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SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE: INCARCERATION OVER EDUCATION

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INCARCERATION OVER EDUCATION

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requirements for the

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Abstract

A review of this literature allowed the writers and authors to express how crimes have decreased and prisons have increased with African Americans, Hispanics, low-socioeconomic families, and students with special disabilities. Zero tolerance policies are being used in today's school systems that lead to an increase in school arrests. This paper is designed to study the research that shows how a particular population of students are being forced out of school's systems and into the juvenile criminal justice system which then filters them into federal prisons.

Keywords: teacher professional, discipline policies, school, prison, pipeline, incarceration, juvenile, criminal justice

Acknowledgement

First, I would like to begin, by acknowledging God, who is the head of my life. I am truly grateful when I wanted to throw in the towel, but God did not give up on me. I had to face many challenges in life, but God has allowed family, friends, and strangers to provide unconditional support me to encourage me to keep pushing on. I would also like to thank my husband, Jorge Parris, and my two children, Jasmine Dillard Poindexter and Matthew Wills, for the sacrifices, unconditional love and the encouragement to obtain my degree. In addition, I would like to take the time to thank Ms. Mary-Elaine Horn, Mrs. Sharon Lancaster, Mrs. Eugenia Davis, Murray State University personnel, and family and friends for their support that they have given me in this chapter of my life. In just a few days, I will be walking across the stage to receive my Bachelor of Integrated Studies Degree and stepping into the next chapter of my life.

Introduction

What exactly is the "School To Prison Pipeline?" It can be defined as the disciplinary policies and practices established by school's systems in order to criminalize youth that will eventually lead to involvement of the law enforcement. What is a zero-tolerance policy? In the school system, there are strict enforcements or regulations that is against unwanted behaviors or possession of items. Disciplinary policies, practices and zero tolerance policy that has been violated by students of color and students with disabilities that will lead to law enforcement involvement for the following examples:

1. Nonviolent

2. Disrespect

3. Insubordination

4. Minor disruption

The "School to Prison Pipeline" has shown to be the consequence of many students who do not have any control of their poverty status, their unequal educational opportunities, disabilities, as well as those who are a part of urban environment; specifically, African American males.

African American males have continuously faced racial prejudice in the school systems. In the United States, African American males are shorthanded in education, colleges, opportunities, media exposure and the criminal justice system; such as juvenile centers, jails, and prisons. Studies have shown how the "School to Prison Pipeline" is a root cause to jails and prisons being overpopulated; specifically, with African American males. Could there be a connection between educational and mass incarceration among African American males? Is the

United States colorblind to racial justice? Are students who have been funneled through the School to Prison Pipeline lost self-control and accepted the status quo of being controlled by the United States Criminal Justice System?

School-to-Prison Pipeline

By definition, according to Nicki Cole, the "School-To-Prison Pipeline" refers to a "process through which students are pushed out of school and into prison." Youth are criminalized through disciplinary policies and practices within schools and this causes the involvement of the law enforcement. After students have been involved with the law enforcement, many are then removed from the educational system and placed into the juvenile criminal justice system. According to Nicki Cole, "zero tolerance policies" is one of the key policies/practice that include harsh punishment for minor and major infractions, expulsion and suspensions (2018). The school system believes that the best way to deal with student's behavior is through suspensions and expulsions (Cole 2018).

According to Marilyn Elias, "policies that encourage police presence at schools, harsh tactics including physical restraint, and automatic punishments that result in suspensions and out of-class time are huge contributors to the pipeline (pg. 39). In the United States, many school districts have adopted discipline policies that will allow racial minorities and students with disabilities to be forced out of the classroom into what is known as the School-To-Prison Pipeline. We have a national problem that deserves federal action," Matthew Cregor, an attorney with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, explained. "With suspension a top predictor of dropout, we must confront this practice if we are ever to end the dropout crisis or the so-called achievement gap." According to, Sen. Patrick Leahy, "as a nation we can do better."

