

Suspension Stories -
Challenging the School to Prison Pipeline in Our Own Words -
A Youth-Led Event by the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team

Saturday, April 17th 2010

12:30 to 5:00 p.m. (Registration and Lunch at Noon)

Depaul University (Levan Hall)

2320 N. Kenmore Ave

This event is FREE and is co-sponsored by Project NIA (www.project-nia.org) and Depaul's Women and Gender Studies Program.

Pre-registration is REQUIRED. Please e-mail rpywat@hotmail.com by Wednesday April 14th 2010.

Youth ages 12-24 are invited to a series of workshops and discussion about how school discipline, policing practices, high-stakes testing and the prison industry contribute to pushing students out of school and into the criminal legal system.

Through our participatory action research project, YWAT is documenting the experiences of youth who have been suspended and/or expelled from school.

At suspension stories, participants will learn about the nature and impact of the school to prison pipeline through a series of youth-led and creative workshops. We will also be collecting stories from youth and adults for our interactive website project.

This is not an event for adults but for those who are interested in this topic, we are offering two adult-focused workshops.

The following is a sample of the workshops that will be offered at the event.

1 to 2:30 p.m.

Loyola University's Social Justice Advocates – **Introduction to the School to Prison Pipeline (youth only):** In this session, participants will learn how the tools from our modern day criminal justice system feeds the school-to-prison pipeline, which pushes children to a one way path toward prison. This pipeline refers to the general trend to criminalize rather than educate our children, especially those located in areas of lower socioeconomic and historically underrepresented locations.

Blocks Together – **Introduction to the School to Prison Pipeline (youth only)**: A group of Chicago teens arrested for having a food fight; a 5 year old girl arrested for having a temper tantrum in class; Suspensions and expulsions up 400%; Police stations inside schools! These are all symptoms of the School-to-Prison Pipeline (SPP). In this hands-on workshop find out more about what’s at the root of the SPP, examine your own experiences in school and find out how you can support the Graduate Don’t Incarcerate Campaign, led by youth like you.

Community Organizing for Family Issues (Austin Peace Center)–**Introduction to the School to Prison Pipeline (adults only)**: During the workshop, participants will discuss alternatives to suspensions and strategies for ending the school-to-prison pipeline. They will also receive a copy of POWER-PAC's *Parent-to-Parent Guide on Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools*. The workshop will be led by parent leaders of POWER-PAC (Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew - Policy Action Council).

2:45 to 4:45 p.m. (Creative Workshops)

Marwen – **Silhouettes and the School to Prison Pipeline (youth only)** – Using the work of artist Kara Walker as a starting point, participants will explore how to identity/persona changes with your audience (peers, administration, family, systemic parties) and your location (school, incarceration). Then focus on mapping and the journey from school to jail. Participants will be taking donated shoes, reimagining and redesigning them as they represent pathways.

Young Chicago Authors – **Writing Collage (youth only)** – Using writing and spoken word, participants will depict the school to prison pipeline through a writing collage.

Neighborhood Writing Alliance – **“There’s No Comparison for Adults” (adults only)** – Through dialogue and readings of current suspension and expulsion scenarios, participants will recall and write about a time from their youth that mirrors the situations today which end in arrest. Through this exercise, parents and adults will gain better insight into the school experience of youth today.