THE SCHOOL GIRLS DESERVE

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GIRLS FOR GENDER EQUITY

YOUTH-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS FOR CREATING SAFE, HOLISTIC, AND AFFIRMING NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Based in New York City for the past 15 years, Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) has partnered with a number of community-based organizations to combat the widespread human rights violations against cis and trans girls of color, and gender nonconforming young people of color in the United States. People living in the US are often able to understand the threat to academic achievement, gender-based violence, and reproductive choices as human rights violations against girls of color when it's happening internationally. Meanwhile, young people of color in the US face distinct forms of gender-based discrimination and violence in their communities and their schools that adversely impact their well-being and stand in the way of their educational and economic opportunities.

We work with an understanding that anti-blackness, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and xenophobia are cultural values that span from individual to systemic. GGE works from micro to macro believing that individuals make up systems and can transform them. We see ourselves as part of the global commitment to combating human rights injustices while being focused on maximum impact domestically.

GGE's experience working with girls of color, trans and gender nonconforming young people in particular has taught us that the global fight to ensure the basic right for all youth to receive a quality education and be contributing members of our growing democracy is urgent and not only a gender-based violence or reproductive rights issue but is also a school push out issue, school to prison pipeline issue, sexual assault to prison pipeline issue, gender-based violence issue, and school to poverty pipeline issue.

An alumni from our Sisters in Strength youth organizing program shared her story of receiving a suspension for the first time. Her offense? Wearing a cardigan that didn't match the colors of the student uniform, or as the school put it, insubordination (National Women's Law Center & Girls for Gender Equity 2015). Meanwhile, our office receives calls from parents and adult allies who want to support girls as young as middle school who have been sexually assaulted by boys in school and aren't being supported by school administration. Too many times girls and TGNC youth of color are being criminalized for normal adolescent behavior, trauma, crimes or offenses based on survival, mental health issues, substance abuse issues and offenses that truly require social and community support and resources rather than zero tolerance discipline or incarceration. The history of exclusion of all girls of color, including Black, Muslim, Native, Latinx, Southeast Asian, Asian Pacific Islander, from the race and gender-based reforms has a negative generational impact on a family's health, wealth, safety, and choices.

The School Girls Deserve Report isn't new activism; people have been fighting for educational liberation from *The Stolen Generations* to *Brown vs. Board of Education*. But this ambitious effort to shift the nation's largest school district in the United States is an urgent clarion call to action. Use the School Girls Deserve Report as a unifying strategy. We bridged various stakeholders, cross-cultural policy, academia and youth-centered community-based organizations throughout this report. We hope to provide a call to action that creates an optimistic and accessible vision of the schools and community that we know girls and TGNC youth of color deserve.

This participatory action research project and policy report, is driven by girls and TGNC youth of color, but was truly an intergenerational process with the researchers and core authors being under 30 years old. Through collaboration with our study participants, staff and academic researcher, these visionary strategies were developed by young people most impacted by the problems and solutions.

As an adult ally, I'm proud to stand with intergenerational movement leaders as they interrupt the status quo of confronting racial and gender injustice in this country. We know that you will be too.

Joanne N. Smith

Joanne N. Smith
Founder/Executive Director
of Girls for Gender Equity

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE SCHOOL GIRLS DESERVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The system of education and its policies are a major contribution to the school-to-prison pipeline *[and pushout]*. Most of the students affected by inequity of the system are Black/Hispanic and belong to a lower economic class."

*Xiomara, 12th grader from the Bronx

Throughout the nation, young Black and Latinx students experience several barriers and hardships that affect their ability to complete school in a timely manner. While some of these hardships are related to family, money or peers, most of the barriers young people experience relate to school pushout.

Programs and policies, such as the national My Brother's Keeper Initiative started by President Barack Obama and the Young Men's Initiative by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, address and acknowledge the issue of school pushout, but only focus on the experiences of cisgender boys of color. These policies and programs do not address school pushout from an intersectional framework. Given these disparities, there is an ongoing need to explore the needs of and develop policies and programs that benefit girls of color, and transgender and gender nonconforming youth of color (TGNC).

Based in Brooklyn, New York, Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is an intergenerational grassroots organization that focuses on the development of girls of color. GGE recognizes that girls of color experience unique barriers that can push them out of school. GGE has been at the forefront of highlighting and combating racial and gender disparities in schools, holding schools accountable, and uplifting preventative approaches to end school pushout. GGE has led multiple participatory research projects on how girls of color experience school pushout. These projects led GGE to embark on creating the School Girls Deserve (SGD) Participatory Action Research Project and Policy Report.

GGE explored not only all the barriers that girls and TGNC youth of color experience, but identified their visions for the school that they believe they deserve. While most research on school pushout focuses on how young people experience harsh discipline in school, we know that school pushout goes beyond discipline. As a participatory action research study, our work extends the current literature on school discipline as it captures the multiple layers of school pushout and highlights a youth-centered vision for schools.

*Names have been changed to protect the identity of the young people in this study.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This participatory action research project (PAR) was done in collaboration with a variety of young people in all five boroughs of New York City. We held listening sessions with 120 participants aged 9-23 from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Fifty-three percent of our participants identified as Black; twenty-three percent identified as Latinx, and nearly twelve percent identified as Asian (including Indo-Caribbean and South Asian). Six percent of the participants identified as multiracial/multiethnic and close to three percent identified as white, less than one percent identified as Native American, less than two percent Middle Eastern and less than one percent identified as Pacific Islander. The majority of the vision session participants identified as cisgender females (78.3%) nearly seven percent identified as transgender or gender nonconforming/genderqueer and approximately fifteen percent identified as cisgender males. For the study, we only included the voices of cisgender females, transgender, and gender nonconforming/genderqueer (TGNC) youth[1].

FINDINGS

Throughout the vision sessions, we found that young people experienced multiple forms of violence while in school. They identified experiences with both institutional and interpersonal violence that intersect and overlap through a combination of school policies, curriculum, and practices implemented and executed by peers and adults. Fortunately, the young people have solutions for the various forms of violence they experience in their school that they believe will not only positively impact them, but have the potential to positively impact all students.

Through our analysis, we identified three major findings:

1. Girls and TGNC youth of color experience institutional violence in school.

2. Girls and TGNC youth of color experience interpersonal violence in school from adults and their peers.

3. Girls and TGNC youth of color have visions for safe, holistic, welcoming, and affirming schools for all students.

Finding 1: Girls and TGNC youth of color experience institutional violence in school.

Institutional violence is defined as any form of violence or harm that occurs in institutions or social places that prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Girls and TGNC youth of color experience violence from the oppressive policies and practices in their schools. The institution identified in the vision sessions is the school system. The forms of institutional violence that they've identified are over policing, culturally disconnected curriculum, under resourced and under supported schools.

In the vision sessions, girls and TGNC youth of color identified over-policing in their schools as a barrier that makes school an unpleasant experience. Up to half of the girls and TGNC youth of color reported going through metal detectors. They discussed the negative impacts that the scanning devices had on their daily experiences with school.

Girls and TGNC youth of color also identified school safety agents (New York City Police officers stationed in schools) as another barrier for them. Young people shared how school safety agents make them feel constantly surveilled and imprisoned. These young people reported negative experiences with school safety agents, who they say do not make them feel safe but rather criminalized in their school.

Participants shared that the lack of diversity in curricula also contributed to school pushout. Youth stated that the limited representation in the curriculum was a form of violence because it made them feel disconnected and less valued by the school.

Young people highlighted how they feel pushed out of school because of the lack of resources and support that are available to them. According to our data, because these things are not a part of their environment, they have harder times staying in school and feel less valued in their school community. Young people specifically stated that the lack of mental health support and limited extracurricular activities made school a less pleasant experience.

1 Throughout this report, we interchange the terms, "young people" and "girls and TGNC youth of color," to refer to the students whose voices were captured in this report. While GGE's definition of girls includes girls of trans experience, girls and TGNC are separated because we include boys of trans experience's stories throughout this report. While TGNC youth experience violence because of their intersecting identities like cisgender girls of color, they experience a different type of violence that is not applicable to cisgender girls.

Finding 2: Girls and TGNC youth of color experience interpersonal violence in school from adults and their peers.

In the School Girls Deserve PAR Project young people identified experiencing interpersonal violence from both adults (i.e., educators, administrators, school safety agents) and peers. Interpersonal violence is defined as a form of violence that occurs between people that makes one or more parties feel unsafe. The examples of interpersonal violence that the young people reported include but are not limited to: sexual harassment, racial harassment, Islamophobia, control of their gender expression and identity. Our findings show that interpersonal violence is informed by institutional and structural violence because the interpersonal violence that the young people reported experiencing are microcosms of the institutional and structural forms of violence that they reported experiencing.

In our study, young people reported experiencing sexual harassment while in school. Sexual harassment is defined as, "Any unwanted behavior or attention of a sexual nature that may or may not interfere with a person's ability to participate in or benefit from a school's programs or activities." (Smith, Huppuch, and Deven 2011). Our research shows that approximately one out of three of the vision session participants reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in school. While they reported experiencing sexual harassment to our research team, they did not always report it to their schools. This is consistent with other research findings (Smith, Huppuch, and Deven 2011) (Hill and Kearl, 2011).

> Our research shows that approximately **1 in 3** of the vision session participants **reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment** in school.

Young people reported experiencing racialized harassment and Islamophobia. Racial harassment is defined as discrimination towards a person based on their race. Racial harassment includes, but is not limited to: teachers/peers/school staff making racist commentary about a certain group of people, making racist jokes, and basing treatment of students on race. During the vision sessions, young people gave specific examples of experiences of anti-Black racial harassment and Islamophobia in their schools from peers and adults. These examples included young people being called racist or Islamophobic names and people speaking negatively about their religion and/or race.

In the vision sessions, some participants also reported experiencing violence because they are transgender or gender nonconforming/genderqueer. Like the students who reported experiencing racial harassment and Islamophobia, they reported that the violence came from both their peers and adults. Examples of this violence include: being misgendered by peers and adults in school; being asked to behave and/or dress in a way that does not reflect their gender identity and people making transphobic comments.

Young people also highlighted how they felt that their gender expression was being controlled by policies and practices in their school. According to our research, 50% of young people reported experiences of control of their gender expression and/or identity, particularly when they did not seem to meet white feminine beauty standards or norms (Morris E. W., 2007). For example, participants shared that they were either made to feel uncomfortable or unsafe for dressing or appearing in their traditional religious clothing, dressing or appearing "too masculine"; dressing or appearing "too ghetto"; and dressing or appearing "too sexy".

Finding 3: Girls and TGNC youth of color have visions for safe, holistic, welcoming and affirming schools for all students.

All the young people who participated in the vision session expressed clear visions for the schools that they want, need, and deserve. These solutions addressed how to prevent pushing girls and TGNC youth of color out of school by calling for major policy and cultural shifts in the education system. They directly address the institutional and interpersonal violence that they reported experiencing. Their visions break down into four major areas: curriculum, resources, support, and discipline.

Throughout the vision sessions, young people envisioned the curriculum in their schools to be affirming of their intersectional identities. They identified this as including culturally responsive topics, themes, and pedagogical practices. Because young people stated that their schools do not provide them with comprehensive sexuality education and their schools focus heavily on high-stakes standardized testing, they envisioned for their schools to provide comprehensive sexuality education and the elimination of standardized testing.

Young people also created solutions that have potential to create stronger mental health and social support systems in their schools. Their solutions included having more effective counselors in school, support for LGBQ and TGNC youth of color and support for pregnant and parenting students. They also envisioned solutions for teachers to receive more thorough and competent training to better serve, respect, and affirm their students.

Young people also envisioned solutions to end the racist and sexist discipline practices that they reported experiencing in school. They specifically called for the removal of metal detectors and school safety agents from their school environments. They stated that their presence creates a prison-like atmosphere in their school. They also envisioned solutions that end gender biased dress codes that negatively impact girls and TGNC youth of color.

Finally, young people envisioned solutions for their schools to have more resources. They asked for schools to include more extracurricular activities, healthier lunches with halal options, bathrooms that are affirming for TGNC youth, bathrooms that have menstrual materials such as pads and tampons, improved technology, better textbooks, more desks, and clean drinkable water fountains.

POLICY & PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on what the young people asked for, we've come up with youth-centered policy recommendations to create the school they deserve.

The School Girls Deserve Policy Agenda calls on policymakers, educators and administrators and youth advocates to:

» **Invest in holistic curriculum and pedagogy** by eliminating high-stakes standardized testing; providing comprehensive sexuality education in K-12; and providing culturally responsive, intersectional, feminist education in K-12.

» **Create resourceful and dignified schools** by fully allocating all court ordered New York State funds to New York City public schools, providing access to current technology, having mandatory testing of school water fountains for lead and access to clean drinkable water available, providing free and nutritious food options that are inclusive to all students' religious dietary guidelines, providing access to quality tampons, pads, and other menstrual materials and mandating accessible bathrooms for TGNC students.

» **Create safe and supportive learning environments for all students** by better implementing existing laws that support the mental, emotional and physical health of all young people, ensuring comprehensive in-school support for LGBQ and TGNC students, ensuring comprehensive in-school support for students who are victims and survivors of sexual violence and ensuring comprehensive in-school support for pregnant and parenting young people.

» **Decriminalize learning environments** by eliminating zero tolerance policies, removing all police from schools, removing metal detectors and other instruments of surveillance, reducing school-based discipline referrals, eliminating vague and subjective dress code policies, mandating guidance interventions before the use of suspensions, protecting immigrant youth and families by eliminating Immigrant and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officers in school and implementing restorative justice practices throughout all DOE schools.

This report seeks to analyze, discuss, prioritize, and amplify the emergent needs of girls and TGNC youth of color. Through this, we hope to advance educational justice that centers intersectional strategy and youth-centered solutions. Finally, this report focuses on the dynamic possibilities of galvanizing young people, youth advocates, policy makers, educators and school administrators to interrupt institutionally and interpersonally violent policies, practices, and culture in New York City public schools.

