



Annual Report

2023



National
Black Women's
Justice Institute

National Black Women's Justice Institute

OUR MISSION

The National Black Women's Justice Institute researches the criminalization of Black women and girls and elevates innovative, community-led solutions to address it. We aim to dismantle the racist and patriarchal U.S. criminal-legal system and build, in its place, pathways to opportunity and healing.

CORE COMMITMENTS

Dismantling Pathways to Criminalization and Confinement for Black Women & Girls

Racial and gender inequities are embedded in U.S. systems and institutions. These inequities produce unjust barriers and disadvantages that increase Black women and girls' risk of coming in contact with law enforcement, courts, and places of confinement. It is critical that we study and understand risk and protective factors to create interventions and advance policy that build avenues to success and well-being for Black women and girls.

Increasing and Enhancing Opportunities with and for Formerly Incarcerated Women & Girls

Returning home from a period of confinement is a daunting experience filled with uncertainty, instability, and a sense of powerlessness. It is imperative that we increase access to services and strengthen and amplify community-led solutions—and we must do so in partnership with women and girls who have been incarcerated, as well as the organizations that support them.

Promoting Healing-Centered Justice

The overwhelming majority of Black women and girls who come in contact with the criminal legal system have experienced deep trauma and harm in their lives. The status quo of criminalization and punishment only causes more trauma and does not heal or increase public safety. We must advocate for access to and expansion of services that support and promote healing and connection and help Black women and girls reclaim their power.

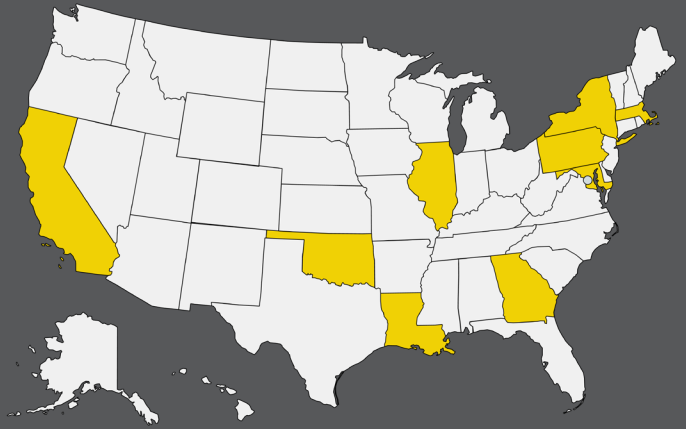


Major 2023 Accomplishments

SISTERS IN SOLIDARITY REENTRY NETWORK

Returning home from a period of confinement is a daunting experience filled with uncertainty, instability, and a sense of powerlessness. It is imperative that we increase access to services and strengthen and amplify community-led solutions—and we must do so in partnership with women and girls who have been incarcerated, as well as the organizations that support them.

To that end, we recruited 9 reentry organizations & programs across the U.S., highlighted here, led by formerly incarcerated Black women to be the inaugural members of our [Sisters in Solidarity Reentry Network](#).



The Sisters in Solidarity Network supports the leadership of formerly incarcerated Black women across the country who are championing the movement for culturally-affirming, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed reentry services for women and girls.

We conducted a landscape analysis and surveyed 43 reentry service providers and advocates at 29 organizations in 14 states to understand Black women’s reentry needs and how to best support the leaders championing this work. They all expressed interest in having a space to facilitate relationship-building with others in the field and space to share knowledge, skills, and resources on issues that impact the work. The Sisters in Solidarity Network answers this call.

CREATING AFFIRMING, RESPONSIVE, EQUITABLE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

The CARES (Creating Affirming, Responsive, Equitable Schools) Initiative aims to end school pushout by transforming schools into the nurturing, caring, and supportive educational spaces that Black girls & gender-expansive youth and all students deserve, where they can grow and thrive.

The CARES Initiative will serve as a national training, assistance, and resource hub for schools and educators to adopt trauma-informed, culturally affirming, and gender-sensitive approaches that support safety, belonging, and opportunities for Black girls and gender-expansive youth. We provide schools with essential tools, resources, and training to enhance educators’ awareness and commitment to policies and practices that affirm the identities of all students.

Developing the CARES Initiative
Mental Health Assessment for Schools

6 YOUTH ADVISORS AGES 12-19

2 YOUTH LISTENING SESSIONS

Our youth advisors, along with an additional 10 Black girls, shared their experiences and recommendations for how schools can improve their policies & practices to best support the mental health of Black girls & gender-expansive youth. Their insight & recommendations informed the creation of the [CARES Mental Health System Assessment](#) to help schools improve & sustain a comprehensive school-based mental health system.

2023 Research & Policy



Supporting Black Women's Reentry from Incarceration

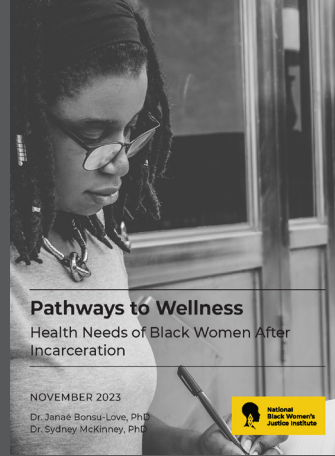
Recommendations for Reentry Policy & Practice in California

SEPTEMBER 2023
Dr. Janaé Bonsu-Love, PhD



Although 1 in 5 people released in California are women, reentry services and post-release policies have been created primarily with men in mind. This leaves significant programming gaps that do not address Black women's unique pathways into the criminal legal system and their complex,

unmet needs upon release from incarceration. This policy report makes several recommendations for policymakers and practitioners in the state of California to better meet the needs of Black women returning to their communities from incarceration.



