

“Sent Down the Drain: Zero Tolerance & the School to Prison Pipeline” –

Illustration & Text by Billy Dee

Commissioned by the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team (www.rogersparkywat.org)

and Project NIA (www.project-nia.org) for

The Suspension Stories Project.

Harsh disciplinary policies, such as *zero tolerance*, contribute to the *school to prison pipeline* by criminalizing students and pushing them out of school.

We approached the supremely talented artist and social justice activist Billy Dee with the idea of creating a one page “comic” illustrating the school to prison pipeline (STPP). Billy created “*Sent Down the Drain*” in response to our request. Billy volunteered time and artistic skills to help us in our quest to raise awareness about the destructive and pernicious impact of harsh school disciplinary policies.

We have provided a set of questions that can be used along with the comic as popular education tools. In the spirit that Billy exhibited in creating this work, we are making the comic freely available to anyone who wants to use it. We do ask, however, that you credit “the *Suspension Stories Project*” if you reproduce it. Finally, mark your calendars and visit the Suspension Stories website (www.suspensionstories.com) in **January 2011** when it launches.

In Peace,

Lillian Matanmi (YWAT & Project NIA)

Mariame Kaba (Project NIA)

Discussion Questions by YWAT and Project NIA

1. What happened to Alexa Gonzales?
2. Do you agree with the consequences that she suffered for her actions?
3. What are *zero tolerance* policies?
4. Have you ever been suspended or expelled from school? If yes, why?
5. Did you feel that your suspension/expulsion was fair? Why or why not?
6. What does the term “School to Prison Pipeline” mean to you?
7. Look closely at the illustration. What do you see? Why did the artist title it “*Sent Down the Drain: Zero Tolerance & the School to Prison Pipeline?*” What does this mean to you?
8. *Research Activity:* What has happened to Alexa since her incident at school?