FOREWORD

Girls for Gender Equity (GGE) is an intergenerational, advocacy organization committed to the physical, psychological, social, and economic development of girls and women. Through youth organizing, leadership development, and community-building for gender and racial equity, GGE challenges structural forces—racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, and economic inequality—that work to constrict the freedom, full expression, and rights of girls and transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) youth of color.

For 15 years, GGE has been at the forefront of the 21st-century movement for gender and racial justice. Through local and national advocacy and engagement with the most impacted young people, GGE has supported and mobilized over 8,000 young people from underserved communities of color. GGE mobilizes young people of color locally and nationally, particularly girls, queer, trans, and gender nonconforming youth ages 11-24 to work as a collective towards systemic change in the support networks that shape the development and achievement of girls and women. To do this, we undertake policy advocacy, community organizing campaigns and youth-of-color-centered programming to achieve safety and equity in the social, political, educational, athletic, economic, health, and media worlds of the smaller and larger communities in which girls and women live and work.

GGE engages with community leaders, philanthropy, and national organizing campaigns including Dignity in Schools Campaign, New York State's *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)* Think Tank, Move to End Violence, New York City Young Women's Initiative, National Collaborative of Young Women's Initiative, Communities United for Police Reform, Black Girl Movement and Grantmakers for Women and Girls of Color.

Since 2002, GGE has employed a multi-pronged approach to community organizing, advocacy, education, and direct service provision to holistically support the leadership of young women who identify as cisgender, transgender, gender non-conforming and LGBQ youth of color through its three core programs—Urban Leaders Academy, Sisters in Strength Youth Organizers, and the Young Women's Advisory Council. GGE is committed to fully supporting transformational movement building with these young people of color by activating their often-untapped leadership and advocacy potential.

GGE, Participatory Action Research and School Push Out Campaign

GGE has historically been at the forefront of community-led initiatives that work with young people to highlight racial and gender disparities in schools, hold schools accountable, and uplift preventative approaches to end school pushout. GGE uses participatory action research (PAR) as an approach to its organizing work because of the method's deep roots in social justice, critical theory, and participation of the most marginalized. PAR values knowledge produced from lived experiences as equally important as those produced in the academy. It also seeks to challenge and expand upon traditional notions of expertise, while centering on those most impacted by social disparities and inequalities (Torre, et al. 2012)

PAR, at GGE, is primarily carried out by GGE's Sister in Strength youth organizing program. Our youth organizers engage in a collective process to critically examine issues in their school environments and develop research informed solutions. The young women researchers shape all aspects of the research project including design, data collection, and analysis, as well as development of research-based products (i.e., solutions, advocacy campaigns, policy briefs, and policy recommendations).

GGE initiated its first groundbreaking participatory action research project in 2007, asking the question "What is the impact of sexual harassment in New York City schools?" The study's major aim was to provide localized strategic research that identified the presence of gender-based violence and oppression present in the NYC school system.

The survey captured 1189 middle and high school students from over 90 schools and community based organizations.

The study identified five major findings. First, mirroring research across the country, the study found that sexual harassment occurred in NYC schools and negatively impacted learning environments and students' well beings (Hill and Kearl 2011). Second, the study found that 97% of students did not report sexual harassment when it occurred. Third, in addition to cis-gender heterosexual girls of color, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer and Trans, Gender Nonconforming (LGBQ and TGNC) students experienced sexual harassment in schools. Lastly, students needed more education about sexual harassment and how to report it. Research from the PAR project has contributed to the *New York State Dignity for All Students Act (Dignity Act)*, New York City Respect for All Campaign, and Title IX compliance in schools.

From this work, we found that sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence created hostile school environments for girls, especially girls of color and LGBQ and TGNC youth in schools. These hostile environments represented one piece of a larger issue --school pushout, especially with zero tolerance policies in place that punished the victim even when they were defending themselves, leading GGE to address the multitude of factors creating hostile and unsafe environments for young people in NYC. GGE founder and Executive Director, Joanne N. Smith, explained, "We recognized suspension and pushout as an issue when our girls told us how they got in trouble for hitting boys back when they were touched inappropriately. We first addressed it as a safe climate, Title IX issue but as suspensions increased it became evident that the increased suspensions resulted in black girls being pushed out of school like black boys." The previous participatory action research became the foundation for us to further investigate how girls of color were being pushed out of school and develop the School Girls Deserve participatory action research campaign.

GGE'S CAMPAIGNS

Since the initial PAR project and our research on gender and education, Girls for Gender Equity has moved to further capture the authentic experiences of girls of color, LGBQ and TGNC youth of color in New York City in their learning environments. We began a study on school discipline, race, gender, sexuality, and education in NYC. We adopted the language of "school pushout," utilized by the Dignity in Schools Campaign (DSC), to speak about the disparate educational outcomes of girls and LGBQ and TGNC youth of color. School pushout explains the numerous factors that prevent or discourage young people from remaining on track to complete their education (Dignity in Schools Campaign 2016).

Given that most research on school pushout focused on the experiences of boys of color, GGE began working with DSC to expand their definition to include the specific experiences and perspectives that girls and TGNC youth of color have regarding curriculum, policing, suspensions, and expulsions.

In 2014, GGE began its PAR project "Listen to Girls - Gender Justice and School Pushout" on race, gender, sexuality and school pushout. Findings from this study showed that while girls of color and LGBQ and TGNC students have limited access to diverse learning opportunities, they have extensive experiences with sexual harassment, and violence, and were subject to punitive school discipline policies and practices. Girls of color in particular are also vulnerable to challenges of having minimal to no support with early pregnancy and parenting, and the lack of social and emotional support they need in their school communities. Girls of color face discrimination from school personnel and violence stemming from their gender and sexual identity. Our study identified these variables as those that systematically (and sometimes, simultaneously) operate to disproportionately push girls, LGBQ and TGNC youth of color out of school and into the juvenile justice system, often impacting their life chances and future opportunities.

In 2015, GGE's Sisters in Strength youth organizing program shared findings from our study at the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Annual Meeting and the National Women's Studies Association Annual Meeting. We also presented our findings to the NYC Department of Education and the Mayoral leadership team, which oversees school discipline policies. Our work has contributed to public discourses surrounding the ways that school pushout impacts girls and TGNC youth of color.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years school discipline has been under scrutiny by the U.S. Department of Education because of the disparate criminalization and impact on students of color and students with disabilities. "Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline" released by the U.S. Department of Education under the Obama Administration made enormous strides to report on the stark racial disparities in discipline. However, largely absent from this conversation were girls of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (LGBQ) and transgender, and gender nonconforming (TGNC) young people.

This has produced a one-sided story repeated over and over again: girls of color are thriving and transgender and gender nonconforming young people do not exist. Eye catching studies and headlines such as "Black Women Now Most Educated Group in US" (Helm 2016) and "Women of color have seen the most advances in educational attainment...receiving degrees at higher rates than men" (Kirby 2012) captures a story that only highlights the successful educational attainment of women and girls of color. Meanwhile, stories about trans women of color only occur when they are on the red carpet such as stars and activists Janet Mock and Laverne Cox, or in the casket, like Islan Nettles and Letisha Green. However these deaths are rarely covered in the mainstream media and when they are they are often misgendered. We know the narrative that the girls of color are doing alright and TGNC youth of color do not exist are simply false.

As a microcosm of larger society, schools end up being hostile environments that recreate the structural oppression that girls and TGNC youth of color face in the outside world. While girls of color are graduating and completing college, the journey to getting there is not always one that is safe and affirming for them. For every headline highlighting the educational attainments, the other side contains headlines and studies that provide a different look into their experiences like:

"A 6-Year-Old Girl Was Handcuffed at School For Taking Candy" (Quinlan 2016)

"School Guards Break Child's Arm and Arrest Her For Dropping Cake" (Watson 2007)

"Transgender student charged with assaulting School Resource Officer over bathroom issue in Pickens Co., SC". (WSPA 2016)

"School Threatens to suspend Black Students for wearing braids"(Danielle 2017)

These headlines are further solidified by statistics about girls and TGNC youth of color that we cannot ignore:

» Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual youth, particularly gender-nonconforming girls, are **up to three times** more likely to experience harsh discipline from school administration than their non-LGB counterparts (Moddie-Mills and Mitchum 2014)

» Nationally, 81.9 percent of LGBT youth were verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, 63.9 percent were verbally harassed because of their gender expression 38.3 percent of LGBT youth were physically harassed because of their sexual orientation, 27.1 percent were physically harassed because of their gender expression. (J. G. Kosciw, et al. 2015)

» Black girls in NYC are ten times more likely to be disciplined over white girls (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda 2015)

» In the 2011-2012 academic year in New York City 90 percent of all girls subjected to expulsion were Black. (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda 2015)

» Black girls are almost four times as likely to be arrested in school than white girls. Latina students are close to three times more likely to be arrested in elementary school than white girls (Morris, Epstein and Yusu 2001)

While these headlines and statistics are sobering and require a serious call to action, they still represent an incomplete picture of how girls and TGNC youth of color are prevented from finishing their education. There remains a paucity of data available to illuminate the experiences of young people who identify as girls of color and TGNC youth of color. Other realities for girls and TGNC youth of color exist, but are rarely referred to when discussing "the school to prison pipeline" such as:

- Hostile school environments across the country have profound impacts on the mental physical, and emotional health of LGBQ and TGNC youth and represent clear pathways to juvenile detention (Moddie-Mills and Mitchum 2014) Every year, GLSEN reports that LGBQ/TGNC youth do not believe that school officials are doing enough to foster safe and welcoming school climates. (J. G. Kosciw, et al. 2015)

- Schools have failed to address climate issues and hostile environments in comprehensive and proactive ways, they have defaulted heavily on zero-tolerance policies for those who are harmed and those who do harm by "bullying" thereby reinforcing the school to prison pipeline as a means of protection for vulnerable youth. (Advancement Project 2012)

- LGBT young people must decide every day between attending a school in a hostile climate and the possibility of experiencing harassment or skipping school and the possibility of facing punitive discipline measures for absence and or even truancy charges (Moodie-Mills and Mitchum 2014)

- The experiences of Islamophobia and xenophobia faced by immigrant and Muslim students in school, is completely absent from mainstream conversations on school pushout.

Lastly, when girls and LGBQ/TGNC youth of color resist discrimination, harassment, and violence in their learning environments, they are read through a lens that typically leads to their criminalization and punishment rather than protection and support. They are constantly blamed for their own victimization. (Arnold 1990) (Burdge, Licona, and Hyemingway, 2014) (Morris, M. W. 2016)

The School-to-prison pipeline framework, which refers to the practices and policies that push young people out of school and onto a path to juvenile detention and the prison industrial complex (Burdge, Licona and Hyemingway 2014), inadequately captures the myriad of experiences of girls and TGNC youth of color. We intentionally expand on the necessary narratives included in the school to prison pipeline framework, and utilize the *school pushout* framework that refers to any condition, practice, policy or force that marginalizes a student and/or interferes with their ability to complete their education.

These are challenging and urgent times for young people and those who care about them. Secretary of Education Betsy Devos has announced that U.S. Department of Education has begun the process of rolling back Title IX guidance for survivors of sexual assault put in place by the Obama Administration. President Trump rescinded protections for transgender students which allowed them to use bathrooms in their schools that corresponded with their gender identity. The Trump administration also ended the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, the Obama-era program, that shielded 800,000 young undocumented immigrants from deportation and made them eligible for work permits.

The School Girls Deserve asserts that too many girls TGNC youth of color are being criminalized, marginalized, and neglected because of the beliefs, policies, and actions in their schools that ultimately push them out and render them vulnerable to significant danger and undesirable outcomes (M. Morris 2016) (Moodie-Mills and Mitchum 2014) The School Girls Deserve report presents narratives, numbers, and new solutions that we hope will inspire critical thinking about the multitude and converging ways in which racist, sexist, classist, Islamophobic, homophobic and transphobic practices marginalize girls and TGNC youth of color in their learning environments. It highlights how schools subject young people to an inferior and substandard education system because of their real or perceived identities that frame them as undeserving of just, fair, and dignified treatment in school. Finally, as a report completely based on findings from Participatory Action Research conducted with girls and TGNC youth of color, this report includes a constellation of visions for the schools young people want, need, and deserve.

The School Girls Deserve

The School Girls Deserve centers girls and TGNC youth of color, their experiences with school pushout and their visions for the schools they want, need, and deserve. We recognize school pushout as anything that prevents or gets in the way of a young person completing their education. GGE specifically identifies the ways that institutionalized racism and sexism create oppressive school environments for girls and TGNC youth of color.

The School Girls Deserve is a call to action for New York City's Department of Education and local school districts to listen to the voices of students and create school environments that enable girls and TGNC youth of color to thrive. GGE believes in trusting young people to be experts in their own experiences and solutions.

OUR RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Girls for Gender Equity has a long history of conducting youth-centered and youth-informed Participatory Action Research Projects. For this PAR project, it was youth-centered and youth-informed with staff supporting youth to be the experts on crafting solutions to their improve school communities.

Overview

In conversations and advocacy work surrounding school pushout, the experiences of cisgender boys of color are consistently at the center, leaving out the needs and experiences of girls and TGNC youth of color who are also disproportionately impacted by school pushout. We decided to embark on this PAR project to collect the voices and visions of girls and TGNC youth of color. We envisioned the findings to add to current advocacy efforts and conversations about school pushout that is more inclusive of girls and TGNC youth of color. To develop this PAR project, we formulated our research questions based on a combination of previous GGE participatory action research work as well as academic research on Black girls' experiences in school.

These main research questions were:

1. How do girls and TGNC youth of color experience school pushout?

2. What emerging pushout themes do the young people identify?

3. What is the young people's vision of a school that is safe, accepting and affirming of them and their intersectional identities?

Based on these research questions, we developed a workshop tool called a "Vision Session," which we used as our main form of collecting our data.

Sampling

We decided to collect data from various girls and TGNC youth of color throughout New York City to make sure that the stories used exclusively included their experiences. We collected data from young people ranging from as young as 4th grade to 2-3 years post-high school.

