

Children's Defense Fund

Children's Rights

<https://www.childrensdefense.org/2009/childrens-defense-fund-national-leaders-convene-to-address-americas-cradle-to-prison-pipeline/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

SACRAMENTO, CA Today, the Childrens Defense Fund (CDF) and several co-conveners concluded their two-day California/National *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* Summit in Sacramento, California. The more than 500 attendees at the summit shared promising approaches and developed community action plans to stop the funneling of thousands of children down a pipeline to prison.

In America, a Black boy born in 2001 has a 1 in 3 chance of going to prison in his lifetime, and a Latino boy a 1 in 6 chance, and yet we spend nearly three times as much on every prisoner as we do per public school pupil,said CDF President Marian Wright Edelman. **We gathered in California which houses the largest prison system in the United States, incarcerating more than one of every nine prisoners in America to share solutions and strategies for rerouting children on a path to healthy adulthoods and reordering our priorities to save taxpayer dollars. We must mount a concerted national effort to dismantle the prison pipeline by eliminating its root causes through implementation of the promising approaches articulated at the summit.**

Co-conveners of the summit included the NAACP, NCLR, U.S. Conference of Mayors and PolicyLink, and noted speakers included: Angela Glover Blackwell, founder and CEO of PolicyLink; Ben Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP; the Honorable Kevin Johnson, Mayor of Sacramento, California; and Jurnee Smollett, actor.

As a nation, we can ensure that all children reach their full potential. We must use our vast knowledge about what works to dismantle the cradle to prison pipeline which hurts so many of our children,said Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and CEO of PolicyLink. **Instead of prison, our children deserve good schools, healthy and safe communities, and opportunities to thrive. We have a blue print for action. We must act to save our children.**

Summit participants discussed the role of race and poverty in the pipeline to prison, the importance of reweaving community relationships and surrounding children and youths with the care and services they need to succeed. The Summit also highlighted promising approaches to addressing these challenges.

In September 2007, the Childrens Defense Fund facilitated a national summit in Washington, D.C., to focus attention on the Pipeline and since then has gathered leaders across the country to plan for action. The California/National Summit showcased strategies that work in dismantling the pipeline to prison and engaged a broad range of people in the search for solutions: policy experts, elected officials and celebrities involved in education, child welfare, community revitalization, health and mental health and juvenile justice.

Some 200 youths led and participated in the deliberations of the first day to help define their own involvement in efforts to dismantle the prison pipeline. During interactive sessions, they shared challenges and discussed their personal experiences in the pipeline, and the interventions that changed their lives. Their report and recommendations were presented to the entire summit.

The pipeline to prison is not an act of God; it has been created by our human political choices,said Edelman. **We know what to do and now we must call upon our leaders to create and implement policies that will ensure every child a level playing field in life so that we dismantle the pipeline to prison and improve the lives of our children and all Americans.**

CDF's *Cradle to Prison Pipeline* Campaign addresses the urgent national crisis at the intersection of poverty and race that puts Black boys born in 2001 at a one in three lifetime risk of going to jail, and Latino boys at a one in six lifetime risk of the same fate. The goal of the campaign is to reduce detention and incarceration by increasing preventive supports and services children need, such as access to quality early childhood development and education services and accessible, comprehensive health and mental health coverage.

In California alone:

For more information on CDF's Cradle to Prison Pipeline Campaign, visit www.childrensdefense.org/cradletoprison

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