In the United States, although crimes have decreased, we can also see that incarceration has increased. There seems to be an educational failure with the African American students due to racism/discrimination. In the United States' school systems when children from kindergarten up to 12th grade are being funneled out of the public-school systems and into juvenile and criminal justice systems. In the process of the developmental stage, could "School To -Prison Pipeline" cause an effect on African Americans adolescents, black males, Hispanic and low-income families, particularly within urban areas and students with special education disabilities?

ACLU National Prison Project

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is "to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties to every individual in this United States." Wikipedia (2018). There are several factors according to the ACLU that contribute to students that are isolated, punished, and then pushed out of public school into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. These factors include:

1. Children with learning disabilities
2. Histories of poverty
3. Abuse
4. Neglect
5. Additional educational

According to Welch, W. (2018) students who have been funneled out of the schools and falling into the "School-To-Prison Pipeline" is the likelihood of involvement in the justice system increase, a consequence that is most common among black and poor children and also

those with special learning and emotional needs. Following factors reflect in the increase of student's criminalization:

1. Detriment of educational objectives

2. Harshly disciplined students

3. Experienced repeated grades

4. Dropping out

5. Committing crimes

6. Incarcerated

AJ+ (2015) video explained how the harsh zero tolerance policies within school systems have led to more suspensions and in-school arrests. African American students have been found to be charged with harsher punishments compared to white classmates charged with the same offenses. Under the zero tolerance policies, minority students are over-represented in numbers and harshness of discipline (Fowler, 2011; Wald & Losen, 2003). African American students that have been suspended, expelled or dropped out of the school system are three times more likely to get arrested. Students of color or with a disability are found to be more affected with the harsh zero tolerance policies. Black students are three times more likely, than white students, to receive expulsion. Students with a learning disability are subjected two times more to receive suspension than any of their classmates.

Where is the Money?

The local, state, and federal education has contributed to not having any value for the Equal Right Amendment for all students in the public school. Today's education is not about all students receiving proper education to gain knowledge to be able to succeed but education is

about money and federal funding. Federal funding is not used to pay for school textbooks, material, school supplies for teachers to be successful in their classrooms. School to Prison Pipeline is being used to force children out of the school system to close the gap so the particular schools can earn the named "Distinguished School". The School-To-Prison Pipeline is a system that have allowed students to be funneled out of the school system for federal funds while incarcerations have increased to feed the prison addictions by housing students to fund the prison needs. Education is one of the strongest predictions of lifetime wealth, and lack of access to quality education is one the most frequently cited constraints on upward mobility in area of poverty (Autor, Katz & Kearney 2008; Bailey & Dynarski, 2001).

According to Anonymous speaking from experience teachers don't get bonuses…they get penalized and often lose their jobs over test scores. The following comment is the Anonymous opinion: there is too much testing and not enough teaching being done. Teachers are told what to teach and how to teach by legislators who have no education background other than they were a student. Teachers are expected to teach standards and those are good but not in depth. Teacher have a certain amount they have to cover in the year and the big tests in the spring that has federal money tied to it. If students don't test well federal funds are withheld and things such as textbooks and supplies are withheld (2018)

According to Flannery (2017), around 34,000 students are behind bars, and two thirds for non-violent offense, 20,000 students are confined to residential facilities, and 10,000 are imprisoned in adult prisons and jails. Black and Hispanic students are being criminalized for misbehavior and pushed out into the justice system. Where there is an officer being present in a public-school system, the "Prison to Pipeline-Prison" is then identified within that school and therefore, an opportunity lies open for a student to be arrested at school.

One reason for the racial disparity may be that Black students are more likely to attend schools with officers in them. Another reason is racism. Either way, more students, mostly Black, are feeding the profit margins of privatized prisons. (Flannery, 2017).