For this study, we selected various schools and youth organizations across all five boroughs in New York City as sites to conduct vision sessions. We conducted vision

sessions with organizations and schools connected to GGE through programming, organizations that we are in collaboration with, and various other organizations and schools that work with young people. In choosing organizations to survey, we tried to reach a diverse range of students by reaching out to organizations and schools that work mainly with young people of color, particularly girls and TGNC youth of color as well as ensuring that we reached out to students across all five New York City boroughs. In total, there were 120 participants[2].

Data of students surveyed:

Race and Ethnicity	Percentage
Black (includes Afro-Caribbean, African, African American and Afro-Latinx)	53.30%
Latinx (gender neutral term for Latino/Latina)	23.30%
Asian (specifically South Asian, East Asian, and/or Asian American)	11.70%
Native American	0.80%
Middle Eastern	1.70%
Pacific Islander	0.80%
Multiracial/Multiethnic	6%
White	2.50%
Gender	Percentage
Cisgender Female	78.30%
Genderqueer/Gender Nonconforming and Trans	6.60%
Cisgender Male	15%

Vision Sessions

The vision sessions were conducted from February 2016 to December 2016 and ranged between 45 minutes to 2 hours long, with the average vision session being about 1 ½ hours long. These were interactive workshops that incorporated a combination of writing, discussion, and art about how girls and TGNC youth of color experience school and their vision for a school

that is safe, welcoming and affirming.

The vision sessions consisted of three activities: graffiti wall[3], a reflection journal[4], and the creation of a vision board[5]. Each activity was followed by a debrief where young people engaged in a conversation about their experiences, further expanding and clarifying on definitions and naming the various types of violence that negatively impacted their experience in school.

FRAMEWORK

Critical race feminism (Wing 2003) guides the framework for this report. Critical race feminism (CRF) examines the intersectional relationship among race, gender, sexuality, and class. CRF researchers have argued that to understand social and institutional inequality researchers must center the experiences of those who exist at the intersections of multiple marginalities (Crenshaw 1991). This framework is further explained in our findings that girls and TGNC youth of color experience school pushout through structural, institutional and interpersonal violence that consistently overlap each other. Structural violence refers to a form of violence wherein some social structure or social institution may harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs. Institutional Violence refers to a form of violence that occurs in institutions or social places that prevent people from meeting their basic needs. Interpersonal violence refers to a form of violence that occurs between people that make one or more parties feel unsafe.

DATA ANALYSIS

GGE community organizers, community-driven research consultant - Dr. Connie Wun, Sisters in Strength youth organizers, and GGE interns completed four cycles of the data analysis. During the first cycle of data analysis, we analyzed data from the opening activity, journals, vision boards and coded for recurring experiences and themes. Prevalent narratives included criticisms of metal detectors, lack of student support,

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2   There were 122 participants for the vision sessions but two of the participants did not attend k-12 schooling in NYC.
3   Graffiti Wall- This project involved various sheets of butcher paper where young people engaged in a written discussion about what they experienced in their school based on prompt questions.
4   Reflection Journal- Individual journal activities in which young people used various visual art forms (drawings, poetry, storytelling) to share how they've experienced school pushout
5   Vision Board- Young people created boards that were collective visions of what they envisioned for their schools to be

policing of gender identity and expression by peers and adults, criminalization, concerns about excessive standardized testing, lack of diversity in curriculum, and ongoing forms of negative stereotyping. The second cycle of data analysis included cross-checking previous codes, categorizing and thematically organizing participants' experiences. We identified that participants' experiences fell under 3 types of violence: structural, institutional, and interpersonal violence. As a legal scholar, Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) theorized, these forms of violence often intersected and overlapped because of the participants' intersectional identities. During our third cycle of analysis, we closely examined the experiences that participants had with violence. We identified experiences with structural forms of violence including racism, sexism, ageism, Islamophobia, transphobia, and homophobia. We also found that participants experienced institutional violence through mechanisms such as metal detectors,

school discipline policies, and culturally disconnected curriculum. During the final data analysis phase, we also found that participants experienced various forms of interpersonal violence including sexual harassment, racial harassment, Islamophobia, and gender-biased discrimination from their peers and adults.

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Girls and TGNC youth of color experience institutional violence in school.

2. Girls and TGNC youth of color experience interpersonal violence in school from adults and their peers.

3. Girls and TGNC youth of color have visions for safe, holistic, welcoming and affirming schools for all students.

FINDINGS

"As an individual who identifies as a woman of color, I feel like the education system has found multiple ways to push me out of the community and isolate me and make me feel discouraged to participate."

Haleema, 11th grader from Queens

Over 40% of girls of color in NYC are denied the support, infrastructure, and reinforcement they need to finish high school. While girls of color graduate at higher rates than their male counterparts, the numbers are "still *appalling*." To compound matters, policy makers, providers, and funders have ignored the needs of girls of color under the presumed notion that this population has been "doing okay." (The New York Women's Foundation 2015)

These sentiments fail to recognize that many girls of color are facing unique challenges associated with systemic forms of violence and oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and poverty. These challenges and barriers create different outcomes and have lasting effects on them, their family, and their community.

Our study suggests that girls and TGNC youth of color are not doing okay.

Findings from The School Girls Deserve research project centers the lived experiences of girls and TGNC youth color in New York City public schools. Our study provides insight into the needs and experiences that these young people have at school as well as solutions for policy makers, school administrators and teachers, and youth advocates. When we listen to girls and TGNC youth of color we better understand their barriers to education and can begin to map out a more complete strategy that ensures the success of all young people.

Over 40% of girls of color in NYC are **denied the support**, infrastructure, and reinforcement they need **to finish high school**.

FINDING 1

Girls and TGNC youth of Color experience institutional violence.

Young people of color disproportionately attend schools without access to quality resources, rigorous and diverse course offerings, supportive faculty, staff, administrators, and extra-curricular activities. Data shows that access to these resources and opportunities are key to enhancing educational experiences and improving health outcomes. (National Women's Law Center 2014)

Participants in our vision sessions reported experiencing an overwhelming amount of institutional violence in school. Institutional violence is a form of violence that occurs in any institution or social structure (in this study schools, which young people are required to attend by law) that prevent a person from meeting their basic needs. School-based institutional violence prevents young people from meeting their basic educational needs. The examples of institutional violence identified in our study include: policing in schools, lack of resources and support for students, and culturally disconnected curriculum.

Policing Schools - Metal Detectors & School Safety Agents

"I hate metal detectors[;] they make me feel like I am in jail."

Dominique, 9th Grader from Brooklyn

Studies suggest that most young people in school do not know a school system without metal detectors and police presence. National School Board Association found in a study of more than 700 school districts across the United States, 39 percent of all urban districts used metal detectors, 75 percent used locker searchers and 65 percent used security personnel (National School Board Association 1993). In addition to these disciplinary measures, there are police in schools. According to Hirschfield (Hirschfield 2008), school police is the fastest growing field of law enforcement. Across the nation, 67 percent of teachers in predominantly Black and Latinx schools have police at their schools.

Similar to these studies, nearly 50% of the young people from The School Girls Deserve research project reported going through metal detectors at school. Young people in our study reported that the presence of police and metal detectors in schools often made them question their safety, feel "criminal", and even embarrassed at times.

"My first day of school as a freshman was the worst and the most embarrassing moment in school. I had a nice necklace, little hoop earrings, my diamond bracelet, and a ring my mother recently bought me. Then my shoes had a metal piece I'm guessing and I never knew anything about metal detectors. I came from a white privileged middle school and never experienced a metal detector. So, the first school safety told me I had to take my bracelet off but I was still ringing. I had to continuously take all my belongings off. Then I was still ringing (because of my

shoes). Then, I had to get searched with the wand and I hate[ed] the procedure. A year later, I found myself sophomore year knowing to never wear too much jewelry so I don't have to feel like a prisoner again."

Janae, 10th grader from Brooklyn

nearly 50% reported going through metal detectors at school... which often made them question their safety, feel "criminal", and even embarrassed at times
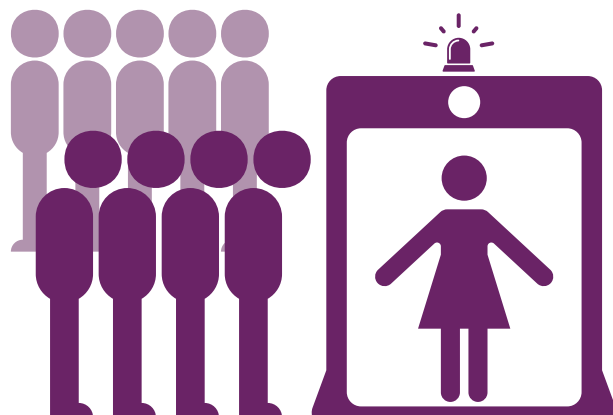
In 1998, the NYC Department of Education (DOE), then the Board of Education voted to transfer school safety from educators and school administrators to the NYPD. This process occurred without clear guiding principles for the roles, training, and oversight of school safety agents in schools. (New York Civil Liberties Union n.d.) After the transfer, the NYPD School Safety Division would become the fifth largest police force in the country. There are over 5,000 school safety agents in schools throughout the city, double the number of guidance counselors and four times the number of social workers. NYC has more school safety agents per student than other large cities have police officers per citizen. (New York Civil Liberties Union n.d.)

"We have safety agents everywhere in the building , and it makes me feel like a prisoner."

Leilani, 12th grader from the Bronx

The presence of law enforcement in schools is not innocuous or merely just a preventative protocol for students of color. The presence of school safety agents in NYC has led to daily exchanges and interactions with law enforcement and greatly expanded the surveillance of youth of color and the normalization of prison culture

in school settings. (M. W. Morris 2012)The presence of law enforcement in schools has been cited as one of the largest contributing factors for increased student arrests in schools. (Advancement Project 2005) (Advancement Project 2012) Some research suggests that the use of metal detectors in schools is associated with lower levels of students' perceptions of safety in school and may lead to increased school disorder. (Hankin, Hert and Simon 2011) Other research has found for Black girls, increased levels of law enforcement and security personnel inside of schools sometimes made girls feel unsafe, often to the point where they did not want to attend school. Girls expressed discomfort when having to walk through metal detectors. (Crenshaw, Ocen and Nanda 2015)

"In the morning before I come in the school I have to pass [through] the metal detectors, and first this makes me feel uncomfortable or as if I was doing something wrong like criminal or something like that."

Beatriz, 12th grader from The Bronx

"I feel like I'm being targeted for no reason. One day they made me take off my boots because they were HEAVY!"

Fatima, 12th grader from the Bronx

While the United States has seen an increase in police presence and security mechanisms such as metal detectors in the country's public schools over the last twenty years, in response to school shootings, a review of scholarly literature from over 15 years found that there was insufficient evidence to draw conclusions about the benefits of metal detectors on student behavior. (Hankin, Hertz, and Simon 2011) Instead, studies suggest that

School Safety Agents 5,200

Guidance Counselors 2,850

Social workers 1,193

these practices position girls of color as perpetually and involuntarily open to surveillance and control. Girls in these situations are denied access to self-autonomy, which includes feeling like they cannot utilize any form of self-defense. Additionally, these practices position girls of color to be seen as criminals under supervision, rather than people with feelings to be recognized, defended or supported. (Wun 2016)

Under-resourced and Unsupported Schools

"We don't have enough activities in our own building!"

Shameesha, 9th grader from Queens

Schools often fail to address the myriad and diverse needs that girls and TGNC youth of color face such as access to mental health counseling, extracurricular and academic enrichment activities, sports, and safe and affirming environments. Young people are deserving of an infrastructure in public schools that are designed with their specific situations and needs in mind.

"...No theatre or African studies club….. the food is not good"

Tamia, 10th grader from Brooklyn

Data shows that access to resources is key to enhancing educational experiences and improving overall health and wellbeing outcomes (National Women's Law Center 2014). While school resource disparities affect both boys and girls, data on the impact of school resource disparities are not tracked by gender. Our findings demonstrate that schools seem to pay little attention to the particular challenges, needs, and strengths of girls and TGNC youth of color.

1 in 10 girls and TGNC youth of color in our study said they lacked the resources they needed in their schools.

Girls and TGNC youth of color lack access to extracurricular activities that improve the educational success of all students. Previous research found that after-school programs and activities improve young people's participation in school, attendance, their graduation rates, and their overall academic achievement. (National Women's Law Center 2014)

Unfortunately, for many girls of color access to these programs and activities remain limited. The participation

gap in extracurricular activities is widened by class status. Extracurricular activities are increasingly reserved for young people from middle and upper-class homes, whose families have more financial resources to put towards out of school activities. (Schoenburg, J., et. al. 2013) Girls who belong to low socioeconomic status (SES) households have lower participation compared to girls from high SES households. (Girl Scouts 2017)

The census shows that 31% of all girls in New York City live in households in which annual incomes are at or below the federal poverty line. With deep poverty as a looming reality for many girls of color, the opportunity of participating in extracurricular activities become weak, especially if a student's school has only a few from which they can choose. Our participants also shared that while they would like to participate in the limited activities, most of their time after school was also occupied by gender-specific burdens such as caring for younger siblings. Others explained that they needed to work after school. Many girls in our study were responsible for taking care of family members, managing the household, and/or providing emotional and financial support for family members when a parent was absent. Consistent with existing data, which argues that girls are more likely to have familial obligations than their male peers, our study finds that because of these gendered responsibilities, girls were unlikely to participate in extracurricular activities. (Schoenburg, J., et. al. 2013)

"I have one obligation, and that is to help my mother to pay bills."

Ramelcy, 10th grader, from the Bronx

"I wanted to join the basketball team, but I had to pick up my brother so I couldn't."

Peta, 11th grader from Brooklyn

"Some days I will have to rush home to watch my brothers, so I will miss out on tutoring sessions."

Mya, 12th grader from Manhattan

Sometimes these obligations also interrupted the girls' abilities to seek additional academic support such as tutoring and test preparation. Gendered responsibilities create unequal opportunities for girls.