Pathways to Wellness

Health Needs of Black Women After Incarceration

NOVEMBER 2023
Dr. Janaé Bonsu-Love, PhD
Dr. Sydney McKinney, PhD



This study investigates how race, gender, health, and incarceration interact to shape the reentry experiences of formerly incarcerated women and their health, especially the experiences of Black women who are disproportionately represented within this population. It is a

groundbreaking study that examines how formerly incarcerated Black women access healthcare services, the barriers they face in trying to access those services, their healthcare needs, and the impact of incarceration on their health.



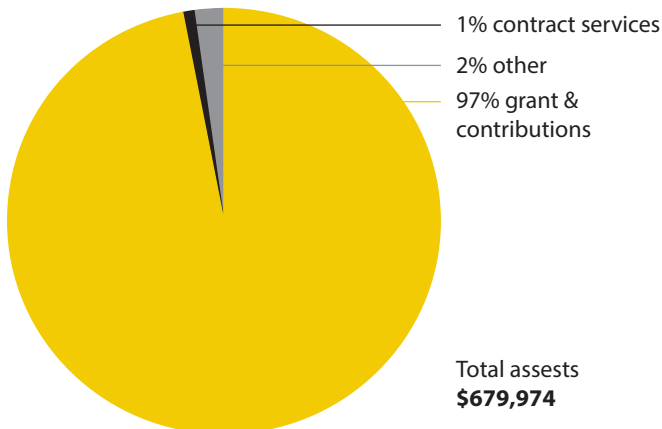
COVID-19 Crisis Intervention for Black Girls Impacted by the Foster Care and Juvenile Legal Systems

MAY 2023
Dr. Sydney McKinney, PhD

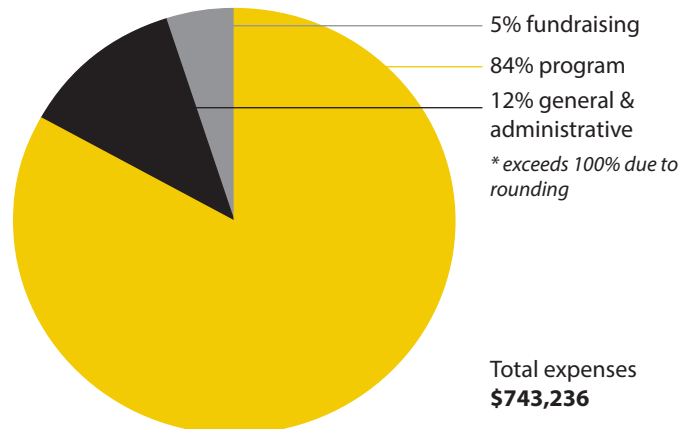


This study explores how the COVID-19 pandemic affected Black girls and gender-expansive youth impacted by the foster care and the juvenile legal systems and the organizations that serve them. Several key themes emerged, including that the pandemic intensified already-existing needs related to housing, income, education, food, and mental health.

2023 REVENUE



2023 EXPENSES



What's Ahead in 2024



CREATING AFFIRMING RESPONSIVE & EQUITABLE SCHOOLS (CARES) INITIATIVE

Black girls have been experiencing significant and distressing increases in poor mental health over the past several years. Yet, school-based mental health care often does not have an intersectional lens to understand how race & gender interact and uniquely shape Black girls' experiences & needs. In 2024, we are piloting our new tool in three schools in New York City. This assessment tool will help schools cultivate intersectional, trauma-informed practices & spaces in schools to care for the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Black girls and gender-expansive youth. This will help schools foster an environment that is safe & creates a sense of belonging and help prevent school pushout of Black girls and gender-expansive students.



SISTERS IN SOLIDARITY NETWORK

In 2024, we will welcome nine members of the first cohort of the Sisters in Solidarity Network. The inaugural members will focus on innovating in the reentry field, which has traditionally overlooked and marginalized the experiences of formerly incarcerated Black women. The first cohort of organizations will receive targeted technical assistance and project-specific grant support from NBWJI to work on a particular project, program, or area of focus. In addition, we are creating a collaborative learning space, which will include peer-led workshops and advocacy & strategy sessions, to strengthen the capacity of the network leaders to develop solutions to address the needs of formerly incarcerated Black women.



DISMANTLING PATHWAYS TO CRIMINALIZATION RESOURCE & DATA HUB

The Resource & Data Hub will be the premier home for comprehensive research, analysis, & data that examine the factors that lead to the criminalization, arrest, and incarceration of Black women & girls. We're launching the Hub with a series of factsheets & data briefs focused on school pushout to spotlight the practices that disproportionately push Black girls out of school and highlight the need for changes in policy & practice to protect Black girls and their futures from the impacts of pushout and criminalization. By building this extensive library of data & analysis, we aim to empower policymakers, practitioners, & advocates to put into place evidence-informed solutions that enhance the safety and wellbeing of Black women & girls.

We aim to dismantle the racist and patriarchal U.S. criminal-legal system and build, in its place, pathways to opportunity and healing.

We envision a society that respects, values, and honors the humanity of Black women and girls, takes accountability for the harm it has inflicted, and recognizes that real justice is healing.

