the deceptive tactics police use to incriminate people, especially youth of color, and how those tactics are embedded in larger systems of control. Diving deeper into racial profiling, police quotas and qualified immunity helped me understand how these systems are designed to target and silence us.

The fellowship led me to apply for the Youth Network with the Legal Rights Center, where I did legal education, helped co-facilitate the fellowship and worked closely with impacted youth as well as the youth leaders who were ultimately a driving force for us. During my time with the Fellowship and Network, I testified on bills at the Capitol and helped

organize protests and gatherings. I recently stepped into a new role at the Legal Rights Center as the Youth Programming Lead—a testament to how far I’ve come.

At 18, I caught my first and *last* charge. Even then, I felt out of place being put into an adult jail. I spent five days inside, and it was a wake-up call. With the support of attorneys from the Legal Rights Center, I was able to get the case dismissed and eventually expunged. Their advocacy made a real difference then, and now, I’m proud to call them my coworkers.

MESSAGING OUR MOVEMENT

04

As noted throughout this report, the recent resurgence of tough-on-crime narratives—fueled by misinformation and sensationalized crime data—has the potential to undo years of progress in our fight to end youth incarceration. YFJC’s work is driven by and anchored in the understanding that our current system isn’t just ineffective and costly, it’s destructive to our communities and perpetuates cycles of violence and trauma.

A unified communication strategy is a form of resistance. We can counter these damaging narratives with positive stories about young people and the community-led programs that are increasing and enhancing safety for communities across the country.

We can tell real stories of resistance, community-building and healing—and we can tell them better.

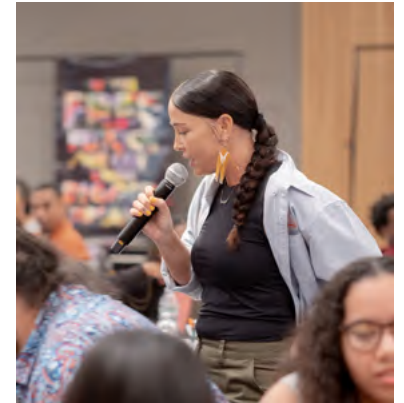
To guide our overhead messaging and mission, we launched a new #NoKidsInPrison website in 2025—a digital space to highlight practical alternatives to youth incarceration, share information with campaign partners and uplift stories of young leaders. Check it out at www.nokidsinprison.org.

We move people to support #NoKidsInPrison by influencing their capacity to imagine. We paint pictures that populate the subconscious and enable people to imagine and conceive of realities beyond the punitive, destructive, ineffective system we have been conditioned to accept as necessary. Through our messaging work, we are ultimately showing the public that when we invest in youth, our communities become safer.

Our approach to resisting harmful messaging is twofold:

We’re documenting and publicizing the effectiveness of the alternatives.

We are highlighting the proven success of community-led initiatives like restorative justice programs, diversion programs, violence intervention programs and continuums of care for our young people.



We’re showing the public that young people are the solution.

Rather than capitulating to the opposition’s framing, we’re leaning into our own. Our opps are telling the public, “Young people are the problem.” They’re saying kids these days are beyond helping. Our response has evolved and become more thoughtful than, “Young people aren’t the problem. Instead, we’re saying: “Young people are the solution.” And we’re saying it loud.



“Would you invest millions of dollars in a system with such a poor track record?”

The #NoKidsInPrison Manifesto

The #NoKidsInPrison Manifesto is a powerful example of messaging that clearly highlights the problem and confidently proposes solutions, without mincing words. Read and share it online at nokidsinprison.org/nokidsinprison-manifesto/ or scan the QR code.



YOUTH PRISON WATCH

NO KIDS IN PRISON BLACK AUGUST 2023 A YEAR PUBLICATION

STATE OF YOUTH PRISONS

Black August - created by Black Panther Party member George Jackson - is an opportunity to reflect on and study the contributions of Black revolutionaries and political prisoners.

This special inaugural edition of Youth Prison Watch is presented in honor of and solidarity with the countless Black revolutionaries and political prisoners who have come before us, whose unwavering commitment to freedom lays our collective fight for abolition in every generation.

YOUTH FIGHT BACK!

While politicians, prosecutors and private companies push for more youth prisons and incarceration, young people and their allies are fighting back and winning! According to the *Restoring Project*, between 2000 and 2007 the number of youth locked up decreased by 75%! Arrest rates for youth dropped over 80% since their peak in 1997! All thanks to the work of countless people organizing at local and state levels.