School Resource Officers (SROs)

According to Girouard (2001), there are no strict standards regarding the police job descriptions in schools. Therefore, the School Resource Officer (SROs) was first developed in Flint, Michigan, around 1950's due to the increase of gun violence, drugs, and mass shootings in schools (Ryan, 2018). School Resource Offices are defined as armed police officers that are placed in public schools to serve as the following:

1. Mentoring

2. Teaching

3. Law Enforcement

4. Patrolling School

5. Investigating criminal/complaints

School Resource Officer (SRO) help with teaching through the participation in the following programs in the public-school systems:

1. DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education)

2. GREAT (Gang Resistance Education and Training) (Coon, & Travis, 2012; Flinn & McDevitt, 2005).

According to Na and Gottfredson (2011), three-quarters of principals have allowed the SROs to handle disciplinary issues. The National Association of School Resource Officer states

that SROs should be prohibited from becoming involved with any formal school disciplinary

actions. Disciplinary action is the responsibility of school administrators (NASRO, 2105).

School -to-Prison Pipeline Discipline Statistics

The following exclusionary discipline practices can have negative effect on students:

1. Suspension

2. Expulsion

3. Disciplinary alterative educating programs (DAEP) (Skiba, 2000).

African Americans tend to become resentful and disengaged when they have experienced

being expelled (McNeely, Nonemaker &Blum, 2002; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003). African

American males that are involved in the Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP)

may be more likely to associate with deviant peer groups which may also lead to an increase of

criminal activity (Poulin, Dishion, & Bkurraston, 2001). According to Nicki Cole, once a student

has been labeled bad or criminal by their teacher, family members, friends and society they may

experience:

1. Confusion

2. Stress

3. Depression

4. Anger (2018)

Exclusionary discipline practices were found to be used to punish African American and

European American males many years ago. According to a thirty year of exclusionary discipline

research (Costenbader & Markson, 1994, 1988; Fenning & Rose, 2007; McCarth & Hoge, 1987;

McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Petterson, 2002; Skiba &

Petterson, 1999; Skiba, Petterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu, Pink, Crain & Moles, 1982) the

following statistics were developed:

1. In 1974 students from 1.7 million -3.1 million in United States (U.S. Department

    of Education, 2001).

2. In 2000 African American student represented less 17% of the student population

    in United States schools, they accounted for 34% of all suspensions (U.S.

    Department of Education, 2001).

3. Wald and Losen (2003) reported that African American males were 2.6 times will

    be suspended than European American males.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice (2003), due to negative behavior, academic

disengagement and academic problems African American males will not have an interest to

pursue a high school diploma and will eventually drop out of high school. African American

males that drop out of school before the age 30 years old are most likely to be incarcerated.

Drop Out and Incarceration

According to Hjalmarsson (2008), 26% of students who did not graduate were subject to

be arrested. Students who are arrested before the age sixteen will decrease graduation potential

by 17%. According to Henry, Knight and Thornberry (2012), students who remain connected to

their positive peers and school by the age fifteen have found to significantly decrease in violent

behavior and drug use by age eighteen. African American students compared to their white

classmates are subjected to drop out and twice as much. Students with disabilities are likely to

drop out and Hispanic students are about two and a half times as likely to drop out (Chapman,

Laird, Ifill & KewalRamani, 2011). Students in Grades K-12 may also experience a disconnect

or disengagement from the school system, due to lack of school activities involvement, decrease in academic and difficulties in behavior (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Kemp 2006).

Within the last forty years, there has been a shift of black males going from school to prison. That shift is in a negative way, meaning more black men are going to prison today than they were in the 1980s. According to an article by Butterfield:

> A study found that in 2000 there were 791,600 black men in jail or prison and 603,032 enrolled in colleges or universities. By contrast, the study said that in 1980 there were 143,000 black men in jail or prison, what 463,700 and role in colleges or universities (Butterfield 2012).

