

National Black Women's Justice Institute



2020 Impact Statement



We envision a society where healing—not punishment—is upheld as justice.

The National Black Women's Justice Institute (NBWJI) aims to eliminate racial and gender disparities in the U.S. criminal legal system that are responsible for its disproportionate impact on Black women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people. We engage in rigorous research and capacity building in order to transform the current system and promote policy change that centers and uplifts the voices and experiences of Black women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. We seek to dismantle the punitive paradigm driving the U.S. criminal legal system and build, in its place, pathways to healing and opportunity.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Striving for race and gender equity

Elevating and amplifying community expertise

Creating opportunities for healing

Grounding our work in data

Since 2014, NBWJI has worked to transform the U.S. criminal legal system by shifting narratives and the meaning of justice through research, policy, training, and assistance that centers Black women, girls, and gender-nonconforming people.

NBWJI 2020 Highlights

- **Co-created paid leadership opportunities for 6 formerly incarcerated women.**
- **Completed process evaluation of EMERGE**, an alternative education program for system-impacted Black girls. Report forthcoming early 2021.
- **Developed a gender-based violence prevention curriculum** to support and help Black and brown boys become allies against sexual violence. Available early 2021.
- **Provided technical assistance to 5 nonprofits** (3 reentry programs and 2 HIV/AIDS interventions) serving Black women and other women of color.
- **Trained over 500 Los Angeles probation officers** on various topics, including commercially sexually exploited children.
- **Co-hosted 5 webinars**, alongside Georgetown's Center on Poverty and Inequality, for Learning Network members, addressing student and educator wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic, restorative practices, and policing in schools.
- **Hosted a discussion with the NBWJI community about the criminalization of Black girls during the pandemic and a virtual event calling for healing and justice for Breonna Taylor.**

Our Core Commitments

Dismantling pathways to criminalization and confinement.

We continue our efforts to dismantle school-to-prison pathways for Black girls and gender expansive youth. The pandemic has shown us that this work is more important now than ever, as increasingly we hear alarming reports of Black students and parents being policed in their homes and coming in contact with juvenile courts and child protective services, as they attempt to navigate distance learning. **In August 2020, we hosted a virtual conversation about the case of Grace, a Black**

girl who was remanded to youth detention during the pandemic for failing to complete her homework, a violation of her probation.

We also hosted 5 webinars with our partners at Georgetown University's Center on Poverty and Inequality through the Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Network for Girls of Color. Our membership has grown significantly in the three years since its launch. **More than 1,200 educators, and counting, have joined the network** to gain resources and build their capacity to create trauma-informed learning environments for Black girls and other girls of color.

And early next year, we will publish the report of our evaluation of EMERGE, a first-of-its-kind alternative education program for system-impacted Black girls and other girls of color. Rooted in a deep commitment to healing and trauma-informed practices, EMERGE offers a promising new approach for repairing system-impacted girls' relationships with school and placing them on a path to higher education and beyond.

Expanding resources and opportunities with and for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women.

We established an advisory council of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women to guide and deepen the work of the Leadership of Voices of Experience (LOVE) Project, a training initiative funded by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) to enhance the capacity of victim services providers to support the needs and leadership of women who have experienced incarceration. This is a collaborative project between NBWJI, Young Women's Freedom Center, and National Crittenton. During a year when so many people have lost employment and are feeling the emotional strain of living increasingly isolated lives because of the COVID-19 pandemic, NBWJI has provided six formerly incarcerated women with a small, but reliable source of income and, equally as important, a sisterhood of support.

One of our advisory committee members was released from prison in April during the first wave of the pandemic. The advisory committee has been an important resource to her as she has navigated the challenges of returning home from incarceration, which have become even more daunting during the pandemic.

We bring together women from across the country: LOVE project advisory committee members are from California, Nevada, Georgia, Maryland, and Hawaii. In 2021, the advisory committee will facilitate at least three listening sessions with other formerly incarcerated women, ensuring that the training we develop is informed by a diversity of voices and experiences of formerly incarcerated women.



In 2021, NBWJI will:

Conduct first-of-its-kind interview study of Black cis- and transgender women about their interactions with police and experiences of police violence.

Survey educational practices in youth detention centers across the country to identify gaps and opportunities to improve educational experiences of youth directly impacted by the juvenile legal system.

Examine reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated women released during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, we also provided technical assistance to three reentry programs offering trauma-informed, gender-specific services to formerly incarcerated women in California, as part of our evaluation of the California Wellness Foundation's Women's Initiatives. Despite growth of the women's prison population, there has been little investment in developing reentry programs attuned to the unique needs and experiences of women returning home from incarceration

Promoting healing-centered justice.

Since 2016, NBWJI has provided training to Los Angeles probation officers to raise awareness about commercially sexually exploited children and to increase their capacity to support sex-trafficked minors under their supervision without causing harm. **This year we trained over 500 probation officers and have continued to offer virtual trainings during the pandemic.**

In September 2020, NBWJI, the Sentencing Project, and the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide co-hosted the convening "Creating Coalitions to End Extreme Sentencing for Women." **Following the convening, we drafted a joint statement of principles and action to end extreme punishment of women, who are disproportionately Black women and other women of color who have long histories of trauma, sexual violence, and unmet mental health needs.** Sixteen experts and organizations, and counting, have signed of as of December 2020. Despite anecdotal and empirical research confirming the distressing prevalence of sexual violence among incarcerated women, the U.S. criminal legal system continues to prioritize punishing women over supporting their health and wellbeing by providing services and support healing.

Finally, NBWJI hosted a virtual event calling for healing and justice for Breonna Taylor. The intimate gathering featured Dr. Cheryl Hicks, historian, and Andrea Ritchie, attorney and policing expert, who put Breonna's tragic and untimely death in the context of a broader history of police violence against Black women and reminded us of Black women's long legacy of activism for racial and gender justice in the U.S. criminal legal system.

Thank you for your support!



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