This decline is a major victory, but all communities have benefited equally. In 2023, Black and Indigenous youth faced the highest level of incarceration in youth incarceration rates. Black youth were nearly six times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated. Indigenous youth were almost four times as likely, and Latinx youth faced a 25% higher likelihood of incarceration. These disparities reveal youth incarceration for what it is: a tool of a racist system targeting Black people and trapping our communities in cycles of incarceration. This is why we must fight. No one is free until all our youth are free.

Now youth prisons are not the solution. How will a new prison do the ongoing underfunding that keeps youth locked in their cells all day? How will it stop the violence and abuse they face from guards? Why must youth be locked up for minor offenses like school truancy, counseling and education? Why aren't these services available in our communities? A new prison still removes youth from their support systems, families and loved ones. This sets them on a path to experience higher rates of both incarceration and violence as they grow up. The average cost to incarcerate a youth is over \$200,000 a year. What could our communities do with that money instead?

We haven't even talked about how much it costs to build new youth facilities. Eighty-one states are being built or expanded across the country at huge costs. For example, Tennessee plans to build three new youth prisons at a combined estimated cost of \$618 million. Louisiana's Governor is pushing for over 200 new youth prisons and detention centers built at a cost of \$624 million with the explicit purpose of locking more and more youth to serve time behind bars. California's, Colorado's, Wisconsin's, Ohio's, Washington's and other states are planning for new cages to lock our youth in for generations to come.

History has shown us that when we fight, we win! And young people have been leading the fight for generations. We want you to reach out to your friends, your family and people in your community and ask them: What could we do with millions of dollars every year that would actually help young people instead of locking them in a cage? What does our community need to thrive? How can we fight for it together?

Do we've got one question for you: What are we going to do about it?

NO KIDS IN PRISON MANIFESTO

Today in the United States, the kids are not okay.

More than 64,000 young people* are locked up inside facilities every year where they experience violence instead of justice, neglect instead of care and degradation instead of growth. They are isolated from family, loved ones and community to the tune of more than \$200,000 taxpayer dollars per child. That's 1.25% more than we spend on average to educate a child, which is around \$16,000.

Youth and communities thrive when society prioritizes keeping families and support networks together.

The nation's entire system of youth incarceration is predicated on the disruption and decimation of the family unit -- the most integral and foundational institution of a society. Our youth prisons are globally recognized as the most inhumane in the world, with widespread physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The research is clear: Youth prisons don't do what they're supposed to do, and they don't make our communities safer. They're an expensive ineffective money pit siphoning tax dollars from the public that could be better invested in solutions centered around the struggles of our families and communities. Would you invest millions of dollars in a system with such a poor track record?

Public safety is possible, and at a much better price point. When young people make mistakes and learn from them, society should respond by providing them the chance to repair the damage they have caused while also healing the community and their own trauma. We want to see resources reallocated to the places where young people live, instead of being removed from their communities, our homes and access to resources in their neighborhoods. When we invest in our youth, we invest in our future. We want to see resources reallocated to the places where young people live, instead of being removed from their communities, our homes and access to resources in their neighborhoods. When we invest in our youth, we invest in our future. We want to see resources reallocated to the places where young people live, instead of being removed from their communities, our homes and access to resources in their neighborhoods.

Despite this fact, we continue to see our government and states double down, calling for more punitive measures, more facilities to trap kids and more taxpayer dollars to fund a failed operation. Lawmakers want to be "tough on crime," while detention facilities consistently report staffing shortages, extended use of isolation and lockdowns, lack of education and other programming, and rampant violence and escape attempts.

The solution isn't "tougher" youth prisons - the problem is youth prisons in the first place. The vision is of a world with #NoKidsInPrison. That means no young people are put in carceral settings, including jails or prisons, juvenile and adult detention centers, and private and state-run facilities.

ARE YOU WITH US?

Join the #NoKidsInPrison Movement and get your free NYSP sticker!

Fact check us! www.nokidsinprison.org

The Youth Prison Watch broadside will publish in seven states.

CULTURE & POWER BUILDING

05

People engage with each other most authentically through cultural modes—art, storytelling, shared spaces, celebrations and rituals. That’s why it’s essential that we tap into culture as a key component of our power-building efforts. Through art and storytelling, we shift attitudes, foster connections, elevate the voices of those most impacted by inequity and incarceration and challenge harmful narratives, replacing them with new stories, new ways of thinking and new ways of learning from one another. **Our Youth Prison Watch broadside and our new #NoKidsInPrison magazine are canvases for this change; disruptive engines for building a youth-led movement.**

Designed to chronicle the state of

youth prisons in the U.S., sound the alarm about new youth prison builds and amplify the powerful ways young people are fighting back, Youth Prison Watch will be distributed to more than 400 people across seven states: Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Connecticut, New York, California, Mississippi and Kansas.