That is a very drastic change over the years and one would want to know why and how this has been allowed to happen. What transpired over the years has allowed black men to head down a successful path of becoming a member of the prison system. In order to try to understand the process, you would have to take a look at the changed throughout history to see how black men proceeded through life in the 1980s until today and the changes black men have gone through in order to understand the why behind this deceiving process. The following contributors to African American male's social disorganization that can contribute to the prison system:

1. Poverty

2. Residential Mobility

3. Population density (Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994)

4. Drug Traffic

5. Gang activity

6. Exposure to violence

7. Police harassment (frequent) (Hambrick-Dixon, 2002; Miller, Webster, & Maclntosh, 2002).

African-American males have become victims of the prison system that prohibits an entire race of men from the responsibilities of reproducing children, raising their children, being responsible husbands to their wives, working in competing in corporate America, and providing a lifestyle that is suitable to the other races of other males within the United States today.

Personal Interviews

The following section includes personal accounts of people who have experienced firsthand the effects of the School To Prison Pipeline epidemic. Each of the interviews were conducted with an African American male, an African American Education Official, and an African American mother whose son, under thirty, is currently incarcerated in a federal prison.

Randy Stevenson

In an interview with Randy Stevenson (2018), the question was presented to him "as a black man growing up, what is the difference in how you went through school, as to how the young black men are going to school today"? He explained how life was for him growing up in Chester, Pennsylvania in the 1980s. Chester is a city about fifteen miles south of Philadelphia. Randy grew up in the Ruth L. Bennett homes projects. Everyone knows growing up in the projects can be rough for any young black male, and, because of the challenges of the project life, usually does not turn out well for most young black men. In the 1980s it was a little different. In those days, it was not uncommon to see both parents together raising their children. There was still a strong sense of pride for dual parenting and building a strong foundation at home. There were still single moms raising their children in the projects and there were several

different reasons for that. Some were from bad choices, some were from deaths (not necessarily

murders) and some may have stemmed from money problems or from jobs.

Although single parenting did exist in the projects that he lived in, they adopted the

concept that it takes a village to raise a child. With that being said, a greater percentage of

families adapted to that concept and allowed the village to raise their children, but there were

some who did not want any part of that concept. There were children that made wrong choices

and end up in the prisons because they did not want to listen to anything anyone had to say, and

their parents wonder what went wrong with their child, if they even cared at all.

Some errors in the project were not heard, they were using drugs and, in the streets, and

no matter what you did, you cannot save the children. The school systems back in the 1980s

were the same way. When Randy attended school, it was ok for his teacher paddle a child. Not

all parents adapted to this concept, but the bottom line was that you were either going to do right

in school or accept the consequences of the school discipline. In those days it made you want to

do better in school.

In the 1980s, the school systems had programs in the school that prepared you for life

outside of high school. For example, at Chester High School you had your college prep classes,

those classes were obviously set up for those who were trying to go or who knew where they

were going to college. For those who did not meet the academic level of college prep classes, the

school had programs that would help students with basic necessities like math, English, science,

etc. A student could stay after school for additional help with a teacher or mentor. Shop classes

where available to help students to prepare for the real-world in job market. This was especially

important for the young men because they learned a skill set that most of them would not learn at

home.

One of the shops the school had for example was the building maintenance class. This class was a class that showed you how to do general maintenance to building or home. Building maintenance course consist of running electric wire through the house, putting up drywall, or laying concrete to name a few things about that course. Law-enforcement course was another course taught by a retired police officer to get high school graduates to consider joining the police force once they graduated from high school. Randy's high school also had an auto mechanic shop and an auto body shop one to work on car engines and a desire to fix the body of the vehicle. The point of this is the school had a program in place to discipline you if you did something wrong with a paddle. The school also had in school suspension and out of school suspension as well. They also had programs to set you up to go to college. If you knew you weren't going to college, they had shops to set you up to go into the work world and find a job once you graduated from high school. Networking was still in process back in the 1980s, so the county had connections in getting students' jobs who excelled in the classroom. Randy's high school was 98% African-American. For a lot of young African-Americans who did not find work at the high school, or did not go to college, a great number of them decided to join the military and pursue a career in the Armed Forces.

