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LDF Media
212-965-2200 / media@naacpldf.org

New LDF Report Reveals Black Girls Are Pushed out of Baltimore Classrooms and into the Criminal Justice System

Black girls in the Baltimore City Public School System (BCPSS) are nearly five times less likely to have access to “gifted and talented” classes, but four times more likely to get suspended than their white peers—according to a new report from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF). The report, *[Our Girls, Our Future: Investing in Opportunity and Reducing Reliance on the Criminal Justice System in Baltimore](#)*, shares key findings and stories demonstrating how limited investment in educational opportunity and support services, and overreliance on exclusionary discipline, disproportionately pushes Black girls out of the classroom and into the juvenile justice system.

According to the report, Black girls made up nearly 81 percent of enrollment but accounted for 95 percent of suspensions and 92 percent of all expulsions of girls during the 2016-2017 school year. Despite the number of school-based arrests declining in recent years, Black students in Baltimore public schools represented 149 out of 156 school-based referrals to the Department of Juvenile Services—with Black girls accounting for 76 of those complaints. The majority of offenses for which Black girls from Baltimore are held in detention or committed placements are misdemeanors and property offenses. The report also notes that Black girls who have been physically or sexually abused are disproportionately punished, rather than provided support.

“Black girls in Baltimore are harshly disciplined, overpoliced and more likely to be referred to the juvenile justice system,” said [Sherrilyn Ifill](#), President and Director-Counsel at LDF. “It is critical that we confront school discipline practices that perpetuate false stereotypes that Black girls are ‘aggressive,’ ‘threatening’ and ‘dangerous’ and that fail to address the very real trauma that girls may have experienced at home or may be exposed to at schools. The Baltimore City Public School System can and must re-examine its discipline policies and practices to address the devastating harsh and disparate treatment of Black girls.”

For decades, BCPSS has overlooked the needs of Black girls. To unlock their full potential and create long-lasting criminal justice reform, LDF’s report *[Our Girls](#)*,

[*Our Future*](#) offers specific recommendations for school systems to reduce disparities in punishment and overreliance on exclusionary discipline, reduce misconduct and bias by school police, and reduce reliance on juvenile detention facilities.

“When schools are heavily policed, Black students are more likely to be arrested and we see this clearly in the Baltimore City Public School System,” said [Cara McClellan](#), a Skadden Fellow at LDF and co-author of the report. “The school system must prioritize support services for their students and faculty, instead of policing and punishment. Baltimore school officials and city leaders need to take concrete actions to end the implicit bias and exclusionary policies that keep Black girls from feeling safe in school.”

Our Girls, Our Future was produced in partnership with the Thurgood Marshall Institute ([TMI](#)), a multidisciplinary center within LDF that focuses on research, targeted advocacy campaigns and organizing, and was made possible by a grant from the Skadden Foundation.

Read the full report [here](#).

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multidisciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.