In addition to not having resources in schools like extracurricular activities and academic supports, many girls and TGNC youth of color lack the in-school strategic and concrete supports they need while navigating difficult and tumultuous circumstances such as the child welfare system, homelessness, child sexual abuse, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and mental health issues. Schools play a fundamental role in supporting the healing of deep traumatic wounds caused by life events.

"My school lacked the mental health services I needed after my family got evicted."

Brianna, 8th grader from Brooklyn.

In New York City, girls and TGNC youth of color are experiencing many challenges outside of school. According to data gathered by the New York Women's Foundation, Blueprint for Investing in Girls and Young Women, an estimated 2,000 girls, ages 9 -18, are in the child welfare system. An estimated 2,000 - 4,000 girls and young women, ages 11 - 24 are involved in the commercial sex exploitation industry, and approximately 10,000 girls and young women, ages 14 -24 are experiencing homelessness, with many of them living on the streets in unsafe conditions. Additionally over 100 young women in NYC ages 14 -24 are in the juvenile justice system, the majority of those girls and young women are girls and young women of color.

LGBQ and TGNC youth disproportionately experience homelessness in NYC, accounting for over 40 percent of NYC's youth homeless population. Multiple studies indicated that TGNC youth are disproportionately represented in foster care (Turner 2009) Additionally,

TGNC young people are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system, where research has shown that they are likely to face significant prejudice and discrimination related to their TGNC identity. (Mottet and Ohle 2003)

Culturally Disconnected Curriculum

"Why are classes that teach my history considered electives?"

Sarika, 9th grader from Queens

"Schools rarely talk about Latinos and Latinas which makes me upset because I should be able to know their history too other than just the Europeans every year."

Carly, 9th grader from Manhattan

According to the National Education Association's research review: Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review, "Research finds that the overwhelming dominance of Euro-American perspectives leads many students to disengage from academic learning. In the young peoples' experiences of being pushed out of school, young people constantly expressed similar sentiments about being disconnected and disengaged because of the Eurocentric curriculum." (Sleeter 2011) In the vision sessions, young people repeatedly questioned the present school curriculum, suggesting that classes and course lessons were too often culturally disconnected. Instead, they asked for more responsive and competent curriculum that would reflect or help them to better understand their experiences.

"I barely feel connected. I mean we do learn about great things sometimes, but never to the level where I can connect myself fully."

Joseline, 12th grader from the Bronx

These findings echo other NYC educational organizations[6] and their recommendations for more culturally responsive curriculum in NYC public schools. For example, the Coalition for Educational Justice (CEJ), a parent-led citywide collaborative of community-based organizations and unions organizing for educational equity and excellence in New York City public schools, developed a policy platform in favor of culturally responsive education. They write, "In order to

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6   Urban Youth Collaborative, Coalition for Educational Justice and YWI all recommend some type of culturally responsive education.

reproductive health, it included gender and sexuality spectrum, healthy sexual relationships, consent, sexual assault and harassment, etc. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly half of high school students are sexually active, and young people are especially at an increased risk for unintended pregnancies and STDs. Young people of color have a disproportionate risk for STD acquisition among all young people. (Sexual Risk Behaviors: HIV, STD, & Teen Pregnancy Prevention 2016) However, despite this disparity, white students are more likely to receive comprehensive sexuality education than youth of color. (Abma 2011)

> *"A lot of times in school sex health they don't teach us much. They don't tell us about contracting STDs especially like with HIV a lot of my peers don't know about PrEp, like I've told them about PrEp. I've answered a few of my peer's questions about HIV, PrEp and STDs"*
>
> Jamika 10th grader from Staten Island

All young people need this information to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. When young people have access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive education, they better understand their bodies and sexuality, protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, and plan their families. Schools should be an environment where young people can safely express their sexuality and gender identity with dignity, and the knowledge, skills, and resources to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

FINDING 2

Girls and TGNC youth of Color experience interpersonal violence.

The second major finding from our vision sessions is that young people experience interpersonal violence in school. At Girls for Gender Equity we define this as young people experiencing violence that occurs between them and their peers, teachers, administrators and/or school safety agents, which can make them feel unsafe. The examples of interpersonal violence that the young people reported include, but are not limited to sexual harassment, racial harassment, Islamophobia, criminalization, and control of their gender expression and identity. Our findings show that interpersonal violence is informed by institutional and structural violence.

help [students] achieve their goals, improve outcomes for all students and create an oasis from racism, sexism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, homophobia and other biases, the NYC school system needs Culturally Responsive Education." (CEJ Platform for Culturally Responsive Education 2017) Across the country, courses, and programs such as Ethnic Studies have been established to meet the needs of diverse student populations. For example, in California, state bill (*AB-1750*) was passed to mandate Ethnic Studies classes in public schools teaching 7th-12th grades.

In addition to questioning current academic courses, participants also highlighted the need for comprehensive sexual health education. The participants idea on comprehensive sexuality and sexual health educated expanded beyond just

Sexual Harassment

"I didn't report it because I didn't want to make a fuss over it"

Zora, 10th grader from Manhattan

In our study, young people reported experiencing numerous incidents of sexual harassment while in school.

Girls for Gender Equity defines sexual harassment as any unwanted behavior or attention of a sexual nature that may or may not interfere with a person's ability to participate in or benefit from a school's programs or activities. Sexual harassment can include, but is not limited to:

» Touching

» Pinching

» Grabbing someone else's breasts, butt, or genitals

» Sexual comments jokes, stories, song lyrics, or rumors

» Inappropriate looks or staring at someone's body

» Clothing pulled to reveal your body or someone else's body

» Demands for sexual activity

» Physical intimidation (e.g., standing too close to someone, following someone, blocking someone's way so they can't leave)

» Cyberbullying (when the internet, cell phones, or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person) (Smith, Huppuch and Deven 2011).

Our research shows that approximately 1 in 3 of the vision session participants reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in school. Similar findings on school sexual harassment were discovered in a 2007-2008 participatory action research project conducted by Girls for Gender Equity and highlighted in the book, *Hey, Shorty!* (Smith, Huppuch and Deven 2011). According to the 2007-2008 study, nearly one in four (23 percent) participants said that they had personally been a victim of sexual harassment at school. In our study, some of the young people reported that sexual harassment began as early as elementary school. In one vision session, a young person described their experience with sexual harassment in elementary school. They wrote, "In elementary [school], people would catcall me in halls, and make sexual comments. I didn't report it though because I didn't want to make a fuss over it." This quote highlights the ways that some vision session participants not only experience sexual harassment but are also not reporting it or are afraid to report when sexual harassment occurs. Another young person in our study reported similar feelings about her reluctance to tell anyone about her experiences with sexual harassment. She explains, "I was sexually harassed but never said anything." Other research shows similarly, young people who either experienced or witnessed sexual harassment also did not report their experiences. (Hill and Kearl 2011)

We asked students to indicate whether they had ever reported sexual harassment, regardless of whether it happened to them directly. Almost all of the youth (97 percent) said they had not reported it. When participants were prompted to elaborate on their responses, several themes emerged, the most common being that sexual harassment was simply accepted as a part of what it meant to be at school

(Smith, Huppuch and Deven 2011, 126)

Schools recreate American societal culture in which sexual harassment is a part of the school culture, normalized, and under-reported/unreported.

Violence Towards Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students of Color

"As a closeted transgirl, I was legitimately terrified of being outcasted, beat up or anything else for

attempting to be/defend myself."

Elizabeth, youth organizer who attended NYC public schools from Brooklyn

In our study, young people reported experiencing violence because they were transgender or gender nonconforming. Participants explained that the violence they experienced included being misgendered[7], held to a strict binary[8] school dress code, and being prevented from using appropriate restrooms. They also shared that they felt erased by their peers and adults who often used binary language. Moreover, they shared that they experienced verbal and physical harassment and assault, which made the school an unsafe environment for them.

According to GLSEN's National School Climate Survey from 2013, transgender students face high rates of gender-related discrimination. 42% of transgender students are prevented from using their correct self-identified name; 59% are required to use the bathroom or locker room of their legal sex; and 31% of transgender students are prevented from wearing clothes because they were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex (J. G. Kosciw, et al. 2014). These reports reflect the stories that participants shared about the types of violence that they experienced in school. Although our study had a limited number of TGNC participants, their narratives about violence and the need for TGNC specific resources were consistent.

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7 Misgender — referring to someone by the pronouns of a gender that is not theirs.

8 Binary (The Gender Binary)- A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed "male and female", in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories. (TSER 2017)

Racial harassment and Islamophobia are two other forms of interpersonal violence that young people reported. Racial harassment is discrimination towards a person of color based on their race. According to this study's findings, racial harassment includes but is not limited to teachers/peers/school staff making racist commentary towards students of color and racist jokes. During the vision sessions when discussing racial harassment, young people gave specific examples of anti-Black racial harassment (discrimination specifically towards Black people) in their school from peers and adults. One participant commented on the anti-Black racial harassment that she has experienced from her peers, she stated:

"Once in one of my classes, a man said to me, 'We are not in Africa' for the fact that I was laughing with a friend. It made me feel bad and I did speak up and he apologized"

Onika, 12th grade from the Bronx

This type of racial harassment that the young person experienced in her school was not only rooted in anti-Blackness but also intersects with xenophobia (the student is a recent immigrant from West Africa).

One young person who identifies as transmasculine described the struggles with school,

I don't [know] how I can be so calm but so betrayed by the phrase 'ladies and gentlemen.' I go to class, and the greeting slowly kills me. I have been put in an 'All Girls' gym class when I know damn well there are trans boys and nonconformers infiltrating that shit. Classrooms are filled with binary jargon and non-PC political debates. White supremacists are just playing 'devil's advocate', and sexist dudes get all the girls that 'aren't like other girls.' Teachers can make Caitlyn Jenner jokes, and I can get called "disruptive" for merely trying to educate them.'

Will 10th grader from Brooklyn

This young person, like many others, expressed that the interpersonal violence they experienced in school did not only come from peers but also from staff and faculty.

Racial and Religious Harassment

"I find myself having to prove that I'm not different than a person without hijab."

Huda, 12th grader from Queens

Also in our study, young people reported experiencing Islamophobia, which is the dislike, hatred or discrimination of Muslims or people perceived to be Muslim[9]. According to a 2016 report by the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) and UC Berkeley

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9   This usually includes people who are Sikh, non-Muslim Arabs, North Africans and South Asian individuals

Center for Races and Gender, Islamophobia, like anti-Black racism, is embedded into multiple facets of American society and permeates into interpersonal interactions between Muslims and nonmuslims:

...55% of Muslim students in that state [California] have been subject to at least one form of religion-based bullying...the percentage of females who reported experiencing discrimination by a teacher or administrator was slightly higher. Additionally, of the female respondents who wear a hijab, the Islamic headscarf, 29% reported being offensively touched by another student, and 27% reported being discriminated against by their teacher.

(Council on American-Islamic Relations 2016)

From the stories of the young people, Islamophobia shows up in the interpersonal interactions in violent ways. A young person shared her experience with the intersections of xenophobia and Islamophobia:

"I am from Guinea, West Africa. Questions I get/ comments I hear from students: 'Do you speak African?' 'Do Africans act like that?' 'You guys are crazy!' 'Stop screaming, we are not in Africa!' 'Are you sure you're from Africa with that long hair?' 'You

guys are hungry!' 'Your hijab is just a reminder that you are a terrorist.' I hear from school safety agents: 'I don't know why you guys have to cover your body; we don't want to see it!' 'You have a pencil, it can hurt someone- after the Paris attack'. I am simply a Muslim, not a member of ISIS. It happens every day but I don't have a way to respond to it."

Massange 12th grader from the Bronx

Massange's story depicts that racial and religious harassment not only occurs between students but also between students and school staff. This young person's intersecting identities (Black, African immigrant, Muslim, girl) puts her in a position to face various levels of harassment in her school. One young person from Queens shared her experiences with Islamophobia experienced in the classroom: "I was sent to a week of detention for speaking up to a teacher that was shitting on the Islamic culture." This young person experiencing discipline for speaking up reinforces how schools recreate violence against girls and TGNC youth of color by silencing and disciplining them when they speak out against racial discrimination and harassment. This narrative exists within a landscape of discriminatory practices by School Safety Agents.

Participant's experiences with interpersonal violence, specifically with anti-Black racism and Islamophobia, were prevalent among vision session participants. However, despite studies (Hymel and Swearer 2015) or disciplinary policies and practices (New York City Department of Education 2013) which claim that youth are violent towards one another, our study shows that interpersonal violence more commonly occurred at the hands of adults. More importantly, according to participants, when young people experienced interpersonal violence by an adult, especially in the form of racism or Islamophobia, their experiences were ignored or the student was disciplined for speaking out against it.

Control of Gender Expression and Identity

"School administration calls us "unclassy" and "ghetto" when we wear what we want"

Shri, 11th grader from Queens

In our vision sessions, young people also highlighted how they experience interpersonal violence by feeling that their gender expression was being controlled by policies and practices in their school. According to our research,1 in 2 young people reported experiences of being controlled because of their gender expression and/or identity. Young people highlighted how they experienced this when they do not meet white feminine beauty standards or norms. Youth shared they were either experiencing control or discrimination for dressing or appearing in their traditional religious clothing, dressing or appearing too masculine; dressing or appearing too ghetto; not being able to dress according to their gender identity and dressing or appearing too hypersexual. Our research shows that most of this form of interpersonal violence occurs between young people and teachers/school staff.

1 in 2 of young people have reported experiences of **being controlled** because of their **gender expression and/or identity**.

"...People would always judge me for wearing traditional/ religious clothes..."

Anisha, 11th grader from Queens

While most narratives about dress codes center the experiences of young people who face hyper sexualization, in our study young people shared narratives of being discriminated against based on clothing that reflected their religious identity. As demonstrated in the quote above, young people in our vision sessions experienced a type of control and discrimination that makes them feel like outsiders in their school community. This is common amongst students who are Muslim or perceived as Muslim.