With all of these options to choose from while in school, the projects also had his own activities within each project. Randy's project alone had several activities to keep the men actively active and, on a path, to keep the young man out of the prison systems. In the 1980s, the city had a Mother's Day parade, drill team competition and many states such as: Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Maryland, and Virginia came to compete. Randy was involved in a program that would help students to get involve involved in sports such as football, basketball and baseball; hopefully will aspire students to play in high school and eventually received

scholarships to be able to play for a college of their choice. His project also had a Masonic

organization as mentors to meet with guys to make sure the guys were walking straight. These

programs seem to work well in those days. Being raised and actively involved in church can

have positive influence on African American male.

Michelle Dillard

In an interview with Michelle Dillard (2018), the question was presented "as a single

mother growing up, and what is the difference in how you raised three African American males

in a public school compared to your experience as a professional educator". Michelle was a

single parent raising three African American males. The School To Prison Pipeline was very real

to her. Michelle first noticed it when her three sons were in high school and weren't getting the

proper help they needed for college applications. Through the years when Michelle as single

parent trying to raise her three sons to be educated young Africa American males eventually

went from a single parent on government assistance to an educator. She had to fight to have

them in higher level classes like their white counterparts; her boys were gifted and talented. Even

being an educator, Michelle had to learn things along the way about equality. See what people

don't understand is that African American, special education, Hispanic and low social-economic

families want the same opportunity as others; that is access to grade level curriculum. We want

the same resources that whites, Asians or high social economic people have in school.

As an educator now, she sees that if we don't change things we are sending kids to

prison. The following examples are needs the school district that Michelle is now educator have

put in place:

1. Adopted a racial equity policy.

2. Every school and department in the school district has written a plan to address the gaps with African Americans and/or free and reduced lunch.

3. All plans have to be passed by SBDM.

4. Each school uses the Racial Equity Plan to review policies and procedures.

We have to make sure these groups she mentioned have the necessary resources to be successful. It shouldn't matter what your last name is, what side of town the school is in or who can afford what; it's school districts' responsibility to ensure ALL kids have the same opportunity to be successful. If society doesn't wake up and access these schools, then we will have the School To Prison Pipeline. We must call things out and be transparent about what is going on in our educational system. Michelle's district has been working to make sure ALL kids have access to the grade level standards. The new superintendent has been working on making sure our kids have the opportunity as all others. As a parent and educator, Michelle will ensure ALL get this opportunity because she will continue to advocate and speak up for what she knows is right.

Regina Rice

In an interview with Regina Rice (2018), as a single parent raising two black males, always wanting the best for your children. Regina tried to instill in them the principles of life. God, education, and to live a blessed and prosperous life. You guide them from early childhood, adolescence, teenage years and then adulthood. You pray that all the talks, experiences good and bad are embedded in their mind.

Growing up in an environment that jobs were plentiful, the economy was booming, and life was good. Neighborhood people looked out for each other. Then everything changed.

Economy crashes, jobs lost, people left without any hope for the future. It seemed like no one cared. Everyone went from caring for each other to caring about themselves. Life was becoming hard. Trying to keep your children from gangs, dope dealers, and all unsavory wrong ways but were enticing to those that didn't see a way out. Regina protected her two sons as a mother should have. She didn't allow them to hang in the streets. Regina made sure that they were involved in sports, church activities, and they planned activities as a family. As single parent trying to shield them from a harsh life but not naive to the fact that this is how the world turn. Pick your friends wisely, know your environment keep your eyes open to your surroundings.