Our forthcoming #NoKidsInPrison magazine will be a platform for directly impacted youth, curated by our inaugural Curatorial Apprentices Brit Christopher and Gabriel Arika— young leaders handpicked from the #NoKidsInPrison State Partner network. They will take a leadership role in every stage of publication, from conceptualizing its themes and selecting submissions to overseeing its physical layout and distribution.

Under their editorial leadership, contributors will reshape the national narrative around justice by sharing their own stories and visions.

We’re also building youth-led distribution teams across eight states to act as on-the-ground ambassadors, ensuring the voices of young artists and writers reach far beyond our digital channels. We’ll publish 4,000 copies to be distributed across these states. At an industry standard of three readers per copy, we expect each issue of our magazine to reach more than 16,000 people, providing a tangible glimpse into the world of youth-led art and abolition.

About 50 to 60 young artists and writers will have the opportunity to publish their work on a professional platform, with the potential to reach 16,000 people across seven states.





Story from the Field

The Power of Coalition Building in Louisiana

In March 2025, Louisiana voters rejected a constitutional amendment that would have made it easier to send young people to adult jails and prisons for longer sentences. This victory was largely thanks to the tireless efforts of the Liberty & Dignity Coalition, made up of 50 organizations that banded together to protect their communities. Among them was YFJC's partner, Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children (FFLIC).

We know that incarcerating children at all is harmful; incarcerating them alongside adults puts them at an even greater risk of

violence and psychological distress. Children in adult prisons essentially serve their entire sentence in solitary confinement, which means depriving them of their inherent need to socialize and build community, as well as inflicting lifelong mental trauma.

FFLIC worked to defeat Amendment 3 through a strategic, community-driven campaign focused on voter education, engagement and mobilization. For months leading up to the vote, its members worked with partners to distribute thousands of informational flyers and yard signs across key neighborhoods in the



This victory belongs to the youth, families and advocates who refused to accept policies that harm children and weaken communities. Charging youth as adults does not create safer communities—it only increases the likelihood of harm and trauma for our young people. By voting no, Louisiana has refused to take a step backward in its approach to public safety, and it's a step forward in recognizing that all children deserve support, not incarceration.

— Gina Womack, FFLIC Executive Director and Co-Founder

state's largest cities. They participated in dozens of tabling sessions, canvassing days and collaborative events in the community and at major universities.

The Coalition members were strategic in their efforts: Recognizing that Louisiana officials would schedule the vote on a day when only those most likely to vote 'yes' would show up, they provided transportation to polling places during early voting and on Election Day. Simultaneously, their media strategy amplified the voices of people who had been impacted by incarceration, catalyzing

the campaign's momentum. The result was higher-than-usual voter turnout for an amendment election; a bipartisan wave of Louisiana voters agreed that youth deserve second chances.

The lesson here is that when we expand statewide coalitions and engage in strong community organizing across silos, we create a stronger power base and increased intersectionality, which has the potential to drive positive social impact across issues going forward.

COLLECTIVE LEARNING & EVALUATION

06

Learning and evaluation (L+E) is essential to organizing. Through L+E, we ask questions to understand if and how our work is getting us closer to achieving our vision of #NoKidsInPrison. Questions like:

How well are we supporting state campaigns?

How are we moving closer to a more just, humane society?

How are young leaders, particularly those directly impacted by the carceral system, growing their leadership?



Research for social justice expands and improves the conditions for justice.

— Linda Tuhiwai Smith

Over the last year, we've focused on building out our L+E principles and practice. In time, we want to learn how YFJC funding and resources contribute to the development of youth leaders and their campaigns and how these campaigns are in turn strengthened by the leadership of directly impacted youth.

L+E at YFJC is designed to build on the knowledge, insights and feelings of those in our network. Since September 2024, we've collected baseline information from applications and registration forms to inform our planning, administered surveys to learn about Grassroots Assembly and Learning Lab experiences and held debriefings among the YFJC team and with collaborators. We've also asked state campaigns to complete self-assessments as part of applying for a grant. If they are not already doing so, our intention is that State Partners incorporate these self-assessments as a core tool for sharpening their organizing and youth-adult partnerships.