"[People perceived as girls] Wearing baggy clothes was considered a distraction"

Eshani, 9th grader from Queens.

A gender nonconforming young person from Staten Island shared how they experienced being controlled for their gender expression, "They said I have to dress like a girl and that my body was ugly." Another young person from Queens shared a similar experience of how presenting more masculine was policed in their school community, "Wearing baggy clothing or something different/out of the norm was considered a 'distraction'". These examples provide insight into the ways young people who are not feminine presenting are subject to harsh policies and practices that is do not affirm their gender expression but penalizes them for it. Furthermore, The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) found similar results from students who defy gender expectations of femininity. In their 2015 National Survey, GLSEN found: "22.2% of students [LGBTQ] had been prevented from wearing clothes considered inappropriate based on their legal sex" and the number is slightly higher for transgender students "28.0% of transgender students had been prevented from wearing clothes because they were considered inappropriate based on their legal sex". (J. G. Kosciw, et al. 2015)

Girls and TGNC youth color shared how they were consistently penalized for their gender expression while cisgender boys were not. One young person shares how her school community discriminates against her and other girls:

"Of course, my teachers, my gym teacher…they are very strict about girls when we aren't in uniform, but the boys can come dressed in Nike Tech every

THOSE BRACELETS ARE INNAPROPRIATE AND GHETTO...

By attempting to force the appearances of students of color into white cisgender feminine beauty standards, schools are reinforcing negative stereotypes and narratives about girls and TGNC youth of color. Because of this, schools are also demanding that students subscribe to a form of respectability politics that controls and criminalizes their gender expression.

FINDING 3

Girls and TGNC youth of color have visions for safe, holistic and affirming schools for all students.

All the young people who participated in this study expressed clear visions for the schools that they want, need and deserve. These visions are youth driven solutions that address how to prevent pushing girls and TGNC youth of color out of school by calling for a major policy and cultural shift in the education system. This new vision for education directly addresses the institutional and interpersonal violence that participants reported experiencing and breaks down into 4 major areas: affirming curriculum, meeting basic needs through resources, stronger support systems, and ending racist and sexist discipline and surveillance practices.

Vision 1: Affirming Curriculum

Our study confirms that institutional violence is perpetuated in New York City schools by leaving girls and TGNC youth of color out of curriculum and following a Eurocentric curriculum that doesn't speak directly to their lives. When asked to envision a school that they deserve, young people called for a new curriculum that affirmed their experiences and identities. These responses break down into three smaller categories: the need for culturally responsive curriculum, comprehensive sex education and the abolition of standardized testing.

Culturally Responsive Curriculum

"I [want to] learn about my culture-my people-my country"

"Having more than one lesson about Hispanic and Black History"

"Better history curriculum (Latino, Black, Asian, Middle-Eastern history, etc.)"

day. The excuse they give is that [they're] boys so they probably play sports."

Andrea, 11th grader from Brooklyn.

According to this narrative, school policies and practices about dress codes were used to control girls and TGNC youth of color while excluding cisgender boys.

"School administration calls us "unclassy" and "ghetto" when we wear what we want"

Shri, 11th grader from Queens

Young people from the vision session also expressed that they were not encouraged to fully express themselves because the clothes and/or accessories they choose to wear were deemed as "ghetto" or "unclassy", terms that are normally associated with poor women and femmes of color to describe their demeanor, way of dress and attitudes. Because of racialized stereotypes about girls and femmes of color which placed them outside of what is defined as "normal girlhood" and/or "femininity", the young people in vision sessions expressed feeling that their gender identity was being controlled.

gendered identities), many of their responses called for curricula that is intersectional, such as courses on Black LGBTQ History.

Comprehensive Sex Education

"[I want to learn about] comprehensive sex ed"

"[I want schools to] promote sexual health awareness"

"Mandatory consent education in all health classes"

"Sex Ed for all orientations/genders/intersex (and saying it's cool to not want to have sex too)"

In addition to asking for a more culturally responsive curriculum, girls and TGNC youth of color expressed a desire for a curriculum that includes comprehensive sex education.

This comprehensive sex education includes curriculum that is inclusive of all students across various gender and sexuality spectrums. Many of the visions suggested that comprehensive sexual education also include lessons and trainings on interpersonal violence such as sexual harassment and assault in school.

Abolish High-Stakes Standardized Testing

"NO SAT"

"No Regents! Why do we have these?"

"No high stakes educational statewide test."

"No testing at all!"

Finally, young people called for an end to standardized testing, specifically the regents exams, New York State's high school standardized tests.

During the vision sessions, young people envisioned a curriculum that would depart from traditional, Eurocentric frameworks. Instead they desired courses that reflected their cultural, ethnic, and racial histories as well as those that reflected their identities.

Similar to this vision, Sojoyner (Sojoyner 2016) suggests that culturally reflective and educative curriculum, particularly when infused with political analyses, has the potential to inspire young people to learn and advocate for social change. His study on Black youth, public education, and prisons in Los Angeles supports the visions that our NYC participants have for their own lives. Given that the girls and TGNC youth of color who participated in the study have intersectional identities (i.e. informed by their racial, class, religious, and

According to Meiners (Meiners 2007) schools are increasingly "hostile spaces," filled with expansive school discipline practices, high-stakes testing, and narrowed curriculum. Sojoyner (Sojoyner 2016) has also discussed the ways that high-stakes exams have refashioned school curriculum and cultures. In lieu of funding for arts education or culturally responsive classes, schools are more inclined to invest in courses or tools that help with high-stakes exams. The problem, he suggests, is that the narrowed attention to testing compromises young people's access and abilities to learn about social change and themselves.

The young people's vision for the elimination of high-stakes standardized tests correlates with research showing the damaging effects of standardized testing. Research has shown that high-stakes standardized testing is not beneficial for both students and educators, and is in fact extremely harmful. According to research from the National Council of Teachers of English, high-stakes testing impacts educators by causing educators to lose between 60 to 110 hours of instructional time in a year because of testing and the institutional tasks that surround it. It also impacts students by narrowing their curriculum because of the lost instructional time that goes to testing and testing preparation. Standardized tests also limit student learning because they focus only on cognitive dimensions, ignoring many other qualities that are essential to student success. (National Council of Teachers of English 2014)

Alternatives that are more conducive to student learning and growth currently exist. Various schools and school districts across the country have implemented performance assessment as a more effective student-friendly and teacher-friendly alternative to high-stakes testing that assess students' learning. A performance-based assessment system is an integrated approach to education that links together things such as curriculum, instruction, a variety of student work over time, continuous assessment to assess a student's growth (New York Performance Standards Consortium n.d.)

In various states and even in New York City, there are a variety of schools who did away with high-stakes standardized testing in replacement of performance based assessment systems. In New York City, consortium high schools operate under this model. Consortium schools in New York City only require that students take one regent exam and students are assessed for growth through a portfolio.

Vision 2: Stronger Support Systems

Another theme that came up in the visions is a call for stronger support systems. They include a call for more guidance counselors and social workers, comprehensive support for LGBQ and TGNC students of color and a shift in teaching culture and teacher education that would make teachers more respectful and caring.

Guidance Counselors and Social Workers

"Counselors that can handle real life shit."

"Guidance counselors that are willing to help everyone and not just seniors."

In the vision sessions, young people envisioned school environments with more guidance counselors and social workers. Specifically, guidance counselors and social workers that can handle "real shit".

Unfortunately, in New York City there are more school safety agents (Barnum 2016) than there are guidance counselors and social workers combined (New York City Department of Education 2017). Participants' desire for guidance counselors directly addresses their experiences with institutional and interpersonal violence perpetuated by having police in school. Furthermore, the current ratio of guidance counselors to students is 1:346, which does not allow for the support that girls and TGNC youth of color deserve and need.

Fostering Dignified and Supportive Resources for LGBQ and TGNC Students

"LGBTQ friendly."

"LGBTQ+ acceptance."

"Does not patronize or belittle me or my potential."

"Doesn't misgender me!"

"LGBTQ alliance."

Young people, regardless of sexuality or gender, desire schools that respect, validate, and support the needs of TGNC young youth of color.

According to participants, basic ways to respect TGNC young people of color include referring to them by their self-identified correct name and pronoun and supporting their expression of their gender identity through clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms. There was also a demand to provide proper training for teachers on LGBQ and TGNC students so that they can better support LGBQ and TGNC youth of color and create LGBQ and TGNC friendly schools.

Diverse, Supportive and Respectful Staff

"Staff that reflects me"

"Better background checks on teachers and administration so that it is known they communicate well with students"

"[Teachers and Staff] Stalking (such as hyper surveillance) kids is rude and makes them feel untrusted."

"Respectful Teachers"

"Supportive teachers."

"[More] women of color in administration."

"Respectful teachers and respectful staff"

"Young folks be a part of the interview [school staff] process"

Girls and TGNC youth of color from our study, desired an end to the interpersonal violence that they experience from school staff by asking for them to be loving, caring and respectful.

Young people also asked for more TGNC teachers and administrators as well as women of color teachers and administrators. Like above, these young people want these teachers to also be loving, caring and respectful and to also be genuine adult allies/supporters of young people and not be oppressive and continuously perpetuate respectability politics and/or violence towards their students.

Lastly additional responses about support called for school climates that create affirming environments that promote empowerment for people of color, gender equity and have programs for pregnant and parenting teens.

Vision 3: Ending Racist and Sexist Discipline and Surveillance Practices

Girls and TGNC youth of color said they deserve and demanded a change in discipline and surveillance practices. The presence of police and metal detectors have become a part of the school infrastructure. Police in New York City public schools alone count for one of the biggest police departments in the nation. It is not abnormal for Black and Latinx students to experience school safety agents in their school throughout their K-12 years.

In the visions that called for the end of racist and sexist discipline and surveillance practices, they called for the elimination of cops in schools, the elimination of metal detectors, and the elimination of suspensions. Young people also called for the elimination of gender-biased dress codes that disproportionately impact girls and TGNC youth of color.

Eliminating Police in Schools

"Cop-Free Zone"

"No SSA's"

In almost every vision session young people asked for the complete elimination of police (School Safety Agents in NYC public schools) from schools.

According to research from the National School Survey on Crime and Safety, having police officers in schools on a weekly basis increases the number of students who will be involved in the justice system, and the number of referrals for lower-level offenses increases twofold. A national survey of schools found that schools with assigned police officers had significantly greater levels of law enforcement involvement compared to schools without assigned officers. (American Institutes for Research 2017) This parallels with stories that young people shared during the vision sessions, which highlighted their encounters with school safety agents. Young people described their experiences with school safety agents to be unpleasant and sometimes even hostile. Additional research shows, that aggressive security measures can produce alienation and mistrust among students which disrupt the learning environment and create an adversarial relationship between school officials and students. (Beger 2003)

The Dignity in Schools Campaign, a national coalition to end school pushout, launched *Counselors Not Cops*, which calls for the elimination of cops in schools and to replace them with staff members better equipped to work with students such as guidance counselors, social workers, restorative justice coordinators and peace keepers. This aligns with what young people asked for in the vision sessions.

Removing Metal Detectors

"Less metal detectors and more authority figures who care about the wellbeing of our children"

"No Metal Detectors"

Young people also envisioned the complete elimination of metal detectors and scanning in school.

Young people described their experience with metal detectors as overwhelmingly negative. Currently, legislation on metal detectors does not reflect the visions of girls and TGNC youth of color in New York City. Instead it is a joint effort between the New York City Department of Education and the New York Police Department (NYPD). (New York City Department of Education 2005) This legislation makes the presence of metal detectors a criminalizing aspect in schools. Instead young people want there to be a welcoming and friendly presence when entering their school building and an investment in a school climate that supports them as opposed to criminalizes them.

Elimination of Gender biased and Heteronormative Dress Codes

"No Dress Codes"

"No unreasonable dress codes."

"Sensible dress code"

Girls and TGNC youth of color responded to the overwhelming control over their expression by imagining a different dress code.

Young people expressed being disproportionately impacted by gender biased dress codes. Demands about dress code include creating a sensible dress code where girls and TGNC youth of color aren't punished for wearing clothing that is seen as a distraction to cisgender boys, such as a tank top or shorts, or clothing that administrators don't think fits with their gender such as baggy pants or other clothing that is seen as too masculine. Additional demands asked for a complete elimination of dress codes that target girls and TGNC youth color but not cisgender boys. By calling for the elimination of gender biased dress codes students are challenging teachers and administrators to undo sexiest and hetoronormative ideas on gender and create school environments that are equitable for all genders to be expressed.

Elimination of Suspensions

"No Suspensions"

Finally, young people called for the elimination of suspensions. Throughout the vision sessions when discussing pushout factors as well as visions, they expressed that suspensions weren't effective because they did not address the roots of the problem at hand and created negative experiences.

The participants imagined alternatives to suspensions where there was investment in conflict mediation and restorative practices as opposed to punitive measures.

Although lack of resources did not come up while the girls and TGNC youth of color were discussing what gets in the way of their education, many of the visions of the schools that they deserve demanded better resources. These resources included a need for additional extracurricular activities, healthier lunches and basic necessities.

Extracurricular Activities

Young people in the vision sessions called for more extracurricular activities that include a wide variety of sports and clubs and more groups for girls and all gender sports.

The young people's vision for gender-specific and gender-inclusive extracurricular activities can be met if Title IX was fully implemented in all schools. Title IX requires that all federally funded school institutions provide all genders equitable opportunities to participate in sports. Title IX does not require institutions to offer identical sports but an equal opportunity to play.

Healthy Food

"Better food."

"Fresh fruits and veggies"

"Healthier food options"

"Better food."

"Better/Halal Lunch"

"Better cooks and food for lunch"

"Provide food that looks nice, and tasty and healthy."

In the vision sessions, young people expressed a desire for better food options that include healthy lunches with fresh fruit and veggies as well as halal lunch.