Then there came a day, a mother never wants to endure. One of Regina's son had committed a crime and he was sentenced to prison. The African American single mother was devastated. Her faith was unraveling. The question was asked, what caused him to make the wrong choice? Regina's son made a wrong decision trying to provide a life for the family he chose. Life was getting hard, the job he had wasn't paying enough and he had a soon to be wife with three children to provide for. In Regina's son mind this was the best way; which turned out to be a nightmare for everyone involved. It was a harsh reality check and now my son was a statistic. Was it a true saying that all black males would end up in prison? Are the odds against black males? What sentence would they give a first-time offender? The sentence was harsh and now he was in the prison pipeline. As an adult, committing a crime a black male at that we have to stop and analyze why. Do the black males have the same advantage as others? Are they already targeted? Are they destined for failure? How do we stop this?

As a parent we can do all we can but the environment, conditions, economics, have to change. The dynamics of the world has to change. The world has to be accepting of everyone. The world has to include all people and allow everyone a chance to prosper. Barriers have to be
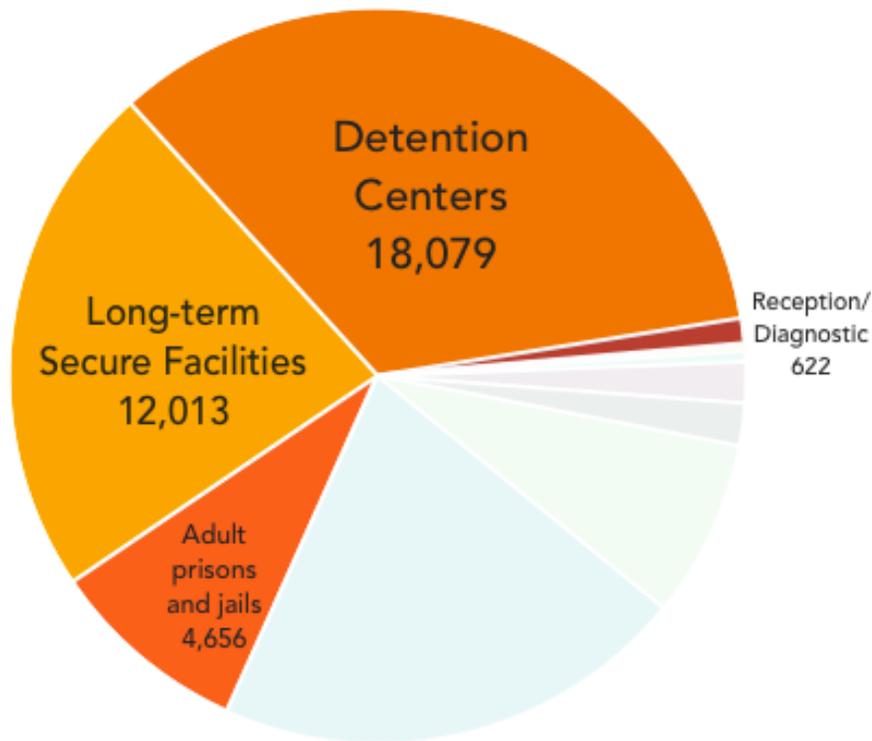
broken. Our males need a fighting chance to survive. "My son will survive this. A hard lesson learned".

Restrictive Facilities

According to Sawyer (2018) around 53,000 juveniles are housed in facilities because of juvenile or criminal justice involvement (53,000 juveniles does not include juveniles currently waiting to be prosecuted as adult). Many juveniles being held has not committed criminal violations.

Two-thirds of confined youth are in the most restrictive facilities

67% are held in either the juvenile justice system's versions of jails and prisons or in *actual* adult jails and prisons.

Detention Centers
18,079

Reception/
Diagnostic
622

Long-term
Secure Facilities
12,013

Adult
prisons
and jails
4,656

According to Rowe (2015), four times as many black students in Seattle public school are being expelled from school for something as small as "disruptive conduct" or disobedience or just breaking the rule.

State wide, more that 8,716 students younger than sixth grade were suspended or expelled in 2012-2013, and patterns in Settle suggest that a disproportionate number were children of color (Rowe 2015).

