

Cradle to Prison Pipeline. April 18, 2015. Re-Visioning Justice.

- Pearl Cohn Academic Magnet : Social-Emotional Support
 - o self-awareness
 - o management
 - o responsible decision-making
 - o academic social and emotional learning
 - o people betting on them being in jail/prison : making profit off of their pain
- Gideon's Army : Rashedia
 - o Eliminate root causes of school to prison-pipeline
 - o Save them from death
 - o Kids being funneled through schools into the prison system
 - o Seeing the students in the classroom go from loving school to prison
 - o 3 students have been murdered
 - o victimization of both victims and offenders
- why should the general public care? What are some stories we should hear?
 - o People who are criminalized are not numbers; they are stories
 - There are reasons why people do the things they do
 - Desperation
 - Doesn't make it okay; but being desperate
 - o People don't see the beauty in people; they only see the "problems"
- Religious roots of slavery
 - o Carry it based on what we profess we believe
 - o The Jesus before Christianity
 - o Everybody is made in the image of God
 - o Not having anybody to advocate for me based on the trauma I experienced
 - Needing space and opportunity
 - Re-imagine what it means to feel value/to tell your story
 - o Zero-tolerance policies
 - o No one is taking the time to talk about
 - WHY are you doing these things?
 - Why did you go from straight As to hating school?
 - What is going on that is changing how you view self/your future?
 - o Help young men to tell their stories / humanize the people who are on death row
 - Humanize these people
 - As more share from death row, we begin to see patterns
 - Commonalities in experience
 - I am misunderstood / paper trails / begin to fulfill the label / accept the label
 - Usually alternative school → juvenile → 50% end up in adult court system
 - If they won't say it, it'll be on insta or on snapchat!
 - Provide a window; provide space
 - Who am I? What do I say about myself? What do other people say about me?
- Cyrus Wilson
 - o Sat in jail for 2 years, before being convicted in 2 days
 - o When you don't have money to afford an attorney, they don't take you seriously
 - o Even though former eye-witness had testified that he was lying, he is still in jail for a life sentence
 - o Never a moment when they have been by themselves
 - o In order to get parole, you have to show remorse.
 - But what if you didn't do it?

Ndume

- most people in prison are coming out! so what do you want them to be like when they get out?

- do we want them marginalized? To feel like they should have to keep doing the things that got them into prison in the first place?
- The very same thing you see happening to other people happens to you, too.
- “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”
- Huge business
 - o They are going to run out of black folks to lock up
 - o If they keep on this trajectory, then it will touch your family
 - o “no man is an island”
- feel good about “not getting involved” → then it wouldn’t be as bad as it is now
- Ferguson, MO
 - o Military-esque
 - o War zone
 - o Seeing that in the streets of st. Louis, then people realize that it doesn’t look like
 - o Same type of force being used against anyone who they feel like are a threat
 - It could happen to you
- Not just the kids are to blame; it’s the system that makes them that way
- Coming in younger and younger with more and more time
- Largest prison company in the world : headquarters in TN
 - o Spend \$60,000 a year to house a kid in juvi, but only \$10,000 on education

What about student/parent responsibility? Individual responsibility?

- we all have personal responsibility, but we must keep this in context
- when we create an environment that leads people to make these choices
- but this does not negate personal responsibility
 - o we also have a personal responsibility to educate ourselves about the system
- said that he wanted to be a vet
 - o her response was doing something else with my hands, like construction
 - o start mentally checking out of school / physically not coming to school
 - o be conscious about what we do with our children, and with other people’s children
- zero-tolerance policies
 - o personal responsibility and systems that address what happens when community is broken
 - o when something is done, it is an individual choice (made with context), but it affects everybody else
 - o how do we begin to talk about you being in connection with other people?
 - o Individual and community responsibility
 - o Your actions affecting you and your community
 - o Having young people doing a diagnosis of their own emotions
 - how this contributes to decisions
 - o system designed to make profit off of people being incarcerated?
- Understand that you have a target on you
 - o 90% occupancy rate / 20 year contract
 - o beds are empty; and beds need to be filled
 - o goods and products need to be made in prison
 - o understand the specifics of the system
- You have value, you have gifts, you are important. Be a steward of those skills!
- You have to know your limitations / refer to a professional
- Responsibility of knowing you’re important and valued. Needed in community
- Harriet Tubman “I could have freed so many more slaves if they had known that they were slaves”
- “to hell with personal responsibility”
- privileges
 - o that black men do not have
 - o every time a black man walks outside... they are made to look like animals... we need to look at the root causes of these problems. Nobody wants to work at the root causes of these problems
 - o we cannot continue to victim shame
 - o we can’t continue to have forums and then just walk out and nothing changes
 - o it doesn’t have to be that way

- o if you walk out of here today and do not change, then you have wasted my time and you have failed
- o same as saying “she was wearing a short skirt; she deserved to be raped”
- look at the root causes
 - o what do we push on
 - o if we push on the same leverage point together, then we can make a change
- personal responsibility starts right here
- empowering young people to empower themselves
- give communities to have their own models without having to go to the man

Question: Josh

- what are the big things that we need to be organizing our communities around?
- Do we work within the schools, or do we work outside of the schools?
- Need to build systems outside of the schools, outside of the police
- Re-structure the way kids are getting through the system
- Being present in places ... being in helps me understand what I do when I get out ... be in the spaces and places where young people are so that you can understand the ethics ... what ways there are possibilities outside
 - o The church can play a major role
 - o How do communities of faith grow mentors? Be present in the building?
 - o How does the community of faith show itself present/create refuge for people?
 - o Having help navigating the social, spiritual ills from which they need refuge
- “life” = 51 years
 - o no matter what
- should be a judge’s discretion to choose how long that sentence is
- quit being scared. Get involved!

Question: Correlation between trauma and incarceration is bigger than the correlation between obesity and diabetes?

- I can reach 450,000 educators. What would you have me say to them?
- Really think about writing referrals on kids: it could be the very thing that sends them to juvi
- Ask educators on a monthly basis: what do your students teach you?
- Engage in quarterly bias assessment
- Dissecting our biases as people
 - o Have we examined our imbedded understanding / bias?
 - Why did I make that decision?
- Teachers seek out training
 - o Preferably through Gideon’s Army
 - o Engage parents / build relationships
 - o Our children belong to the village. And we are the village
 - o TFA teachers get extra slack / we really care, but we’re white. How do we build trust? How do we relate?
 - o Cultural education / experiential
 - o SEL / trauma informed
 - o RJ training
 - o School culture training
 - o Teachers self-assessments
 - What their discipline philosophy is
 - Already understand where you’re comfortable
 - How can you build upon the philosophy that you have

Question: how do I let them know that they can be somebody? That they do have potential?

- Ndume taught himself to paint while he was in prison
- How do we use art as a way for people to express themselves?
- Using art as a means of expression
- Watching people change via art