Currently, there is legislation that addresses access to nutritious food for students in school on the national level. Federal legislation, Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 (HHFK), which was passed and signed into law by President Obama, is designed to feed students nutritious meals during school and to combat childhood hunger (Congress of the United States 2010). In response to this, New York state has adopted a provision of the bill "Community Eligibility" that makes access to meals in high-poverty schools free. Since the 2014-2015 academic year, New York City has been providing free school lunch to public middle school students *regardless of family income.* (Community Food Advocates 2017) In September 2017, New York City passed legislation to provide free school lunch for all New York City students. (Piccoli and Harris, New York City Offers Free Lunch for All Public School Students 2017) Although current legislation provides free lunch for all New York City students, options for students with various dietary needs, such as halal, are not mandatory.

Accessible Bathrooms for TGNC Youth of Color and Access to Menstrual Products

"Gender neutral bathrooms"

"Sanitary napkins in the women's bathroom"

In the vision sessions, young people envisioned bathrooms that included access to free menstrual products such as pads and tampons.

In New York City, legislation was passed by New York City Council and New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio, on increasing access to menstrual products in school, this legislation was passed after vision sessions occurred. (NYCC 2016) Young people also envisioned schools with access to all gender or gender-neutral bathrooms. In March of 2017, the New York City Department of Education released a guideline for schools on working and accommodating transgender students (NYSED 2015). Within those guidelines, it states "Transgender and gender nonconforming students must be provided access to facilities (restrooms, locker rooms or changing rooms) consistent with their gender identity consistently asserted at school. A transgender student may not be required to use a facility that conflicts with the student's gender identity consistently asserted at school." The visions of the young people take these guidelines a step further by uplifting the need for all gender bathrooms or gender neutral bathrooms so that gender nonconforming students and transgender students who do not feel safe in gender specific restrooms have a place to go.

Access to Quality Technology, Textbooks, Lockers and Desks

"Better Laptops"

"Books"

"More tech."

"More desks."

"Usable lockers"

"Provide laptop/iPad for all students"

Young people envisioned their schools to include up to date technology (e.g. laptops and iPads), newer textbooks, better or usable lockers and desks.

Most of the young people who participated in the vision sessions, attended schools that were under resourced.

According to the Alliance for Quality Education Campaign for Fiscal Equity, New York State owes upwards of 3.9 billion dollars in Foundation Aid to New York State Public Schools of which 1.6 billion is owed to New York City Public Schools. (Alliance for Quality Education 2016) (Disare 2016) This funding that is owed to the schools can be used to improve the quality and access to basic resources and technology.

Clean Water Fountains

"Clean water fountains."

"Usable water fountains"

Young people consistently asked for clean water fountains that were free of lead.

Currently, there is a New York State Department of Health Bill (NYS DoH 2016) that makes it mandatory for school districts in New York State to test the lead in the water. While this bill makes it mandatory for schools to test the water, there is no mandate or recommendation on what schools need to do to replace the water supply so that all the students have access to clean and drinkable water.

Daring to Imagine Something New

When given the opportunity to envision the school girls and TGNC youth of color deserve, the young people in our study went beyond expected responses of typical school discipline, culture, and climate towards the creation of learning environments that foster learning spaces where they can learn, grow, and thrive. Young people envisioned new, radical, and solution-based approaches to education that invested in their success. They imagined schools that do not exist right now.

POLICY AND PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

> "I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. That the speaking profits me, beyond any other effect."
>
> Audre Lorde

Young people are a creative and innovative force that if given the opportunity and power, can transform public policy and institutional practices. Yet, as the community most impacted, youth, especially youth of color, are often not included in decision-making about policies, practices, and cultural expectations that are inextricably linked to their lives. Despite their lack of adequate representation in formal political and policy making institutions, presently and throughout history, young people have undoubtedly participated, contributed to, and catalyzed pivotal changes in our social, economic and political systems.

We know that young people have the knowledge, skills, and power to articulate what is best for their lives. We position this policy and practice framework and these recommendations to amplify the concerns and the visions of schools that girls, transgender, and gender nonconforming young people of color (TGNC) deserve. These recommendations have an eye towards transforming school climate, culture, and ending school pushout for girls and TGNC youth of color, thereby eliminating inequity in schools for all young people. We must include the meaningful participation, leadership, advocacy, and decision making of young people themselves and these conversations must be meaningfully intergenerational conversations to actualize policy and practice change to positively shift New York City's landscape.

To address the specific challenges facing girls and TGNC youth of color, we created a comprehensive vision for policy and institutional practice change that includes a commitment to transform four key issue areas: **curriculum, support, resources, and discipline.** Centering the visions of girls of color and TGNC youth of color from our participatory action research (PAR) project we recommend the following:

INVEST IN HOLISTIC CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

Schools represent critical learning environments for youth to develop positive social interactions and develop a sense of self and wellbeing. Schools should provide curriculum and pedagogy that supports a student's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Learning environments that provide students with information they need to make healthy informed decisions about their bodies and relationships are necessary to young people's lives.

Additionally, schools should provide instruction that supports the development of school environments that are free of discrimination and harassment, and a curriculum that raises awareness of important social issues and structures that are inextricably linked to many students' lives including but not limited to racism, sexism, classism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, islamophobia, and xenophobia. A full representation and positive acknowledgement of people of color, transgender and gender nonconforming folks, lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer (LGBQ) folks, women, and low-income folks and people with disabilities are necessary for all young people to feel affirmed and that their full humanity is supported. In order to complete this vision we recommend the following:

» **Provide culturally responsive, intersectional, feminist education in grades K-12.** A culturally responsive, intersectional, feminist curriculum acknowledges the diverse and intersectional backgrounds of students, as well as education to understand and address how structural, institutional power, and interpersonal power, violence, and oppression shape our worldview and interactions with other people. This curriculum should be reflective of all students' backgrounds, identities, and experiences. Providing this type of education can lead to safer communities for girls and TGNC youth of color (The Center for Popular Democracy n.d.) (Mark-Viverito, New York City Young Women's Initiative Report and Recommendations 2016)

» **Ensure that all students receive medically accurate, developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, comprehensive sexuality education in grades K-12.** Comprehensive sexuality education is the most effective way to ensure that young people have the information to make self-determined decisions about their bodies and lives. (Advocates for Youth 2009) Moreover, comprehensive sexuality education has proven to reduce unintended pregnancy, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections among young people. Despite an official mandate (New York City Department of Education 2011) to teach sexuality education in NYC public schools, many schools only offer one or two lessons on sexual health in 12th grade after many young people have already become sexually active or

schools have declined to teach sexual health altogether. We recommend that the Department of Education require comprehensive sex education in all New York City public schools for every grade, every year, that is medically accurate, age-appropriate and inclusive of issues that young people regularly experience, such as sexual consent, negotiating boundaries, healthy relationships, healthy communication, LGBQ and TGNC experiences, gender-based violence, sexual harassment, gender identity, gender expression, and information about where to go for sexual and reproductive health services (The Sexuality Education Alliance of New York City 2017)

» **Eliminate High-Stakes Standardized Testing.** Young people want schools that do not rely on high-stakes standardized testing to measure and evaluate their preparedness for higher education. Research from the National Council of Teachers of English show that high-stakes testing impacts educators by causing them to lose between 60 to 110 hours of instructional time in a year due to testing and the institutional tasks that surrounding test taking. According to their research, English Language Arts and English teachers are forced to limit broader curriculum content to test-specific teaching since testing content focuses on narrowed reading material forcing the primary class curricula to focus on passing standardized tests. (National Council of Teachers of English 2014) Further, in many schools standardized testing scores are linked directly to district or school funding forcing an even greater emphasis on testing. Eliminating high-stakes standardized testing from school will expand learning time for students and lessens the anxiety that comes with testing while fostering a more holistic and safe learning environment. (New York City Department of Education n.d.) We also recommend using portfolio-based assessments or performance assessments (New York Performance Standards Consortium n.d.) to prepare young people for college and post-secondary educational/training opportunities. Portfolio-based assessments or performance assessments increase analytical thinking and conceptual knowledge that facilitates problem-solving skills.

DECRIMINALIZE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Girls and TGNC youth of color deserve schools where they are not disciplined for who they are and the identities they hold. Girls and TGNC youth of color, like all children, deserve safe, respectful, affirming school communities free from violence, discrimination, and stigma. To accomplish this goal, schools must foster positive school climates for girls and TGNC youth of color that includes but is not limited to, divesting from harmful discipline practices, values community involvement and limits the role of law enforcement inside of schools. In order to complete this vision we recommend the following:

» **Remove all Police (school safety agents) in all New York City Public Schools.** Young people in the vision sessions overwhelmingly asked for a complete removal of all New York City Police from public schools. This is consistent with findings from other young people surveyed across NYC and in other states. The vision sessions support findings from other New York City advocates (The Center for Popular Democracy n.d.), recommend that school safety agents be removed from all NYC public schools, and funding for that program be redirected to counselors, social workers, and restorative justice programming. (Dignity in Schools Campaign 2016) Law enforcement should only be contacted in the case of an emergency that cannot be handled by school personnel.

» **Protect immigrant youth and families by eliminating and preventing the presence of Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers in school communities.** New York City should be a leader in preventing the school to deportation pipeline through ensuring that young people do not have to risk deportation simply by attending school. New York City should fully implement the Immigration Guidance for Principals. (New York City Department of Education) and completely eliminate

and prevent the presence of ICE officers in school communities. NYC DOE Chancellor in collaboration with City Council creates a mandate preventing and eliminating their presence in school communities.

» **Remove metal detectors and other instruments of surveillance from all New York City public schools.** Young people cited various reasons for their removal including delaying their ability to getting to class on time to feeling like a criminal when they enter school. There is no definitive research on whether metal detectors make school environments safer. Currently there are 80 permanent scanning campuses (New York City Department of Education 2016) in New York City. These campuses are located in under resourced predominately Black and Latinx schools with an overrepresentation of law enforcement such as school safety agents and other NYPD officers. These factors demonstrate resourcing and practices rooted in institutionalized racism. We recommend that the DOE take immediate steps to remove metal detectors from all public schools.

» **Eliminate Zero Tolerance Policies.** Eliminate zero tolerance policies and the use of superintendent suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests for minor infractions, including B21[10]. In the vision sessions, young people consistently asked for an elimination of zero tolerance policies because the policies operate under a harsh penal practice that excessively discipline students for minor infractions. These zero tolerance policies disproportionately target students of color and TGNC young people. (Advancement Project 2012)

» **Mandate guidance interventions before the use of suspensions.** Research on discipline practices has clearly demonstrated that guidance interventions (Walker, Ramsey and Gresham 2003) are more likely to address the root causes of disruptive behavior, and may prevent future incidents of these types of behaviors from occurring. Currently, schools use guidance interventions at their discretion, leading to uneven application of guidance interventions across the school system. Guidance interventions

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10 B21-New York City Department of Education discipline code for *insubordination* which is defined as "Defying or disobeying the lawful authority or directive of school personnel or school safety agents in a way that substantially disrupts the educational process and/or poses a danger to the school community". This code has been used by school administrators as a catch all to suspend students they deem undesirable.

should be mandatory and uniform across all Department of Education schools.

» **Implement restorative justice practices throughout all New York City Department of Education schools.** While the New York City government has shown an initial commitment to restorative justice (Mark-Viverito, Ferreras-Copeland and McKinney, The City Council of The City of New York Fiscal Year 2017 Adopted Expense Budget Adjustment Summary / Schedule C 2017) through money allocated to the Department of Education to start Restorative Justice pilot programs, this must be followed by a deeper investment in efforts to expand restorative practices citywide. In a 2015 case study, from Teachers Unite, a grassroots organization based in New York that organizes with teachers to implement restorative practices in school communities, showed that restorative justice practices cut suspensions in half and improved overall school climate (Teachers Unite 2015). The study further suggests that restorative justice practices should include a racial justice lens.

» **Eliminate vague and subjective dress code policies that tend to be used disproportionately against girls and TGNC youth of color.** Young people should not be expelled, kicked out of class, given detention, treated differently or punished in any way because of their gender expression according to the New York State Dignity Act, Title IX of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution, and the Equal Protection Clause. Ending punitive practices around dress code (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division 2014) must expand beyond clothing to include infractions related to hairstyles and accessories (i.e. wraps with bobby pins, dreadlocks, braids, etc.) religious dress/identifiers (i.e. Hijabs) or other cultural markers (i.e. African head wraps)

» **Collect and Confidentially Share Disaggregated Data on School Discipline Practices** Collect and make publicly available, in a way that protects student privacy and confidentiality, disaggregated and cross-tabulated data on disciplinary actions including suspensions, expulsions, and school arrests of girls and TGNC youth of color. This recommendation is also reflective of a call to remedy broader discrepancies in data collection, information sharing, and open data source information in a way that is disaggregated by race

and gender in New York City (Mark-Viverito, New York City Young Women's Initiative Report and Recommendations 2016) Though efforts have been made by New York City Council such as local laws 2016/128, 2016/126, and 2016/127 (New York City Council 2016) there is still work to do in collaboration with New York City Agencies, New York City Council, data and systems experts, advocates, and directly impacted communities.

CREATE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

For girls and TGNC youth color to succeed - policy makers, schools, parents and advocates must work diligently to create and maintain safe, respectful, and affirming environments where all young people can learn and have the vital support they need to overcome obstacles, succeed academically, heal and thrive. Girls and TGNC youth of color want and need focused support and purposeful resources. Schools are critical points of intervention and all actors in educational environments including educators, school safety, school leadership, and support staff must be trained and equipped to understand the multiple traumas that young people experience inside and outside of school, recognize the warning signs, and be prepared to respond. The following should be adopted:

» **Stronger implementation of Title IX, The Dignity Act, and Respect for All to support the mental, emotional, and physical health of all young people.** There are existing local, state, and federal laws that are intersectional in nature, however they are not given the adequate fiscal and implementation resources they require in order to be fully implemented and successful. Which includes assigning a Title IX coordinator to every NYC DOE School. New York City has 1.1 million students, 1,800 schools but only has 1 Title IX coordinator.