Sharp Increase in Discipline of Black Children

## Sharp increase in discipline of black children

The racial gap in suspensions of less than 11 days for Seattle elementary students widened between 2004 and 2008. It has since narrowed, but black children are still disciplined at more than four times the rate of whites.

*2013-14 rates include in-house suspension

Note: Native American and multiracial students are not included because of their small numbers.

Source: Seattle Times analysis of data provided by Seattle Public Schools

Short-term suspension rates for Seattle elementary students

— AFRICAN AMERICAN   — WHITE   — HISPANIC   — ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER
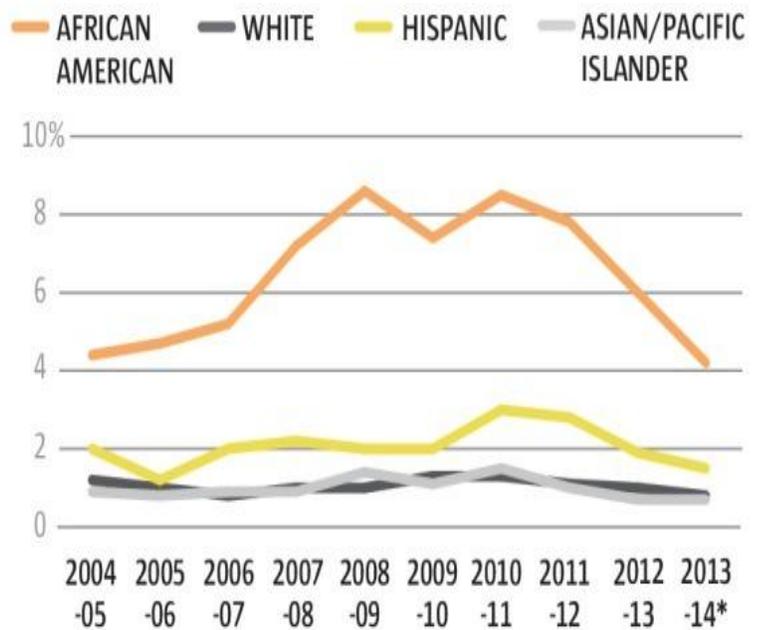
STEPHANIE REDDING / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Conclusion

School to Prison Pipeline is defined as the disciplinary policies and practices established by school system. Student are funneled through the system with a zero-tolerance policy enforced by local, state and federal. Zero-tolerance policies can be defined as strict enforcement or regulations that is against unwanted behaviors or possession of items. As the literature has been orchestrated, researchers have found that the education system has failed the radical minorities, low-income families and students with special education disabilities.

Students have been placed in the "School To Prison Pipeline" in The justice system due to the following criminalization factors:

1. Lower achievers

2. Committing crimes

3. Dropping out

4. Experienced lower expectations

5. Failed to graduate

6. Harshly disciplined students

7. Incarcerated

African American students who have experienced suspension and have dropped out of the school system are likely to get arrested. Students with learning disabilities also experience suspension greater than any other students. When improper education is provided to students the following factors will show:

1. Low test scores

2. Shortage of textbook

3. Crowded classrooms

4. Decrease in academic achievement

Studies have identified that all students have not received proper education because of the injustice in the school system. African American males, when compared to white males, are known to drop out and twice as much. African American males have become the greatest victims of the prison system. In order to understand what transpired over the years that has allowed black men to be a part of the prison systems, poverty, drug traffic, and gang activity is a contributor to African American Males social disorganization. African American, special education, Hispanic and low social-economic should have the same opportunity as white, Asians or high social economic people have in school.

Are students who have been funneled through the School to Prison Pipeline lost self-control and accepted the status quo of being controlled by the United States Criminal Justice System? How can society help the black males have the same advantage as others? Are they already targeted? Are they destined for failure? How do we as society stop the School to Pipeline to Prison?

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