



The Society for the Study of Social Problems
Publishers of the Journal *Social Problems*

901 McClung Tower University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996-0490
Phone: 865-689-1531 Fax: 865-689-1534 E-mail: sssp@utk.edu
www.sssp1.org

OFFICERS (2013-2014)

Anna Maria Santiago, Ph.D.
Case Western Reserve University
President

Marlese Durr, Ph.D.
Wright State University
President-Elect

R.A. Dello Buono, Ph.D.
Manhattan College
Past-President

Luis A. Fernandez, Ph.D.
Northern Arizona University
Vice President

Nancy J. Mezey, Ph.D.
Monmouth University
Vice President-Elect

Glenn W. Muschert, Ph.D.
Miami University
Secretary

Susan M. Carlson, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University
Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Cheryl A. Boudreaux, Ph.D. (2014)
Grand Valley State University

Stephani Williams, Ph.D. (2014)
Northern Arizona University

Antwan Jones, Ph.D. (2015)
George Washington University

Raymond Michalowski, Ph.D. (2015)
Northern Arizona University

Phoebe Morgan, Ph.D. (2015)
Northern Arizona University

John Dale, Ph.D. (2016)
George Mason University

Heather M. Dalmage, Ph.D. (2016)
Roosevelt University

Sarah E. Hendricks, Student (2014)
Drake University

Margaret R. Austin Smith, Student (2015)
University of Maryland

Shannon M. Monnat, Ph.D. (2015)
Pennsylvania State University
*Ex-Officio, Chairperson, Council of the
Special Problems Divisions*

Becky Pettit, Ph.D. (2014)
University of Washington
Ex-Officio, Editor of Social Problems

Brent Teasdale, Ph.D. (2013)
Georgia State University
*Ex-Officio, Editor of Social Problems
Forum: The SSSP Newsletter*

EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
University of La Verne

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Michele Smith Koontz
University of Tennessee
Administrative Officer & Meeting Manager

Sharon Shumaker
University of Tennessee
Information Technology Specialist

Marisa Stone
University of Tennessee
Administrative Assistant

Elizabeth A. East
University of Tennessee
Graduate Research Associate & Webmaster

October 4, 2013

Mayor Michael Bloomberg
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mayor Bloomberg,

I am writing on behalf of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), an organization composed principally of educators in higher education, many of whom study a wide range of problems afflicting our society, among them educational and criminal justice system problems. In August of this year, we held our annual meeting in New York City. The Society has several divisions designed to allow members with similar scholarly interests to discuss important social issues. Several of these divisions -- namely Sociology and Social Welfare; Educational Problems; Youth, Aging, and the Life Course; Racial and Ethnic Minorities; Disabilities; and Sports, Leisure, and the Body -- came together to sponsor the attached resolution, passed unanimously by the members present, entitled *School to Prison Pipeline, Affecting Low Income Students of Color, Especially Black Males*. The resolution states the problem and proposes actions by your and other offices to help rectify a situation that has no place in a fair and just society.

As you will see from reading the resolution, the SSSP urges the city to reduce suspensions and school-based arrests and to find alternative means to protect students' right to education and dignity; to create a different climate, one devoid of such heavy reliance in the city's public schools on police and metal detectors and such high suspension rates, by increasing training and other measures designed to prevent and resolve conflicts more constructively. The resolution contains a long list of specific steps that we hope that the Mayor's office, the city's and state's departments of education, and the city and state's legislators will take, that in our expert opinion, we believe will help to resolve the problem.

If you wish to discuss this resolution and our appeal with the Society, please feel free to contact one of the following individuals: Joyce Bialik at bialik@yu.edu and Heather MacIndoe at heather.macindoe@umb.edu. Acknowledgement that you received this letter by writing to me at hector.delgado49@gmail.com would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.
Executive Officer, SSSP

Enclosure: Approved Resolution

RESOLUTION 4: School to Prison Pipeline, Affecting Low Income Students of Color, Especially Black Males

Submitted by Joyce Bialik and Heather MacIndoe on behalf of the Sociology and Social Welfare Division, Sponsored by the Educational Problems Division; Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division; Racial and Ethnic Minorities Division; Disabilities Division; and the Sport, Leisure, and the Body Division

Whereas more than one-half of Black men in low-income urban areas do not finish high school, which studies show greatly increases their risk of incarceration;

Whereas by the end of the 1990s a Black male who lacks a high school credential, born 1965-69, had nearly a 60 percent chance of serving time in prison;

Whereas research shows that current school discipline policies which rely on suspensions, widespread police presence, and other punitive practices do not reduce conflict, and instead increase the likelihood that students will fall behind, drop out and/or become incarcerated;

Whereas punitive policies disproportionately affect low-income students of color and students with disabilities, with Black male students impacted more than any other group;

Whereas youth with disabilities are over-represented among youth pushed out of the school system and funneled into the juvenile justice system and are not given the necessary services and supports to stay in school successfully.