» **Increase the number of trained and supervised guidance counselors and social workers.** Girls and TGNC youth of color need a consistent individual who they can turn to for help in their school environments. Ensure that social workers and guidance counselors have extensive
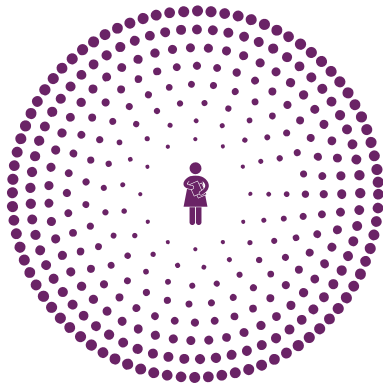
**New York City has
1,100,000 million students,
1,800 schools
but only 1 Title IX coordinator.**

anti-oppressive frameworks/practice training (Minnesota Philanthropy Partners 2013). Inform students about guidance counselors and social workers, what their role is, how they can help, and where they are located. Conduct universal screenings for students' academic, social, emotional, mental, and physical health and other needs and ensure that they receive the proper culturally-responsive support.

» **Ensure comprehensive in-school support for students who are survivors of sexual violence.** Expand the number of school guidance counselors that are equipped to provide students with or refer them to community-based culturally-responsive, survivor-led, gender responsive, trauma-informed support such as mental health services. Provide counseling to assist students who've been exposed to trauma or violence (Duncan 2013).

» **Increase School-Based Health Centers (SBHCs) and School Based Mental Health (SBMH) programs across the city for middle and high schools** (Mark-Viverito, New York City Young Women's Initiative Report and Recommendations 2016)**.** Youth of color often face financial, cultural, and institutional barriers when accessing the healthcare they need. These barriers drive the racial and ethnic health disparities that young people of color experience (Augustine, Alford and Dea 2004). Offering supportive health resources in school creates the opportunity for young

people to access healthcare that they may not receive outside of school.

Ensure comprehensive in-school support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Queer (LGBQ) and Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) students.

» **Comply with the Dignity Act.** Schools are legally required to provide a safe learning environment free from physical or verbal harassment. In conjunction with school compliance with the law, New York State must equitably allocate resources to support with better implementation and evaluation to have real impact on young people's lives.

» **Follow the Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Student Guidelines** (NYSED 2015). The New York State Department of Education released guidelines on how to best support transgender and gender nonconforming students. Schools should be provided the resources needed to properly implement the guidelines such as access to regular trainings and opportunities to share best practices with each other.

» **Collect and make publicly available (in a way that protects student privacy and confidentiality) disaggregated and cross-tabulated data** on incidents of harassment based on sex, race, sexual orientation, and actual or perceived gender identity.

» **Identify at least one staff member to be the Dignity Act Coordinator/Respect for All Liaison in every public school.** Ensure that every school has a Dignity Act Coordinator who is thoroughly trained in methods to respond to human relations in the areas of race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practices, disability, sexual orientation, gender or sex. Under the Dignity Act and Commissioner's regulations all schools are required to identify at least one staff person to perform the duties put forward by the New York State law, The Dignity Act.

» **Provide all staff and school personnel with annual mandatory, age appropriate, gender-inclusive training on bullying, harassment and violence, including consent, healthy relationship skills, and bystander intervention.** Annually provide mandatory training for

educators and school personnel from a qualified, experienced community based trainer, culturally responsive training on supporting students impacted by harassment or bullying based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, racial identity, religious affiliation. All staff should be prepared to respond, support, and follow up on these major experiences in schools.

» **Create a safe space for students to give feedback.** Policies and practices in school environments often happen without input from students, the people often directly impacted by the decision. We recommend listening to criticism and feedback from transgender, gender nonconforming, and lesbian, bisexual, gay, and queer students and value this criticism as feedback to be taken seriously without defaulting to defensive or punitive measures. Input and feedback from young people most affected is an opportunity for learning and growth.

» **Establish and support more Gender and Sexuality Alliances or GSAs (formally Gay Straight Alliances) throughout the NYC DOE system.** Throughout our visions sessions many of the young people expressed a desire for stronger support for LGBTQ students. We recommend passing New York City Council's bill Introduction 1639-2017 which would mandate the Department of Education to report to New York City Council on if each school has a GSA. (New York City Council 2017) There is evidence that schools with active GSAs improve overall school climate. (Walls, Kane and Wisneski 2009)

Ensure comprehensive in-school support for students who are victims and survivors of sexual violence.

» **Provide annual mandatory training for educators and school personnel on appropriately identifying, interacting with, responding to, and supporting survivors of sexual violence. Including survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC), childhood sexual abuse, as well as young people engaged in survival sex.** Provide teachers, staff, and administrators with training on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention n.d.) and recognize the signs of trauma that may be underlying and perceived as

"defiant" or "disrespectful" behavior (M. Morris 2016), understand the effects that trauma has on children and learn new ways to appropriately address trauma and not further victimize students. These trainings should also offer visions and tools for fostering an environment that is healing centered and supportive.

» **Create school policies that implement practices of offering content warnings for material in curriculum that may re-traumatize or re-victimize young people.** If you are covering material about sexual violence — such as reading a book or watching a movie that contains scenes of sexual violence — consider giving students a warning about the potentially distressing content of the material, and giving students the opportunity to leave the room if necessary. Adding a brief note to a syllabus about such content and available resources can make a real difference in students' lives.

» **Create Sexual Violence Response Teams and/or Title IX compliance groups in all Boroughs with clear pathways for reporting incidents of Title IX violations.** These groups are important for fostering relationships with local sexual violence response centers and community-based organizations that can provide students with support. (Know Your IX n.d.) They would collaborate with guidance counselor departments (New York City Department of Education 2017) to create a resource of mental health professionals that are trained to deal with issues of sexual violence.

» **Support student-led efforts around sexual violence.** Sponsor and support student groups against gender-based violence. Ask students how you can best support their efforts.

Ensure comprehensive in-school support for pregnant and parenting young people.

» **Increase the number of Living for the Young Family through Education (LYFE) slots offered to parenting students.** With private childcare out of reach for many young parents, more needs to be done to ensure that young parents do not have to choose between attending school and caring for their children. A recent study conducted by NYCLU (Mark-Viverito, New York City Young Women's Initiative Report and

Recommendations 2016) noted that the number of available LYFE (LYFE Program 2017) slots that would provide childcare for students with infants and toddlers was too low to meet the potential need. We recommend determining the number of school-based day care slots available at each public high school in relation to existing demand and improve availability and accessibility of those programs.

» **Implement meaningful and comprehensive training for all school personnel on the legal rights of pregnant and parenting students to equal educational opportunities.** Title IX requires that parenting students can continue to attend school and complete their education. To comply with this law and to further ensure that a young parent does not have to choose between their education and their child, all school personnel needs regular training on both the rights of pregnant and parenting students as well as how to create a supportive school climate for their pregnant and parenting teens. (Garcia and Chaudhry 2017) Trainings should include: how to create safe spaces for nursing students to pump milk and/or breastfeed/chestfeed, how to facilitate the enrollment in programs and/or services such as LYFE and how to build genuine youth adult partnerships so that young parents can be a part of the conversions regarding their education and wellbeing. (#NoTeenShame 2013)

CREATE RESOURCEFUL AND DIGNIFIED SCHOOLS

The systemic failure to treat girls and TGNC youth of color, in an equitable manner when it comes to resources and opportunities deprives them of the many positive health, academic, and economic opportunities that participation in extracurricular activities and sports opportunities offer.

» **The Department of Education must increase opportunities for girls and TGNC youth of color to participate in Extracurricular Activities & Sports.** (National Women's Law Center 2015) Young people in our vision sessions, consistently asked for more extra-curricular activities and sports opportunities in their schools. However,

due to conflicts related to gender-specific burdens such as caring for younger siblings they were unable to participate in extracurricular activities. In addition, many girls and TGNC youth of color attended schools where there were no activities for them to participate in. New York City Council should pass legislation for the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and the Department of Education to provide equitable funding and spending on sports and extracurricular activities for all young people. Furthermore, schools should actively recruit girls and TGNC youth of color to participate in sports and other extracurricular activities, especially where they are historically underrepresented. Schools should partner with girls and TGNC youth of color who have gender specific burdens to create systems that enable them to engage in extracurricular activities. Such as expanding extracurricular days and offerings, flexible membership rules, providing space and materials for smaller children, etc. Lastly, New York City should revise their policy on transgender youth in contact and competitive sports to remove the case-by-case review for young people who want to play on teams that match their gender identity. (NYSED 2015)

» **Create All Gender Bathrooms.** IIn the visions sessions, both cisgender girls and TGNC young people asked for TGNC students to have access to all gender bathrooms that are accessible and safe. In March 2017, New York City released guidelines on how to make schools an inclusive environment for TGNC young people those guidelines included accessible bathrooms (NYDOE 2017). Based on these guidelines, we recommend that the Department of Education mandate and allocate resources to ensure that all schools have accessible all gender bathrooms for TGNC young people.

» **Access to quality tampons, pads, and other menstrual materials.** While NYC Council and the mayor recently signed a package of bills (New York City Council 2016) to include tampons and sanitary napkins in all schools, prisons, and homeless shelters (Rinkunas 2016). As it pertains to schools, there should be monitoring to make sure that schools are not running out of these supplies and are actually providing them in bathrooms free of charge to students who would need them. In addition, the implementation of this policy should

ensure that transgender students who have periods and do not identify as young women are able to safely and easily access tampons and pads.

» **Provide free and nutritious food options that are inclusive to all students' religious dietary guidelines in all New York City public schools.** In the vision sessions, young people consistently asked for access to more nutritious food with halal options in their schools. Beginning in September 2017 in New York City free school lunch is provided for all New York City students (Piccoli and Harris, New York City Offers Free Lunch for All Public School Students 2017). Additionally, throughout the nation and New York State, the Hunger Free Kids Act (Congress of the United States 2010) has made strides to address school food access and these policies can go further by including healthy food options for all students. We recommend fully implementing this recommendation, to ensure that holistic and inclusive food options are provided for all students in NYC public schools.

» **Mandatory testing of New York City public school water fountains for lead and access to clean drinkable water available to all students.** Including regular cleaning of drinking fountains or access to refillable water bottle stations. Young people asked for their schools to have clean and drinkable water. Based on this vision, our recommendation is that all NYC public schools conduct mandatory annual testing of water fountains for lead [and other water impurities] as well as having clean drinkable water available for all students. To make this possible, NYC Department of Education and the Department of Health can revise *Lead Testing in School Drinking Water -10 NYCRR Subpart 67-4* to include a mandate on having accessible and drinkable water for all students. Also implement alternatives to closed water fountains so that students can have access to clean drinkable water.

» **Provide access to current technology for all students in New York City public schools.** Young people in the vision sessions envisioned schools with current technology. Based on this vision, our recommendation is that all NYC public school students have access to current technology. Currently there is no New York State Legislation or New York City Department of Education mandate on providing current technology in schools thus school's technology remains archaic and under resourced. We recommend that the New York City Council collect data on access to current technology in New York City public schools. With the results of this data, provide equitable funding and distribution of technology to under-resourced schools.

» **Fully allocate owed funds to New York City public Schools.** In the vision sessions, young people asked for their basic school needs to be met including full access to current technology, up-to-date and quality textbooks, a number of comfortable seats, tables and chairs that reflects the number of students in each classroom. These visions and needs reflect students' experiences in an under-resourced school. According to Alliance for Quality Education and Public Policy for Education Funds' Campaign for Fiscal Equity, New York State public schools are owed a total of 4.6 billion dollars with New York City public schools accounting for 1.9 billion dollars (How Much Is My School Owed? 2017). We recommend that New York State fully allocate all funds to New York City Public Schools and that schools use a portion of this allocated funding to ensure improved access to quality materials and cover basic classroom student needs.

CONCLUSION

Girls and TGNC youth of color deserve the schools that they imagined. Their visions are a call to action for everyone who cares about education justice to join in genuine intergenerational partnership to make their visions a reality. Furthermore, to actualize the school that girls and TGNC youth of color deserve, we must flip the conversation from what do we need to do to keep young people from being pushed out of school to focusing on how we create the schools that girls and TGNC youth of color want and need in order to succeed. While the visions produced by the young people who participated in this project present a holistic approach to address the many ways in which girls and TGNC youth of color are pushed out of school, it's important to note that there are still areas where these visions need to be expanded upon. For example, issues and visions specifically pertaining to girls and TGNC youth of color with disabilities were not mentioned during the visions sessions, and thus, not fully presented in this report. Thus, this report is not the final word on what needs to happen in our schools to support girls and TGNC youth of color, but a piece of a growing demand to do better by young people.

Lastly, though there are emerging policy and resourcing conversations that begin to uplift the experiences and narratives of girls and TGNC youth of color, there is still a scarcity of data that reflects their lived experiences. To date, most research has focused on the experiences of cisgender Black and Latinx boys and their interaction with the school-to-prison pipeline. Girls for Gender Equity believes that the experiences of boys of color is important, but that policy solutions and advocacy efforts will be incomplete without the intentional inclusion of girls and TGNC youth of color. With this report, we seek to add to the social justice landscape so that girls and TGNC youth of color are not further pushed to the margins or left behind in the quest for education justice. It is our hope that you do too.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A1:

Visioning The School Girls Deserve -- Uplifting solutions to end school pushout [Sample Agenda]

GIRLS FOR GENDER EQUITY '17

workshop description:

Visioning The School Girls Deserve (aka Vision Session) is an opportunity for young people to share their experiences in their learning environments and the factors that may lead to school push out. This workshop tool also provides young people with the opportunity to envision and dream up radical schools that they deserve.

who is this session for?