For the first time in 2025, we asked members of the YFJC Advisory Board to provide feedback on our draft subgrant rubric. These rubrics help determine which of our partners receive funding and how we fund them; collecting feedback on that

process, and then holding info sessions with potential grantees, is part of our effort to create more equitable funding mechanisms.

To make our L+E approach transparent and collaborative, we took advantage of the engaged group of in-person attendees at the 2024 General Assembly in Philadelphia. At the Assembly, we sought input from state campaigns and Learning Lab facilitators, asking about survey design and other evaluation strategies. We also invited attendees to fill out "Abolition Journals" with their own definitions of and reflections on abolition.

The Abolition Journals teased out a common mission and determined how we message it. This is ongoing work, but the journals showed there is interest in deepening connections between people, campaigns, ideas and approaches. As one participant wrote, **'Building power collectively means understanding that oppression is oppression! Coming together gives us the opportunity to build a collective platform for change.'**



Story from the Field

Brit Christopher

In the popular imagination, organizing often looks like marches, rallies and protests—powerful forms of activism that have driven change for generations. But organizing is also about the work that happens behind the scenes: the ongoing strategic efforts that support lasting impact. For movements to thrive, organizing must be accessible and practical for everyone. This idea is wholly embodied by Care, Not Control (C,NC), one of our State Partners. Brit Christopher is a Philadelphia-based Youth Advisory Board member of the organization.

Brit is engaged with 'Shrink the

Youth Carceral State,' a campaign to place a moratorium on building or re-opening youth facilities in Pennsylvania. As a painter, poet and organizer, her art and advocacy are driven by a commitment to building and sustaining healing spaces for young people, particularly Black and Indigenous youth.

YFJC: Can you speak about your experience moving through the leadership pipeline at C,NC? What was that like and how has YFJC supported that journey for you?

Brit: Moving through the C,NC



I feel the most impactful knowledge I've gained was from the group campaign scenarios—being able to see how certain actions could impact your campaign was a reminder of the amount of mindfulness and intention needed to win.

— Brit Christopher

leadership pipeline is almost like joining a new friend group. You kind of just come around, show love and people see you; they welcome you.

I think that's the best way to describe it. I've been following C,NC since 2022-2023. When I learned of them, I was impressed with their vision so I supported it a lot: sharing their posts, coming to events and communing with C,NC members in spaces like Juvenile Law Center and Youth and Self-empowerment Project (YASP).

Through that, [C,NC] ended up collaborating on a podcast project with [YFJC Executive Director] Michaela. Although the project ended up being on hold I continued relationships with C,NC members. I decided that I wanted to be a part of C,NC after their Freedom Constellation Project. The year following, C,NC began recruiting

for their Youth Advisory Board and I was given the opportunity to apply. So I officially joined up.

YFJC: How did training with the George Jackson Organizing School (GJOS) impact your growth and leadership as an organizer?

Brit: Training with GJOS has impacted me in many ways. I was able to expand my knowledge as an organizer, giving me the tools to support my team in furthering our campaign. I feel the most impactful knowledge I've gained was from the group campaign scenarios—being able to see how certain actions could impact your campaign was a reminder of the amount of mindfulness and intention needed to win. In the training I was also able to connect with like-minded individuals who share the same goals of a free future for children.

OUTRO

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This impact report reflects Youth First Justice Collaborative's journey through a challenging landscape of media tension and legislative attacks. It also documents our progress in ending youth incarceration, supporting prison closure campaigns and cultivating tomorrow's frontline of abolitionists. The successes outlined in this report belong to our entire network: to our young leaders, to organizers and to every supporter who believes in a world with #NoKidsInPrison. In the face of a system rooted in control and capital, our commitment is to remain focused and to continue building power.

We see ourselves as stewards of the future. Thanks to the kids, our future is bright. We look forward to continuing this vital work alongside you.



Thank you for taking the time to read our impact report. We are endlessly grateful for your support and for the collective effort of our State Partners and members.

Youth First Justice Collaborative would like to extend a special thank you to everyone who made this impact report possible: Brit Christopher, Gabriel Arika, Florentina Staigers Cruz, Pamela Fong, Sophie Engel and Outside. We also want to acknowledge the leadership and guidance of our Advisory Board and Youth Leaders Advisory Board.

Our work is far from over, and we invite you to be part of this journey. Whether you choose to join us, donate or simply spread the word. Every action matters.

#FreeOurYouth #FreeThemAll
www.nokidsinprison.org
@no_kids_in_prison

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THANK YOU'S



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