Whereas these practices have a negative impact on school climate by undermining positive relationships between students and trusted adults and contributing to conflict on school campuses;

Be it resolved that the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP) calls for New York City to support reducing suspensions and school-based arrests and implementing positive alternatives to protect students' human rights to education and dignity;

Be it further resolved that SSSP supports the creation of safe and supportive school climates in all New York City public schools without the need for school police or metal detectors, where young people are not suspended and removed from class, and where teachers and students have training and support to prevent and resolve conflicts in positive ways;

Be it further resolved that SSSP calls on the Mayor, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, and City and State legislators to:

1. Implement and fund positive school-wide discipline policies in all schools by incorporating approaches such as restorative practices, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and peer mediation.
2. Begin implementation in the highest need schools by providing resources, training and technical assistance for schools. Highest need schools include schools that are heavily policed, schools with metal detectors, cameras, and large numbers of School Safety Officers, schools with high suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates, schools with a population of students at risk of dropping out, and Impact Schools. They also include schools in low income communities of color, where we see a correlation between the criminalization of students inside and outside of schools.
3. Fund, designate, and train a staff person in each school, beginning with the highest need schools, to serve as a Restorative Discipline Coordinator who will help develop and oversee implementation of a school-wide plan, and provide ongoing support and coordination for teachers and students.

4. Require training for all teachers, principals, counselors, school aides, and other support staff on how to implement positive interventions, and engage students, parents, and educators to help design and lead the trainings.
5. Consult regularly with students, parents, and other community members about the development of school discipline, climate, and safety practices to involve the entire school community.
6. Create and train a Restorative Discipline Team at the NYC Department of Education to ensure that schools are implementing and sustaining positive school-wide discipline policies, and to provide technical assistance and support.
7. Reduce suspensions by no less than 50% by the 2013 – 2014 school year, eliminate suspensions of more than 10 days, and reduce school-based arrests by revising the Discipline Code, Chancellor’s Regulations, and other policies.
8. Require the use of positive interventions, such as mediation, counseling, restorative circles, or fairness committees, instead of suspensions except where suspensions are required by law.
9. Adopt a policy that schools must take certain steps before they can suspend a student, such as using positive interventions, or meeting with the student and/or the student’s guardian to discuss disciplinary options.
10. When a student returns from a suspension, require that schools provide academic support and implement positive interventions to reintegrate the student into the school community.
11. Require schools to strictly uphold students’ due process rights and provide remedies for violations of those rights.
12. Decriminalize students by minimizing police presence and arrests and giving schools control over school safety.
13. Continually monitor and evaluate the use of suspensions, removals, arrests, and positive interventions in all schools.
14. Hold schools accountable for reducing high suspension and arrest rates, not through punitive measures, but by providing technical assistance and support to implement positive approaches.
15. Ensure that schools do not use suspensions in cases prohibited by the Discipline Code, such as wearing a hat and other infractions under Level 1 of the Discipline Code.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution and cover letter shall be forwarded by the SSSP Executive Officer to the Mayor, the New York City Department of Education, the New York State Education Department, and City and State legislators

References

Advancement Project. (2010). Test, punish, and push out: how 'zero tolerance' and high-stakes testing funnel youth into the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Advancement Project, 14.

Delgado, Héctor L., (2013) *Social Problems Forum: The SSSP Newsletter*, retrieved from http://www.sssp1.org/file/Newsletters/SP_Forum/Winter%202013%20Newsletter.pdf

Eckholm, E. (2006, March 20). Plight deepens for Black men, studies warn. *The New York Times*. Retrieved June 14, 2013 from http://www.uri.edu/artsci/ecn/starkey/ECN386%20-Race.Gender.%20Class/blackmen_plightof.pdf

Pettit, B. & Western, B. (2004). Mass imprisonment and the life course: race and class inequality in U.S. incarceration. *American Sociological Review*, 69/2, 151-168.

Kupchik, Aaron. 2010. *Homeroom Security: School discipline in an age of fear*. NY: NYU Press.

Mason, Jeff. 2012. "Obama skeptical of NRA proposal to put more guns in schools." *Reuters*, December 30.

Mukherjee, Elora. 2007. *Criminalizing the Classroom: The over-policing of New York City schools*. NY: New York Civil Liberties Union

US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (2008). 2006 Data Collection.