- Young people interested in talking about their experiences in school; particularly with school push out
- Young people ready to imagine different learning environments and excited about creating solutions for safe, holistic, and affirming schools.

goals for session:

- To create a safe(r) space for young people to center their identities and lived experiences as girls of color and/or transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) young people.
- To shift the narrative that school pushout only affects cisgender boys of color.
- To uplift the voices of girls and TGNC youth of color through creative exercises and activities.
- To begin engaging in critical and fierce community conversations about school pushout and thinking about ways to resist!
- To identify and collect youth driven solutions for ending school pushout.

time:

90 min to 2 hours

facilitators:

1 (or more) young people and 1 adult accomplice. *This workshop is intended to be co-facilitated by a young person and an adult.*

materials needed:

- » newsprint for community agreements + graffiti walls + vision board
- » pre-filled school pushout tree on newsprint
- » multi-color post its
- » construction paper
- » blank copy paper
- » old magazines or newspapers
- » scissors
- » pcolor pencils
- » markers
- » tape
- » pens
- » music for vision brainstorming (optional)

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
5 - 10 min	**Introduction**	Introduce yourself and tell a little about what brings you to the work	Yourself + positive energy

Introduce facilitators (name, gender pronouns, and other pertinent information about you) and discuss the description and goals for the workshop. Then, give young people the opportunity to go around and share their names and pronouns.

OPTIONAL: Add a check-in question to the introduction (ex. What emoji would you use to describe your day?) Please note this will lengthen the time of the workshop

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
5 -10 min	**Group Agreements**	Create group agreements to make a safe(r) space for workshop participants	Newsprint + markers

Explain to the group that group agreements are a list of agreements and expectations co-created and co-maintained by all participants and facilitators to create a safe(r) space for honest dialogue and community building.

Generate a list of community agreements together with young folks. You may need to provide examples and/or offer some to get started (i.e. *One Mic*, *Challenge Ideas, not People*, or *Use "I" Statements*)

Check for agreement (i.e. thumbs up or thumbs down, snaps, claps). Remind the group that this is a living document and that it can be revisited.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
20 min	**Graffiti Wall**	Give young people the opportunity to share their experiences with school pushout	Newsprint with questions + tape + markers + music

PRIOR TO WORKSHOP - Generate a list of 10 -12 open-ended questions relating to school pushout. These questions should be specific but not influence a young person's answer.

Example:

» What is your experience with school resource officers?

» NOT -- Have you had a bad experience with school resource officers?

Write each question on a piece of newsprint to be posted around the room. Leave enough space on the paper for young people to write. Be sure to also have printed copies (with large font) for student with any physical access needs. Please also write prompts in the language most used by the community you are working with.

Instruct young people to go around the room and answer prompts. You may music in the background during this activity. Encourage participants to answer at least 7 to 9 of the prompts. Also tell them that they can write as much as they want to.

Bring the group back together and briefly share out anything that they wrote on the graffiti wall or reflect on the activity as a whole.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
15 min	**School Pushout Tree Activity**	Give young people the opportunity to make connections between the root causes of school pushout and how it looks in their own school environments.	Pre-drawn/prefilled School Pushout Tree on newsprint + markers + multi-color post-its + pens.

Explain the School Pushout Tree. Break down each part of the tree, starting at the roots (Please refer to graphic), then the truck, and then the branches. *You may want to ask young people to read aloud to shift who is talking and taking up space.* After you have finished explaining the tree, ask young people to explain how one particular branch (i.e. policing in schools) relates to a specific root (i.e. racism or classism).

Next, divide the larger group into smaller groups. Assign each group a branch (i.e Group 1: Policing in School Branch, Group 2: School Curriculum Branch, etc.) Give each group a set of post -its. Each group should have a different color post-it.

Instruct the group to discuss what the branch means to them and their schools. And then to fill out one post-it note for each way this presents in their school (i.e. Policing in School looks like metal detectors, school resource officers, surveillance cameras, etc). Each person should fill out 2 to 5 post-its. These post-it notes will become the "leaves" of the tree.

Bring the groups back together - allow each group to present one leaf and post the additional leaves on the large School Pushout Tree.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
20 min	**Reflection Journal**	Give young people the opportunity to personally reflect on their experience with school pushout and/or school pushout factors.	Copy paper + construction paper + markers + pens + pencils of color + music

Instruct participants to reflect on their experiences of what what they believe gets in the way of them completing their education. Using poetry, art, comics, storytelling, essays, collage or any other medium -- ask participants to either reflect on something they shared on the graffiti wall, during the pushout tree exercise, or a completely new experience.

OPTIONAL - If it is a medium that is not written, ask participants to write 2 or 3 sentences about their journal.

OPTIONAL - If time permits (and folks feel comfortable), they can present back to the larger group.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
20 min	**School that you deserve**	Give young people the opportunity to create a vision board of the school that they deserve	Newsprint + pencils of color + markers + music + old magazines or newspapers + scissors

Instruct participants to remain in the groups that they were in earlier. Instruct participants to envision a school that doesn't push them out or make them feel unsafe and unwelcome, and create a school that is holistic, safe and affirming for them to thrive in their learning environments. To create this vision of a school that they want, instruct the participants to grab art materials (Such as: markers, newsprints, color pencils) and create a vision board of what this ideal school looks like and feels like for them . Encourage participants to be as creative as possible and for any picture that they draw to write a brief description about it.

OPTIONAL:

Have old magazines, newspapers and scissors available so that participants can cut out key words, phrases or images of what the school that they deserve will look and feel like.

OPTIONAL:

Play fun and energetic music to keep a positive energy in the room.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
15 min	**Collective Vision Board**	Give participants the opportunity to share visions and create a collective vision of the school that they deserve	Newsprint + markers

Give participants the opportunity to share what they envisioned for their schools to the larger group.

Once each group has had the opportunity to share out their visions, participants will create a collective vision board of all the different visions that people shared that resonated with everyone.

Time	Activity	Objective	Materials
10 min	**Closing**	Participants will reflect on the vision session and close it out	Pens + evaluations

Facilitators will collect reflection journals from participants as well as pass out the evaluation form. The evaluation will allow participants to share what they liked about the workshop, what they didn't like and it will also be an opportunity to see if the goals/objectives of the workshop were met (i.e. ask: Do you know what school pushout is? Do you think school pushout is an issue that impacts girls and TGNC youth of color?)

After the evaluation, participants and facilitators will have a closing out activity.

Optional closing activity-- One word go around, pass the pulse, community chant

APPENDIX A.2:

REFLECTION JOURNAL ACTIVITY AND PROMPTS

Reflection journals are an opportunity for young people to go into more detail about their experiences with school pushout specifically any of the incidents that they described during the gallery walk portion of the vision session. Reflection journals can be any artistic visual medium of the young person's choosing. The young people created a range of comics, pictures, poems and stories that describes their experience with school pushout.

Expand on any story that you shared in the gallery walk or any other experience that you had in school. You can create a poem, picture, comic, story or all to share your story.

APPENDIX A.3:
SCHOOL PUSHOUT PROBLEM TREE

MANIFESTATIONS
The ways the factors impact student learning

Metal detectors, school safety agents, sexual harassment, strict gender biased dress codes, misgendering, high stakes testing, not seeing self in the curriculum, lack of comprehensive sex education, lack of access to extracurricular activities, harassment because of race, harassment because of religious identity

FACTORS
The various reasons of the problem

Overpolicing, hypersurvellience, culturally disconnected curriculum, underresourced and unsupported schools, gender based violence, violence towards TGNC young people, racialized violence and harassment, religious violence and harassment, control of gender expression and identity

MAIN PROBLEM
Specific problem the tree addresses.

In this case, school pushout.

ROOT CAUSE
The underlying systems of oppression that is the root of the problem

Racism, Sexism, Classism, Xenophobia, Homophobia, Transphobia, Ableism, Islamophobia, Ageism, Colorism

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

Most of these terms are used throughout this policy report and are commonly used terms in spaces that discuss school pushout, girls and TGNC youth of color.

Cisgender Person: someone who identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth. For example: your birth certificate says female, and you identify as a woman.

Feminine: Socially constructed attributes, traits, characteristics or ways of behaving that our culture usually associates with being a girl or a woman, such as caring, nurturing, sensitive, dependent, emotionally passive, quiet, graceful, innocent, weak, flirtatious, self-critical, soft, submissive, supporting, delicate, or pretty.

Gender: Socially constructed attributes and opportunities typically associated with being male and female, and the relationships between women and men, as well as the relationships between women and those between men and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/ time-specific and changeable. Gender is not a binary, but instead is on a spectrum with an infinite variety of expressions, representing a more nuanced, and ultimately truly authentic model of gender that is self-identified.

Gender-Based Violence or Gender Violence:
Gender violence occurs as a result of the normative role expectations associated with the gender binary (the incorrect idea there are two genders male/masculine and female/feminine) and unequal access to power associated with each gender, within the context of a specific society. Gender violence is expressed through physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse that results in harm, injury, and even death. Legal definitions of sexual assault, domestic violence, and sex trafficking are included in the term gender violence as an inclusive way to encompass all of these forms of violence. Gender violence perpetuates a climate of fear for girls and women, transgender, people who are gender non-conforming, and all people who challenge the norm of heterosexual male dominance through their actions or because of who they are. Gender violence is part of the continuum of gender oppression and is the extreme expression of oppressive practices. The roots of gender violence and gender oppression are in patriarchy, a system of male, heterosexual dominance, supported by and interconnected to other social structures of domination, including racism, classism, homophobia, heterosexism, ableism, adultism, and/or anti-immigrant policies and beliefs to maintain gender, heterosexual, racial and class and other forms of privilege and power.

Gender Binary: A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed "male and female", in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories. (TSER 2017) Source: http://www.transstudent.org/definitions

Gender Equity: Involves trying to understand and give people what they need to enjoy full, healthy lives. Specific measures must be designed to eliminate inequalities and discrimination against anyone across the gender spectrum and to ensure equal opportunities. Gender equity takes measures to correct past inequities and root out structural privilege. Gender equity leads to a truer and more impactful equality. Equality, in contrast, aims to ensure that everyone gets the same things in order to enjoy full, healthy lives. Like equity, equality aims to promote fairness and justice, but it can only work if everyone starts from the same places and needs the same things.

Gender Inequality: Unequal access to power and/ or limited access to power by girls, women, individuals who are transgender, and people who are gender non-conforming in all aspects of life, including but not limited to health care, education, legal protection, the ability to earn a living, and the ability to make decisions in their households and communities.

Gender Nonconforming: refers to people who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Pronouns: This is the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual uses, such as he/him/his, she/her/hers or they/them/theirs. Implementing the practice of saying everyone's pronouns creates space for individuals who do not identify with he/she gender pronouns, and ensures that no one person's gender is assumed. It acknowledges that many individuals identify across the gender spectrum as transgender, gender nonconforming, or gender fluid.

Gender Role: This is the set of roles, activities, expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Our culture recognizes two basic gender roles: Masculine (having the qualities attributed to males) and feminine (having the qualities attributed to females). People who step out of their socially assigned gender roles are sometimes referred to as transgender. Some cultures have three or more gender roles.

Gender Stereotypes: Generalized and/or assembled conceptualizations about people based on gender. Stereotypes depict simplified and rigid view of others and are centered on a limited number of characteristics. Stereotypes create an impression that everyone in the group has the same characteristics. Stereotypes create expectations of how males and females should look, think, feel, and act.

Girls and Transgender and Gender Nonconforming (TGNC) youth of color: While GGE's definition of girls includes transgender girls, girls and TGNC are separated because we include transboys and transmasculine young people's stories throughout this report. We also do this because while TGNC youth of color experience violence because of their intersecting identities like cisgender girls of color, they experience a type of violence that is not applicable to cisgender girls.

Institutional Violence: Refers to violence that occurs from any institution. Examples of institutions include judicial, education, penal, financial, housing, etc. In this report the institution that is specifically being addressed is the school.

Interpersonal Violence: Refers to violence that occurs between people. For this report, we specifically are talking about violence that occurs either between students or students and adults in school.

Intersectionality: Is a theory that seeks to examine the ways in which various socially and culturally constructed categories interact on multiple levels to manifest themselves as inequality in society. Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination.

Islamophobia: The dislike, hatred or discrimination of Muslims or people perceived to be Muslim people. People perceived as Muslim include folks who are Sikh, people who are non-Muslim Arabs, North Africans and South Asians.

Latinx: An all gender term used to describe anyone who identifies and has native ancestry in Latin American countries.

Masculine: Attributes, traits, characteristics, or ways of behaving that our culture usually associates with being a boy or man, such as independent, non-emotional, aggressive, strong, overly competitive, experienced, active, self-confident, hard, sexually aggressive, and rebellious. Masculinity is socially constructed.

Participatory Action Research: A collaborative approach to research that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process. It is a research framework that values: collaboration with research participants; attention to the relationship between researcher and participant; and the goals of learning and social change.

Racial Harassment: Discrimination towards a person of color based on their race. Racial harassment includes but is not limited to teachers/peers/school staff making racist commentary towards students of color and racist jokes.,

Racism: The combination of prejudice and power that benefits one group of people over another. In America, this is white people having power over people of color that gives them an advantage socially and economically in this country.

Religious Harassment: Discrimination towards a person based on their religious identity. Religious harassment includes, but is not limited to: teachers/peers/school staff making derogatory comments about a religion and the practitioners, making jokes about a religion or people in the religion, humiliating someone based on their religion and basing treatment of students based on their religion.

Respectability Politics: "Respectability politics" are rules for marginalized people to follow in order to "earn" respect in mainstream culture. This includes policing appearance, speech, behavior and sexuality to avoid the racist, classist, and sexist stereotypes and to

conform to white middle-class standards of citizenship (Johnson 2015).

School Pushout: Anything that prevents a young person from completing their education in a timely manner.

Sexual Harassment: Sexual harassment is any unwanted behavior or attention of a sexual nature that may or may not interfere with a person's ability to participate in or benefit from a school's programs or activities.

Structural Violence: Refers to violence that is deep seated into the structure of American society and can lead to violence and discrimination that occurs in institutions and interpersonal interactions. Examples of structural violence include, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, xenophobia, etc. While this report does not specifically address structural violence, its impacts can be seen throughout the report.

Transgender Person: someone who identifies with a different gender from the gender they were assigned at birth. For example: your birth certificate says male, and you identify as a woman.

Violence: Anything that causes another person harm. In this report, violence includes harm that is physical, cultural, emotional, structural and sexual.

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